

# 2 – THE OPENING FIGHT

Why does the opening fight matter so much?

## WHAT YOU NEED

- Some pieces of note paper, or a notebook and something to write with.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to play [this clip](#).
- A copy of Act 1 Scene 1 of Romeo and Juliet available on the page or on your screen.

## ACTIVITY

- Look at the stage directions in Act 1 Scene 1 and find where it says '*Sampson bites his thumb*'. Read the lines that follow this stage direction out loud, stopping where the Officer starts speaking. Write down any words that interest you or stand out, even if you don't know what they mean.
- Take a piece of paper and draw a big line down the centre. On one side of the line, write the word 'Capulet', on the other write 'Montague'.
- Read the scene again but this time, from the very beginning until the end of the Prince's speech. You can read it out loud or in your head. Every time you think one of the characters might be a Capulet or a Montague, write their name on the relevant side of the page. Look up anything you don't understand in case it helps you make these decisions.
- Tear up some smaller pieces of paper and write each character's name on it. Don't forget the citizens and servants. Using a fresh piece of paper, draw another line down the centre and try reading the scene again. This time, you can place your characters physically on the correct side of the line.
- Watch RSC actors discuss the feud in rehearsal in [this clip](#). Ask yourself: What does the opening fight tell us about the people in this play so far? What kind of world is Shakespeare setting up for us?

## EXTENSION

- Bring the opening fight to life by creating a 3D map. Using a large piece of paper or card, draw a floor map of where this scene could take place – a town square, a bowling alley, or a beach.
- Use counters, plastic figures or create your own models to represent all the people who might be in this scene. As you read each line, experiment with where everyone might move and interact with each other. How might you place them to create the most dramatic opening scene? What is Shakespeare trying to show us by opening with an argument between servants and households, and how can you emphasise this in your staging choices?