**CHARACTER BACK STORY:**

**WHAT MAKES A PERSONALITY?**

A “backstory” is the personal history of a character that is not described in the actual play or story. In other words, it is what happens to the character before the play starts.

**IN CLASS**

**1. Create Word Bank:** Create a word bank about one of the minor characters in Romeo and Juliet: *Mercutio, Tybalt, the Nurse, Friar Lawrence, Benvolio or Prince Escalus*.

Use descriptive concrete sensory details (sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing). Guide students through describing how the character looks, how s/he acts (personality), and what we already know about him/her from the book.

**HOMEWORK**

**2. Prep for writing Back-story:** Using descriptive words from your own vocabulary, as well as words from the word bank, to write a one-page description for one of the minor characters in *Romeo and Juliet*: Mercutio, Tybalt, the Nurse, Friar Lawrence, Benvolio or Prince Escalus, and when possible, include:

* Timeline of significant events in the character’s life
* Physical description
* Personality traits

Also answer the following questions about the character:

* Where and when does s/he live?
* What does s/he want more than anything?
* Who or what is standing in the way of what s/he wants? What is in his/her pockets?
* What is your character afraid of?
* Who are his/her friends?
* What makes him/her happy?
* What does s/he think about when s/he is alone?
* How does s/he react to stressful situations?
* What is s/he most proud of in his/her life?
* What does s/he do for fun? Who has helped him/her?

**Rubric for the back-story:**

* Be creative.
* Describe the setting (when and where the back-story takes place).
* Describe the character in vivid detail as s/he was early in life—personality, looks, situation, who s/he is friends with, what his or her interests are, how s/he looks or talks, etc.
* Use action words, descriptive words, dialogue, and images.
* Be based on clues from the main story when possible.
* Describe a problem that the character faces and why it is a problem (“I’m tired and my back hurts, but I’ll help my darling Juliet, although I may get fired by Lady Capulet” or “I really hate it that these families keep fighting in the streets and I’m determined to stop it forever”, etc.).
* Describe specifically why s/he chooses to do those things (for example, personal satisfaction, revenge, habit, being forced to do them by someone else, etc.).
* Describe how the character feels about doing what s/he does in the play.

**Reflection:**

* What did you learn about your character that you didn’t know before?
* What did you especially like about one of the descriptions you heard today?
* Did you see a picture of the character in your head?
* How did you describe it in your writing so that other people could imagine the same thing you did? • (To classmates):
* Did you see that character the same way the writer did? What was different if anything?
* Who imagined their character’s day while writing the description? What was it like?
* Why did you decide on the specifics that you did for your character? For example, why did you choose a particular setting for that character’s childhood?
* Does the play provide enough clues to spark your imagination? Why or why not?
* What did you find (in your back story or someone’s from your group) that was particularly interesting?
* How hard was it to imagine beyond the story?