

AQA English Literature GCSE

Romeo and Juliet: Character Profile Lord Capulet

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Lord Capulet

INTRODUCTION

Lord Capulet is arguably a **product of his time** because he displays the characteristics of a typical **patriarch**. In this way, an Elizabethan audience may view Lord Capulet as a **good father** as he only tries to protect Juliet by arranging a marriage for her.



It's important you consider Lord Capulet from the views of a **contemporary** vs a **modern day** audience.

- This sort of possessive behaviour would not have been shocking to Shakespeare's Elizabethan audience as women were merely seen as property to their fathers.
- Yet, to Shakespeare's **modern** audience, Lord Capulet's possessive and abusive behaviour would perhaps stir up a sense of **injustice**. His patriarchal attitudes and foul treatment towards Juliet would be viewed with outrage as **gender equality** has become increasingly important in most parts of the world.

Therefore, some individuals would view Capulet as a terrible father, but both sides could be argued. He could be seen as a good father as he attempts to protect her by arranging a marriage which he deems suitable and beneficial for Juliet. However, the way he treats Juliet in trying to get her to do what he wants would be cringeworthy for a modern audience.

CHARACTER IN CONTEXT

- **Family honour** - During the Elizabethan era **family honour** was extremely important to many individuals which Shakespeare portrays through the Montague versus Capulet feud. Each family member stays loyal to each other by fighting against members of the other family and protecting their own. It is possible that Shakespeare employs Romeo and Juliet's suicide to reveal to the audience the possible dangers of allowing family honour to consume an individual. Yet it is only through Romeo and Juliet's death that Lord Capulet decides to settle the feud between both families, thus their death was essential to the change of Lord Capulet's views.
- **The treatment of women** – As aforementioned, Capulet is extremely abusive and oppresses Juliet throughout the whole play. Yet this wouldn't have been surprising to an Elizabethan audience as men were expected to follow the rules of patriarchy to prevent women from threatening the rigid social order in society.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS & CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- **PATRIARCHAL** – From the very outset of the play, it becomes clear that Lord Capulet is a **product of his time**. It isn't surprising that he oppresses Juliet and disregards her views as women were meant to be ruled by men. An Elizabethan daughter was nothing other than the **property of her father**, until she got married and became the property of her husband, and thus she was expected to abide by his every command.
- **CONFLICTED** – Throughout the play, the audience may be conflicted as to whether or not they view Lord Capulet as a **good or a bad father**. As the play progresses he becomes increasingly controlling and abusive. This is because, at the beginning of the play, although Lord Capulet may come across as overly possessive of Juliet, yet, as the play progresses and Juliet continues to disobey her father, he becomes **increasingly abusive** and cruel towards her, even wishing **death** upon her, which enforces the impression that he is a bad father. Yet, at the ending of the play, Capulet is distraught at his daughter's death and even reconciles with the Montague family, ending the family feud despite cursing them throughout the whole play. Therefore, Lord Capulet is portrayed by Shakespeare as a character that is **complex** as his actions, especially toward Juliet, **fluctuate** as the play continues.
- **ABUSIVE** – At the start of the play, the audience are able to witness Lord Capulet's possessiveness over Juliet, yet it does not come across as abusive until the play progresses. Lord Capulet becomes **increasingly abusive** towards Juliet as she continuously disobeys his orders and pursues a passionate romance with Romeo, refusing to marry Paris. Arguably, Lord Capulet is most abusive in **Act 3 Scene 5** where he wishes death upon his own daughter, and states that he will never again acknowledge her, poor Juliet!



RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OTHER CHARACTERS

Juliet | Lord Capulet and Juliet share a **volatile** bond. There is certainly a correlation between Juliet's continuous disobedience and Lord Capulet's rising manipulation. At the beginning of the play, Lord Capulet can be seen as a **protective father** who wishes to shield his child from the dangers of the world. Yet, as the play progresses, Lord Capulet becomes increasingly controlling and abusive towards Juliet as she continues to disobey him, and thus, their relationship disintegrates. Lord Capulet only conveys his love for Juliet when he realises that she has committed suicide.

Lord Montague | Lord Capulet and Lord Montague share a chaotic bond, which is due to the feud between both families. At the beginning of the play, both Capulet and Montague **despise** each other, whereby their shared hatred becomes **increasingly potent** as the play progresses. Yet, at the **dramatic climax of the play** when Romeo and Juliet commit suicide, both fathers realise the damage that the family feud had really caused. Thus, at the end of the play, both Capulet and Montague share their grief and sympathise with each other, agreeing to put a halt to their disagreements and therefore their relationship becomes one that is surprisingly **understanding** and **peaceful**.

