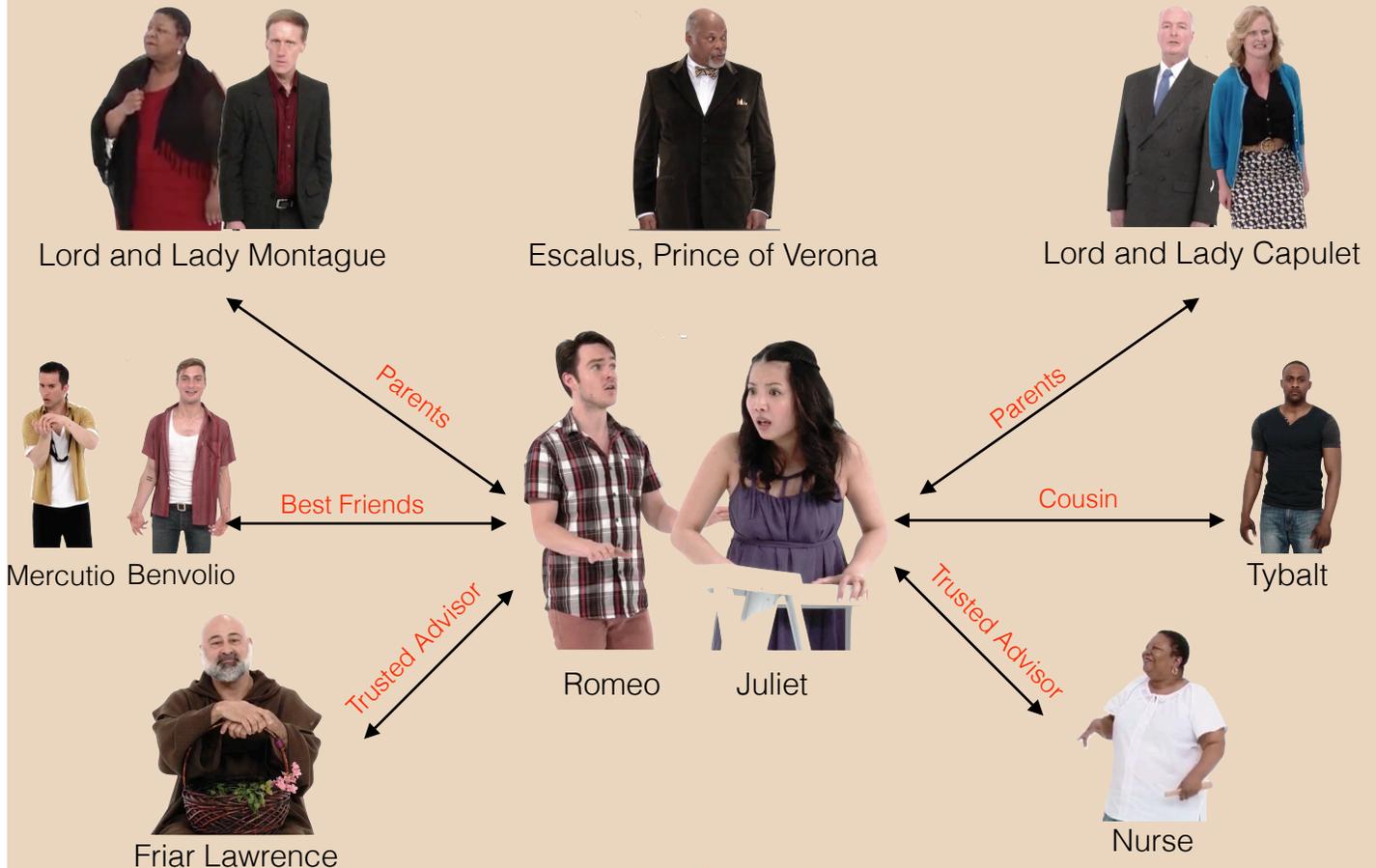


# WordPlay Shakespeare

## Romeo and Juliet: Main Characters



## Romeo and Juliet: The Story

Romeo and Juliet is a play in five acts, written by William Shakespeare around 1595. It is a tragedy (Shakespeare also wrote histories, and comedies) and the action is set in Verona, Italy. Based largely on an Italian story translated into English by Arthur Brooke, the play tells the story of a young man (Romeo) and a young woman (Juliet) who fall in love with each other. The problem — and the central driver of the play's plot — is that they each belong to one of two rival families (The Montagues and The Capulets) who have been at war with each other for so long that no one can really remember why they all hate each other so much.

