Hang thee, young baggage, disobedient wretch!
I tell thee what: get thee to church a’ Thursday,
Or never after look me in the face.
Speak not, reply not, do not answer me!
My fingers itch. Wife, we scarce thought us blest
That God had lent us but this only child,
But now I see this one is one too much,
And that we have a curse in having her.
Out on her, hilding!
Romeo and Juliet Notes and Activities created by the RSC

Act: Three  Scene: Five  Character: Lord Capulet

About the speech
Romeo and Juliet is a play full of contrasts: love and hate, life and death, loyalty and rebellion. Within this world of contrasts lives Lord Capulet, Juliet's father and the head of the powerful Capulet family. Lord Capulet is a proud man who commands respect from those around him. Before this speech Capulet has met with his rich friend Paris and promised him Juliet's hand in marriage. After making this agreement, Lord Capulet asks his wife to inform Juliet of the decision. Because Juliet has secretly married Romeo, the son of Lord Capulet's enemy, Lady Capulet is unable to get her daughter to agree to the proposal. Lord Capulet is furious when he hears of her refusal. He expects his daughter to obey him.

In this speech he is extremely angry and threatening towards Juliet because she has disobeyed him. He calls her a "disobedient wretch" and complains that she is a "curse". He also threatens her with violence when he says "My fingers itch." (meaning his fingers itch to hit her).

How actors work
During rehearsals, directors and actors often investigate the background of the Shakespearean play and character they are bringing to life. Shakespeare often highlights events happening in Elizabethan England through the language, characters and plots of his plays. Understanding the context in which these plays were written will help you make interesting choices about how to perform a particular speech. Actors also connect the character they are playing with their own experiences and the world around them.

Father-and-daughter relationships in Elizabethan England were very different to how they are today. Lord Capulet's marriage was arranged when his wife was only twelve years old. In order to get inside this character, spend some time finding out how daughters were expected to behave towards their fathers and about the reality of arranged marriages.

Performance Suggestions
There are many ways that you can perform the speech. Lord Capulet's strong language in the monologue indicates that he is very angry. In productions, actors have played with this anger in a variety of different ways: throwing Juliet to the floor, physically beating her, shouting loudly, or speaking with a quiet sense of threat. Try to say the speech as if his anger is:

- quiet and still
- loud and aggressive
- pompous and cold

Take a look at the language of the speech and try mixing these different choices to see which ones work best for specific moments.