

## Long Stratton High School English Department

### ‘Romeo and Juliet’ by William Shakespeare – Characters, themes and plot

Character	Character description	Themes
<b>Romeo Montague</b>	Intense, intelligent, quick witted, and loved by his friends.	<b>Love</b> - The love Romeo and Juliet share is beautiful and passionate. It is pure, exhilarating, and transformative, and they are willing to give everything to it. But it is also chaotic and destructive, bringing death to friends, family, and to themselves.
<b>Juliet Capulet</b>	Naïve and sheltered at the beginning, develops into a woman with strength.	<b>Fate</b> - No matter what the lovers do, what plans they make, or how much they love each other, their struggles against fate only help fulfil it. But defeating or escaping fate is not the point. No one escapes fate. It is Romeo and Juliet's determination to struggle against fate in order to be together, whether in life or death, that shows the fiery passion of their love, and which makes that love eternal.
<b>Mercutio</b>	Romeo's close friend. Wild, playful and sarcastic	<b>Individuals v society</b> - Because of their forbidden love, Romeo and Juliet are forced into conflict with the social world around them: family, friends, political authority, and even religion.
<b>Tybalt Capulet</b>	Juliet's cousin. A hothead consumed by issues of family honour. He hates the Montagues.	<b>Violence and conflict</b> – Conflict is one of the key driving forces in the play and it occurs between a range of characters – within families; within friendship groups; between warring households and between members of the communities. This conflict results in a huge amount of violence – violence opens the play in scene one and it also concludes the play with the deaths of the two lovers.
<b>Benvolio Montague</b>	Romeo's cousin, less quick witted than Romeo and Mercutio, tries to keep the peace.	<b>PLOT</b> <b>Act one:</b> In Italy two noble families, the Montagues and Capulets, have much bad blood between them. Romeo, son of old Montague, is in love with Rosaline, who disdains his love. As a result, Romeo is depressed. To cure him of his love, his friend Benvolio induces him to attend a masked ball at the Capulets, where he could encounter other beauties and forget Rosaline. At the ball, Romeo is attracted by a girl who he learns is Juliet, daughter of the Capulets. They seal their love with a kiss.
<b>Friar Lawrence</b>	A Franciscan monk and a friend to both Romeo and Juliet.	<b>Act two:</b> Romeo lingers in Capulet's garden, standing in the orchard beneath Juliet's balcony. He sees Juliet leaning over the railing, hears her calling out his name, and wishes that he were not a Montague. He reveals his presence, and they resolve, after an ardent love scene, to be married secretly.
<b>The Nurse</b>	Juliet's best friend and confidante, and in many ways is more her mother than Lady Capulet is.	<b>Act three:</b> Tybalt encounters Romeo returning from Friar Lawrence's cell. Romeo, softened by his newfound love and his marriage to Juliet, refuses to be drawn into a quarrel with Tybalt, now his kinsman by marriage. Mercutio grapples with Tybalt and is killed. Aroused to fury by the death of his friend, Romeo fights with Tybalt and kills him and takes shelter in the Friar's cell.
<b>Prince Escalus</b>	Leader of Verona, concerned with keeping order between the warring families.	<b>Act four:</b> In despair, Juliet seeks Friar Lawrence's advice. He gives her a sleeping potion, which for a time will cause her to appear dead. Thus, on the day of her supposed marriage to Paris, she will be carried to the family vault. By the time she awakens, Romeo will be summoned to the vault and take her away to Mantua.
<b>Lord Capulet</b>	A typical Elizabethan father to Juliet. Proud and controlling.	<b>Act five:</b> The Friar's letter fails to reach Romeo. When he hears of Juliet's death Romeo procures a deadly poison from an apothecary and secretly returns to Verona to say his last farewell to his deceased wife and die by her side. At Juliet's side, Romeo drinks the poison and dies. When Juliet awakens from her deep sleep, she realises Romeo's error and kills herself with his dagger. The Capulets and Montagues decide to reconcile as a result of the deaths of their children.
<b>Lady Capulet</b>	A typically distant Elizabethan mother who wants her daughter to marry the rich and noble Paris.	