After meeting and pledging their love for each other, they marry secretly, but before they can reveal to their families what they have done, Romeo gets into a fight with, and kills, one of Juliet's family members (Tybalt) who has himself killed one of Romeo's best friends (Mercutio). Romeo goes into exile in Mantua. In a desperate effort to save the situation, Romeo's mentor, Friar Lawrence comes up with a plan. He gives Juliet a potion that will put her into such a deep sleep that she will appear to be dead. Her family, thinking that she is dead, will put her in the family tomb, at which point Romeo will be called back to Verona, collect Juliet, and get away from the city with his new bride.

Things go horribly wrong — Romeo does not receive the message with Lawrence's plan, and when he hears that Juliet is dead (she isn't), he returns to Verona, and commits suicide at Juliet's side. When she wakes up, she sees Romeo dead beside her, and kills herself with his dagger. The two are found dead. Both families swear to end their feud, in honor of their dead children.

# WordPlay Shakespeare

## Themes

- Loyalty to family and friends
- Honor
- Individual agency, versus the tyranny of “belonging” (Fate versus Self Determination)
- How civil societies work — and what happens when they don’t.
- Reckless passion
- Hierarchy - Prince, Montagues and Capulets, Servants
- Requited, and unrequited love
- Violence
- Young versus old — Obedience versus disobedience

## Key Moments

- Benvolio persuades Romeo to come to the Capulet ball **A1 S2**
- Romeo meets Juliet, and the two fall in love. **A1 S4**
- Tybalt spots Romeo. **A1 S4**
- Juliet challenges Romeo’s love, asks for marriage. **A2 S2**
- Friar Lawrence agrees to marry Romeo to Juliet **A2 S3**
- Mercutio dies after baiting Tybalt into a fight. **A3 S1**
- Romeo avenges Mercutio’s death, by killing Tybalt. **A3 S1**
- Friar Lawrence hatches a complex plan to reunite Romeo and Juliet **A3 S3**
- Romeo heads for Juliet’s tomb to kill himself. **A5 S1**
- A plague outbreak interrupts the delivery of Lawrence’s plan to Romeo **A5 S2**

## Terms

- Protagonist (R and J)
- Antagonist (Tybalt)
- Dramatic foil
- Conflict
- Dramatic arc
- Dialogue
- Motivation
- Plot
- Staging
- Theatrical convention
- Iambic pentameter
- Aside
- Comic Relief
- Foreshadowing
- Irony
- Oxymoron
- Paradox
- Pun
- Soliloquy

## Quotes

- “A pair of star crossed lovers” **Prologue**
- “Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?” **A1 S1**
- But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? **A2 S2**
- O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? **A2 S2**
- That which we call a rose, By any other name would smell as sweet. **A2 S2**
- Parting is such sweet sorrow. **A2 S2**
- These violent delights have violent ends. **A2 S6**
- A plague on both your houses! **A3 S1**
- Thus with a kiss I die. **A5 S3**
- All are punished. **A5 S3**
- For never was a story of more woe, than this of Juliet and her Romeo. **A5 S3**

## Motifs & Symbols

- Light versus Dark
- Dreams versus reality
- Fate and Fortune
- Fire/Smoke
- Time
- Flowers

## Discuss

- Romeo and Juliet — innocent victims, or reckless and entitled rich kids?
- Tybalt and Mercutio are villains. Are they also more interesting and “relatable” characters?
- Is Prince Escalus fundamentally responsible for this tragedy, by being (by his own admission) weak in enforcing the law?
- Is it fair to suggest that the Lords and Ladies Capulet and Montague are terrible, uncaring, and bullying parents?
- Is Friar Lawrence an unrealistic fool, or a subtle, peace seeker?
- People can’t agree on what kind of a father Capulet is. Show two moments, one where Capulet is a doting father, the other when he is unfair and abusive.
- Who is your favorite character, and why? Give examples to justify your response.
- Who do you think is a stronger character — Romeo, or Juliet?
- Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy, but there are funny moments. Why would Shakespeare include comedy in a tragedy?