

## CHARACTERS

### CHORUS

ESCALUS, Prince of Verona

PARIS, a young count, kinsman to the Prince

### MONTAGUE

### CAPULET

AN OLD MAN, of the Capulet family

ROMEO, son to Montague

MERCUTIO, kinsman to the Prince and friend to Romeo

BENVOLIO, nephew to Montague and friend to Romeo

TYBALT, nephew to Lady Capulet

FRIAR LAWRENCE, Franciscan

FRIAR JOHN, Franciscan

BALTHASAR, servant to Romeo

SAMPSON, servant to Capulet

GREGORY, servant to Capulet

PETER, servant to Juliet's nurse

ABRAM, servant to Montague

AN APOTHECARY

THREE MUSICIANS

AN OFFICER

LADY MONTAGUE, wife to Montague

LADY CAPULET, wife to Capulet

JULIET, daughter to Capulet

NURSE TO JULIET

CITIZENS OF VERONA, Gentlemen and Gentlewomen of both houses, Maskers, Torchbearers, Pages, Guards, Watchmen, Servants, and Attendants

## Prologue

*Scene: Verona; Mantua*

[Enter CHORUS.]

CHORUS. Two households, both alike in dignity.<sup>1</sup>

In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,

From ancient grudge break to new mutiny.<sup>2</sup>

Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.<sup>3</sup>

5 From forth the fatal loins of these two foes

A pair of star-crossed<sup>4</sup> lovers take their life;

Whose misadventured piteous overthrows<sup>5</sup>

Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.

The fearful passage of their death-marked love,

10 And the continuance of their parents' rage,

Which, but<sup>6</sup> their children's end, naught could remove,

Is now the two hours' traffic<sup>7</sup> of our stage;

The which if you with patient ears attend,

What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.<sup>8</sup>

1. **dignity** high social rank.

2. **mutiny** violence.

3. **Where . . . unclean** in which the blood of citizens stains citizens' hands.

4. **star-crossed** ill-fated by the unfavorable positions of the stars.

5. **Whose . . . overthrows** whose unfortunate, sorrowful destruction.

6. **but** except.

7. **two hours' traffic** two hours' business.

8. **What . . . mend** What is not clear in this prologue we actors shall try to clarify in the course of the play.

[Exit.]

## Act I

1. **bucklers** small shields.

2. **carry coals** endure insults.

3. **colliers** sellers of coal.

4. **an . . . draw** If we are angered, we'll draw our swords.

5. **collar** the hangman's noose.

*Scene i. Verona. A public place.*

[Enter SAMPSON and GREGORY, with swords and bucklers,<sup>1</sup> of the house of Capulet.]

SAMPSON. Gregory, on my word, we'll not carry coals.<sup>2</sup>

GREGORY. No, for then we should be colliers.<sup>3</sup>

SAMPSON. I mean, an we be in choler, we'll draw.<sup>4</sup>

GREGORY. Ay, while you live, draw your neck out of collar.<sup>5</sup>

5 SAMPSON. I strike quickly, being moved.

**GREGORY.** But thou art not quickly moved to strike.

**SAMPSON.** A dog of the house of Montague moves me.

**GREGORY.** To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand.  
Therefore, if thou art moved, thou run'st away.

10 **SAMPSON.** A dog of that house shall move me to stand. I  
will take the wall<sup>6</sup> of any man or maid of Montague's.

**GREGORY.** That shows thee a weak slave; for the weakest  
goes to the wall.

15 **SAMPSON.** 'Tis true; and therefore women, being the weaker  
vessels, are ever thrust to the wall. Therefore I will push  
Montague's men from the wall and thrust his maids to the wall.

**GREGORY.** The quarrel is between our masters and us their men.

**SAMPSON.** 'Tis all one. I will show myself a tyrant. When I have  
fought with the men, I will be civil with the maids—I will cut  
20 off their heads.

**GREGORY.** The heads of the maids?

**SAMPSON.** Ay, the heads of the maids or their maidenheads.  
Take it in what sense thou wilt.

**GREGORY.** They must take it in sense that feel it.

25 **SAMPSON.** Me they shall feel while I am able to stand;  
and 'tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh.

**GREGORY.** 'Tis well thou art not fish; if thou hadst, thou hadst  
been Poor John. Draw thy tool!<sup>7</sup> Here comes two of the house  
of Montagues.

[Enter two other Servingmen, ABRAM and BALTHASAR.]

30 **SAMPSON.** My naked weapon is out. Quarrel! I will back thee.

**GREGORY.** How? Turn thy back and run?

**SAMPSON.** Fear me not.

**GREGORY.** No, marry. I fear thee!

**SAMPSON.** Let us take the law of our sides;<sup>8</sup> let them begin.

35 **GREGORY.** I will frown as I pass by, and let them take it as they list.<sup>9</sup>

**SAMPSON.** Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb<sup>10</sup> at them,  
which is disgrace to them if they bear it.

**ABRAM.** Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

**SAMPSON.** I do bite my thumb, sir.

40 **ABRAM.** Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?

**SAMPSON.** [Aside to GREGORY] Is the law of our side if I say ay?

6. take the wall assert superiority by walking nearer the houses and therefore farther from the gutter

**Literary Analysis**  
**Character** What does this conversation reveal about the Capulets and the Montagues?

7. tool weapon.

