

WHO'S WHO

When directors cast actors for a Shakespeare play, the only information they have is the text that Shakespeare wrote. Unlike in many modern shows, the *dramatis personae* of a Shakespearean play does not include the ages of characters, their relationships to each other, or descriptions of what they look like. All of that information must come from within the play itself. What the characters say about themselves and what other characters say about them define what they look like, where they come from, where their allegiances lie, and how they behave. What information can you get from the character quotations below?

*Keep in mind that the character commenting may have ulterior motives which influence their word choice.

Romeo – “To say truth, Verona brags of him / To be a virtuous and well-governed youth.” – Capulet, 1.5

Juliet – “O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright. / It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night / As a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear, / Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear. / So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows / As yonder lady over her fellows shows.” – Romeo, 1.5

Benvolio – “He is a kinsman to the Montague. / Affection makes him false; he speaks not true.” – Lady Capulet, 3.1

Mercutio – “A gentleman, Nurse, that loves to hear himself talk, and will speak more in a minute than he will stand to in a month.” – Romeo, 2.4

Capulet – “Day, night; work, play; / Alone, in company, still my care hath been / To have her matched.” – Capulet, 3.5

Lady Capulet – “By my count, / I was your mother much upon these years / That you are now a maid.” – Lady Capulet, 1.3

Nurse – “But old folks, many feign as they were dead: / Unwieldy, slow, heavy, and pale as lead.” – Juliet, 2.4

Tybalt – “O, he’s the courageous captain of compliments. He fights as you sing pricksong, keeps time, distance, and proportion. ... A duelist, a duelist, a gentleman of the very first house, of the first and second cause.” – Mercutio, 2.4

Friar Laurence – “We still have known thee for a holy man.” – Prince, 5.3

Paris – “A man; young lady, lady, such a man / As all the world, why, he’s a man of wax.” – Nurse, 1.3

Montague – “But Montague is bound as well as I, / In penalty alike; and ‘tis not hard, I think, / For men so old as we to keep the peace.” – Capulet, 1.2

Lady Montague – “Grief of my son’s exile hath stopped her breath.” – Montague, 5.3

Prince Escalus – “I’ll amerce you with so strong a fine / That you shall all repent the loss of mine. / I will be deaf to pleading and excuses; / Nor tears nor prayers shall purchase out abuses, / Therefore use none.” – Prince, 3.1

Apothecary – “I do remember an apothecary, / And hereabouts a dwells, which late I noted, / In tattered weeds, with overwhelming brows ... Meagre were his looks. / Sharp misery had worn him to the bones.” – Romeo, 5.1

Balthasar – “My master knows not but I am gone hence.” – Balthasar, 5.3

Sampson – “’Tis known I am a pretty piece of flesh.” – Sampson, 1.1

Gregory – “Gregory, remember thy swashing blow.” – Sampson, 1.1

Abraham – “Here come two of the house of Montague.” – Gregory, 1.1

Friar John – “But he which bore my letter, Friar John, / Was stayed by accident” – Friar Laurence, 5.3