The Unforgiving Force of Animosity

Animosity is a key theme which both directly and indirectly alters the paths of many of William Shakespeare’s works. Romeo and Juliet was written in 1595, and is set in Verona, Italy. It is about two star-crossed, young lovers who fall victim to a tragic end. They come from two long-feuding families: Romeo of the Montagues, and Juliet of the Capulets. The hatred between these families causes many acts of violence throughout the story, with dire results. In [Romeo and Juliet](https://www.cram.com/subjects/romeo-and-juliet), animosity is an unforgiving force which alters people’s judgment, lives on through generations, and negatively affects even those not directly involved, resulting in discord, injury and death.

Animosity can accentuate feelings of pride, [*…show more content…*](https://www.cram.com/document/FKLB45FNBXYW)
When the Montague and Capulet servants start fighting in public, Benvolio draws his weapon to stop the fight. Tybalt sees Benvolio with his sword and though Benvolio explains he was trying to keep peace, the family animosity between the Capulets and Montagues cause Tybalt to further challenge the young Montague. When Benvolio asks Tybalt to help him stop the fight, he responds “I hate the word, / as I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee” (1.1.64-65). Benvolio and Tybalt have no reason to hate each other, notwithstanding their family grudges. The Montagues and Capulets were longstanding enemies, and passed this grudge on to later generations. As a result, Tybalt compares his hatred of Benvolio and the Montagues to that of hell, though it is not apparent that he has been personally wronged by any of them. Additionally, even Romeo and Juliet’s actions are impacted by this familial hatred. When pining over the young man she has met at the ball, Juliet believes her wishes will never be upheld when she learns Romeo is a Montague. Once learning of his identity, she cries, “My only love sprung from my only hate! /… That I must love a loathed enemy” (1.5.137-140). Though she is only thirteen years old, and has no direct experience of the Montague family, she has already been raised to view them as the enemy. She refers [*…show more content…*](https://www.cram.com/document/FKLB45FNBXYW)
At the start of the play, servants of the Montague and Capulet households throw insults in a public courtyard, leading to a public brawl. Though the townspeople of Verona as a whole do not side with or against either family, they are still endangered since the animosity between these two families has led to violence in a public area. After this occurrence, Prince Escales announces, “Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word, / By thee, old Capulet, and Montague, / Have thrice disturb’d the quiet of our streets” (1.1.83-85). In the scene, we see the last of three violent fights between the two rival families, each fought in the public streets of Verona, around others. The animosity between the families has caused danger for uninvolved persons, to the point of the Prince banning fighting under the threat of death. In addition, the familial animosity results in loss of life of others. [Mercutio](https://www.cram.com/subjects/mercutio) and Paris did not belong to either family, and yet the Montague and Capulet feud caused their deaths.