8. take . . . sides make sure the law is on our side.

9. list please.

10. bite . . . thumb make an insulting gesture.

**Reading Strategy**  
**Using Text Aids** How does footnote 8 help you understand Sampson's logic in line 34?

GREGORY. [Aside to SAMPSON] No.

SAMPSON. No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir; but I bite my thumb, sir.

45 GREGORY. Do you quarrel, sir?

ABRAM. Quarrel, sir? No, sir.

SAMPSON. But if you do, sir, I am for you. I serve as good a man as you.

ABRAM. No better.

SAMPSON. Well, sir.

[Enter BENVOLIO.]

50 GREGORY. Say "better." Here comes one of my master's kinsmen.

SAMPSON. Yes, better, sir.

ABRAM. You lie.

SAMPSON. Draw, if you be men. Gregory, remember thy swashing<sup>11</sup> blow.

[They fight.]

55 BENVOLIO. Part, fools!

Put up your swords. You know not what you do.

[Enter TYBALT.]

TYBALT. What art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?<sup>12</sup>  
Turn thee, Benvolio; look upon thy death.

BENVOLIO. I do but keep the peace. Put up thy sword,  
60 Or manage it to part these men with me.

TYBALT. What, drawn, and talk of peace? I hate the word  
As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.  
Have at thee, coward!

[They fight.]

[Enter an OFFICER, and three or four CITIZENS with clubs or partisans.<sup>13</sup>]

OFFICER. Clubs, bills,<sup>14</sup> and partisans! Strike! Beat them down!  
65 Down with the Capulets! Down with the Montagues!

[Enter old CAPULET in his gown, and his WIFE.]

CAPULET. What noise is this? Give me my long sword, ho!

LADY CAPULET. A crutch, a crutch! Why call you for a sword?

CAPULET. My sword, I say! Old Montague is come  
And flourishes his blade in spite<sup>15</sup> of me.

[Enter old MONTAGUE and his WIFE.]

70 MONTAGUE. Thou villain Capulet!—Hold me not; let me go.

LADY MONTAGUE. Thou shalt not stir one foot to seek a foe.

## Literary Analysis

**Character** How would you describe Gregory and Sampson in this scene?

**11. swashing** hard downward swordstroke.

**12. heartless hinds** cowardly servants. *Hind* also meant "a female deer."

## Literary Analysis

**Character and Dramatic Foil** Which contrasting personality traits do Benvolio and Tybalt reveal in their brief conversation?

**13. partisans** spearlike weapons with broad blades.

**14. bills** weapons consisting of hook-shaped blades with long handles.

**15. spite** defiance.

## ☒ Reading Check

Whom does Tybalt fight?



[Enter PRINCE ESCALUS, with his Train.<sup>16</sup>]

**PRINCE.** Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,  
Profaners<sup>17</sup> of this neighbor-stained steel—  
Will they not hear? What, ho! You men, you beasts,  
75 That quench the fire of your pernicious rage  
With purple fountains issuing from your veins!  
On pain of torture, from those bloody hands  
Throw your mistempered<sup>18</sup> weapons to the ground  
And hear the sentence of your moved prince.  
80 Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word  
By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,  
Have thrice disturbed the quiet of our streets  
And made Verona's ancient citizens  
Cast by their grave beseeching ornaments<sup>19</sup>  
85 To wield old partisans, in hands as old,  
Cank' red with peace, to part your cank' red hate.<sup>20</sup>  
If ever you disturb our streets again,  
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.  
For this time all the rest depart away.  
90 You, Capulet, shall go along with me;  
And, Montague, come you this afternoon,  
To know our farther pleasure in this case,  
To old Freetown, our common judgment place.  
Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.

[Exit all but MONTAGUE, his WIFE, and BENVOLIO.]

95 **MONTAGUE.** Who set this ancient quarrel new abroad?<sup>21</sup>  
Speak, nephew, were you by when it began?

**BENVOLIO.** Here were the servants of your adversary  
And yours, close fighting ere I did approach.  
I drew to part them. In the instant came  
100 The fiery Tybalt, with his sword prepared;  
Which, as he breathed defiance to my ears,  
He swung about his head and cut the winds,  
Who, nothing hurt withal, hissed him in scorn.  
While we were interchanging thrusts and blows,  
105 Came more and more, and fought on part and part,<sup>22</sup>  
Till the Prince came, who parted either part.

**LADY MONTAGUE.** O, where is Romeo? Saw you him today?  
Right glad I am he was not at this fray.

110 **BENVOLIO.** Madam, an hour before the worshiped sun  
Peered forth the golden window of the East,  
A troubled mind drove me to walk abroad:  
Where, underneath the grove of sycamore  
That westward rooteth from this city side,  
So early walking did I see your son.

16. Train attendants.

17. Profaners those who show disrespect or contempt.

pernicious (pəˈnɪʃəs)  
adj. causing great injury or ruin

18. mistempered hardened for a wrong purpose; badly tempered.

19. Cast . . . ornaments put aside their dignified and appropriate clothing.

20. Cank' red . . . hate rusted from lack of use, to put an end to your malignant feuding.

21. Who . . . abroad? Who reopened this old fight?

22. on . . . part on one side and the other.

**Literary Analysis**  
**Character** What can you infer about Benvolio based on his interaction with Romeo's parents?