STUDENT TIP

For the top grades, examiners are looking for students to **AVOID** making **sweeping generalisations** such as "*All Elizabethan men were violent*". Instead, examiners are seeking for students to make **sophisticated links between relevant contextual factors and the question**. For example, if you were speaking about Act 3 Scene 1 you could say instead that "*It perhaps wouldn't be surprising for Shakespeare's audience to see that Mercutio and Tybalt engaged in a violent physical fight because most men were influenced by pride, honour and status during the Elizabethan era as they were expected to be the dominating gender within society. Therefore, it is likely that such an influence would lead to the eruption of male aggressive behaviour and violence that the audience are able to witness in this scene.*"



LORD CAPULET QUOTE BANK

| QUOTE | EXTENDED ANALYSIS |
|---|--|
| <p><i>“O brother Montague, give me thy hand.”</i> Act 5 Scene 3</p> | <p>At the dramatic climax of the play where both the Montagues and Capulets become to know of Romeo and Juliet’s death, the feud between both families seems to be settled which was first foreshadowed in the prologue.</p> |
| <p><i>“My child is yet a stranger in the world.”</i> Act 2 Scene 1</p> | <p>The personal pronoun “my” emphasises Lord Capulet’s possessiveness over Juliet. Furthermore, the fact that he doesn’t mention Juliet’s name but rather calls him his “child” further reinforces the impression of possessiveness; one could argue that Lord Capulet merely views his daughter as his own property and possession as this is what was expected of him living in a patriarchal society.</p> <p>On the other hand, his possessive language could be employed by Shakespeare as an expression of Capulet’s love and concern for his child. Thus, this quote may not be just an expression of his possessiveness and authority, but rather it could alternatively show the audience how Capulet actually cares for his child and is willing to protect him from the dangers of the “world”.</p> |
| <p><i>“Disobedient wretch!”</i> Act 3 Scene 1</p> | <p>This epithet created through the adjective “Disobedient” used to describe Juliet illuminates how cruelly Juliet is treated by her father and further reinforces the impression that he views Juliet as mere property.</p> |
| <p><i>“Hang, beg, starve, die in the streets, for by my soul I’ll ne’er acknowledge thee”</i> Act 3 Scene 5</p> | <p>The asyndetic listing here emphasises the idea that Capulet is becoming increasingly erratic and distraught as Juliet continues to disobey him.</p> <p>The harsh terms “hang” “beg”, “starve”, and “die” agglomerate to create a semantic field of death which further reinforces the impression that Capulet is a bad father and is concerned more by reputation and honour than he is concerned for his own daughter’s life. Particularly, the term “hang” would have perhaps shocked the Elizabethan audience because a hanging only usually occurred in the case where a crime had been committed. In this way, it is as if Lord Capulet views Juliet as a criminal for going against his orders, which again reinforces the impression that Juliet is trapped by the patriarchal, abusive views of her father.</p> |



“Flower as she was, deflowered by him.”

Act 5 Scene 3

The **symbol** of the flower could connote ideas of purity, fragility and gentleness. In this way, by viewing Juliet as a flower that had then been “**deflowered**” Shakespeare implicitly employs **sexual imagery** as when Capulet says that Juliet had been “**deflowered**” by Romeo he could be referring to the act of him taking her virginity. Therefore, Lord Capulet can no longer view his daughter as pure and fragile as she once was.

STUDENT TIP

For the top grades, examiners are looking for students to **AVOID** simply identifying Shakespeare’s nouns or verbs as this may limit the effectiveness of your analysis. For example, the 2017 examiner’s report urges students to compare “Shakespeare **uses the verb** “bite” in “bite my thumb” to...” with “Shakespeare creates an **aggressive tone** through the insult “bite my thumb” to...” The report states that it is the quality of your explanation which determines your level rather than the inclusion of a ‘term’.

STUDENT TIP

If you are looking to get a grade 7 or above examiners are looking for you to show a **development in your ideas** as you write each paragraph. You can **show this development through your argument**. *For example*, if the question you are given is about a Lord Capulet, you could state at the beginning of your second paragraph that Lord Capulet’s character becomes **increasingly cruel** at a later stage in the text, and then in your final paragraph you could state that this particular section of the text is where Lord Capulet’s character is the most cruel, or in his case the ending is where we can witness a positive change in his attitude towards his daughter and the family feud. This clearly shows that you are writing about how the particular character develops within the play by simply changing a few words at the beginning of each of your paragraphs!

