



## THE *R* & *J* DEBATES

Grade Level	Grades 7–12
Subject Areas	Language Arts, English, Drama
Ontario Curriculum Expectations & Learning Outcomes	By the end of the lesson students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify and explain the important information and ideas of the text.</li><li>• Use a variety of drama conventions to establish a distinctive context or role.</li><li>• Analyse drama works to determine how they communicate ideas about issues, culture and society.</li></ul>
Time Needed	Two class periods
Space	Open space in the classroom upon presentation
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pencil/pen and notebook</li><li>• <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> script</li></ul>

### Setting Up the Exercise:

- In this lesson, the students will have the opportunity to debate on a variety of controversial issues surrounding *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* after reading the play and/or seeing the Stratford Festival production.
- Some of the topics that the class may choose from are listed below – or students may choose to come up with their own. (Note: Some of these are specific in nature and others are general.)
  - A daughter must honour the wishes of her father at all times.
  - Juliet should marry Paris.
  - Banishment is preferable to death.
  - Mercutio is a superior swordsman to Tybalt.
  - Romeo and Juliet's love was merely an infatuation.
  - Mercutio and the Nurse were unnecessary characters in the play.
  - Both Romeo and Juliet were too immature to get married.
  - The deaths of Romeo and Juliet were necessary to bring about the reconciliation between the Capulets and the Montagues.
  - Friar Laurence's well-meaning interference caused more harm than good.

### The Exercise:

- For each topic, choose two teams: one team will be “for” the argument put forth, and the other team will be “against.”
- As a class, decide on the length of each debate and the number of rounds. Have the rest of the class not involved in that particular debate create a score card that rates each round for each team (e.g., from 1 to 5, with 1 being “weak argument” and 5 being “exceptionally clear argument,” followed by one sentence stating the reasons for that score).
- Each team will be responsible for creating an opening statement and supporting arguments, using evidence found in the text they've read or production they've seen.

- Present each debate, with the rest of the class listening and filling out their score cards. Make sure to give sufficient time for the teams to confer before presenting their rebuttals. NOTE: The students may wish to debate as a character from the play or as themselves addressing the particular issues.

**For Discussion:**

- After viewing/listening to the debates, have the class discuss questions listed below.
  - Were all of the arguments put forth supported by the evidence from the text?
  - Do we get a sense of what is relevant to the plot by debating some of these issues?
  - What insights have you gained through these debates?
  - By looking at the pros and cons of various issues, what does this reveal about the characters?
  - If you were to stage a production of *Romeo and Juliet*, what issues would you emphasize and highlight over others?