**Romeo and Juliet/Characters**

**Romeo**
The son and heir of Montague and Lady Montague. A young man of about sixteen, Romeo is handsome, intelligent, and sensitive. Though impulsive and immature, his idealism and passion make him an extremely likable character. He lives in the middle of a violent feud between his family and the Capulets, but he is not at all interested in violence. His only interest is love and he goes to extremes to prove the seriousness of his feelings. He secretly marries Juliet, the daughter of his father’s worst enemy; he happily takes abuse from Tybalt; and he would rather die than live without his beloved. Romeo is also an affectionate and devoted friend to his relative Benvolio, Mercutio, and Friar Lawrence.

**Juliet**
The daughter of Capulet and Lady Capulet. A beautiful thirteen-year-old girl, Juliet begins the play as a naïve child who has thought little about love and marriage, but she grows up quickly upon falling in love with Romeo, the son of her family’s great enemy. Because she is a girl in an aristocratic family, she has none of the freedom Romeo has to roam around the city, climb over walls in the middle of the night, or get into swordfights. Nevertheless, she shows amazing courage in trusting her entire life and future to Romeo, even refusing to believe the worst reports about him after he gets involved in a fight with her cousin. Juliet’s closest friend and confidant is her Nurse, though she’s willing to shut the Nurse out of her life the moment the Nurse turns against Romeo.

**Friar Lawrence**
A Franciscan friar, friend to both Romeo and Juliet. Kind, civic-minded, a proponent of moderation, and always ready with a plan, Friar Lawrence secretly marries the impassioned lovers in hopes that the union might eventually bring peace to Verona. As well as being a Catholic holy man, Friar Lawrence is also an expert in the use of seemingly mystical potions and herbs.

**Mercutio**
A kinsman to the Prince, and Romeo’s close friend. One of the most extraordinary characters in all of Shakespeare’s plays, Mercutio overflows with imagination, wit, and, at times, a strange, biting satire and brooding fervor. Mercutio loves wordplay, especially sexual double entendres. He can be quite hotheaded, and hates people who are affected, pretentious, or obsessed with the latest fashions. He finds Romeo’s romanticized ideas about love tiresome, and tries to convince Romeo to view love as a simple matter of sexual appetite.

**The Nurse**
Juliet’s nurse, the woman who breast-fed Juliet when she was a baby and has cared for Juliet her entire life. A vulgar, long-winded, and sentimental character, the Nurse provides comic relief with her frequently inappropriate remarks and speeches. But, until a disagreement near the play’s end, the Nurse is Juliet’s faithful confidante and loyal intermediary in Juliet’s affair with Romeo. She provides a contrast with Juliet, given that her view of love is earthy and sexual, whereas Juliet is idealistic and intense. The Nurse believes in love and wants Juliet to have a nice-looking husband, but the idea that Juliet would want to sacrifice herself for love is incomprehensible to her.

**Tybalt**
A Capulet, Juliet’s cousin on her mother’s side. Vain, fashionable, supremely aware of courtesy and the lack of it, he becomes aggressive, violent, and quick to draw his sword when he feels his pride has been injured. Once drawn, his sword is something to be feared. He loathes Montagues.

**Capulet**
The patriarch of the Capulet family, father of Juliet, husband of Lady Capulet, and enemy, for unexplained reasons, of Montague. He truly loves his daughter, though he is not well acquainted with Juliet’s thoughts or feelings, and seems to think that what is best for her is a “good” match with Paris. Often prudent, he commands respect and propriety, but he is liable to fly into a rage when either is lacking.

**Lady Capulet**
Juliet’s mother, Capulet’s wife. A woman who herself married young (by her own estimation she gave birth to Juliet at close to the age of fourteen), she is eager to see her daughter marry Paris. She is an ineffectual mother, relying on the Nurse for moral and pragmatic support.

**Montague**
Romeo’s father, the patriarch of the Montague clan and bitter enemy of Capulet. At the beginning of the play, he is chiefly concerned about Romeo’s melancholy.

**Lady Montague**
Romeo’s mother, Montague’s wife. She dies of grief after Romeo is exiled from Verona.

**Paris**
A kinsman of the Prince, and the suitor of Juliet most preferred by Capulet. Once Capulet has promised him he can marry Juliet, he behaves very presumptuous toward, acting as if they are already married.

**Benvolio**
Montague’s nephew, Romeo’s cousin and thoughtful friend, he makes a genuine effort to defuse violent scenes in public places, though Mercutio accuses him of having a nasty temper in private. He spends most of the play trying to help Romeo get his mind off Rosaline, even after Romeo has fallen in love with Juliet.

**Prince Escalus**
The Prince of Verona. A kinsman of Mercutio and Paris. As the seat of political power in Verona, he is concerned about maintaining the public peace at all costs.

**Friar John**
A Franciscan friar charged by Friar Lawrence with taking the news of Juliet’s false death to Romeo in Mantua. Friar John is held up in a quarantined house, and the message never reaches Romeo.

**Balthasar**
Romeo’s dedicated servant, who brings Romeo the news of Juliet’s death, unaware that her death is a ruse.

**Sampson and Gregory**
Two servants of the house of Capulet, who, like their master, hate the Montagues. At the outset of the play, they successfully provoke some Montague men into a fight.

**Abraham**
Montague’s servant, who fights with Sampson and Gregory in the first scene of the play.

**The Apothecary**
An apothecary in Mantua. Had he been wealthier, he might have been able to afford to value his morals more than money, and refused to sell poison to Romeo.

**Peter**
A Capulet servant who invites guests to Capulet’s feast and escorts the Nurse to meet with Romeo. He is illiterate, and a bad singer.

**Rosaline**
The woman with whom Romeo is infatuated at the beginning of the play. Rosaline never appears onstage, but it is said by other characters that she is very beautiful and has sworn to live a life of chastity.

**The Chorus**
The Chorus is a single character who functions as a narrator offering commentary on the play’s plot and themes.