The Dangers of Revenge Socratic Seminar

1. What is the nature of revenge as depicted in the various texts? Is it an inevitable human reaction or is it controllable?

2. Are Romeo and Juliet making decisions or simply responding to their situation? Who or what is to blame for their current situation? What does their situation reveal about the human condition?

3. Romeo and Juliet was written 500 years ago in England, when society was a very different place from here and now. Are there any similarities between the problems Romeo and Juliet faced and problems that people in modern times face?

4. Do many parents try to arrange marriages for their children?

5. Do many people want to marry when they are thirteen?

6. Can people marry freely or do their parents have to agree?

7. When or why would parents not allow their children to marry someone they love?

8. What are the effects of the feuds?

9. How have attitudes toward suicide, teenage sexuality, and parent/child relationships changed since Shakespeare’s time?

10. Is the play about love? Is the play about revenge? Is the play about death?

11. “Art is a living, breathing form of expression. There is no right or wrong answer when it comes to interpreting art. One piece may be interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on the life experiences of both the artist and the audience.” What is meant by this statement?

12. Who should be punished for Romeo and Juliet’s deaths?

13. What is love?

14. Would you go against all your friends and family to follow your heart?

15. Are our actions determined by fate, chance, or free will?

17. At the end of Romeo and Juliet, six people have died, priests have lied, and a town awakes to complete shock. Someone has to take the blame for all of this craziness. Who is it going to be?

18. What is “Revenge”? Give an example of it.

19. How are the characters influenced indirectly by the feud? How are they directly influenced?

20. How many characters died because of the conflict? Who were the innocent victims and who were the instigators?

21. What other films/stories can you think of that center on avenging one’s father?

22. How does Shakespeare immediately introduce Tybalt as a menacing character?

23. How does Shakespeare create an immediate mood of sadness around Romeo?

24. How does Paris try to convince Capulet that Juliet isn’t too young to be married? Were you surprised by this?

25. Why does Juliet not want Romeo to swear by the moon?

26. Explain why Romeo thinks banishment is a punishment worse than death. Do you agree with him?

27. Do you have sympathy for Paris? Explain your answer.

28. Do you agree with Prince Escalus’ conclusion that “All are punish’d”? Explain your views.

29. Were Romeo and Juliet victims of fate, thereby always destined for a tragic ending? Or were they simply victims of bad luck, which could have been avoided?

30. Consider how the events of the play (and therefore the lives of Romeo and Juliet) would change if…
   a. Romeo had not killed Tybalt.
   b. Juliet had not been ordered to marry Paris.
   c. Balthasar had not seen Juliet “buried.”
   d. Friar Laurence’s letter had reached Romeo.
   e. Juliet had woken up five minutes earlier than she did.

31. Discuss the difference between trusting friends and relatives. Is there a difference? Why does Romeo tell his friend Benvolio about his problem and not his father? Is this usual with young people?
32. Is there such a thing as love at first sight?

33. Do Juliet’s first words to Romeo surprise you? Why or why not?

34. Juliet is afraid because their love has happened too suddenly? Do you agree with her? How long does it take lovers to get to know each other?

35. Romeo and Juliet’s story is very sad but it has scenes which are very funny. Why did Shakespeare put the Nurse in the play? Was it a good idea?

36. Discuss Romeo’s words to the doctor: ‘More people are murdered for gold than die by poison.’ Is this true?

37. How do we choose who we love? Do we choose who we love?

38. Romeo and Juliet are the most famous pair of lovers in Western literature, but is their love real, or is it just infatuation? Some people claim that Romeo and Juliet are just melodramatic teenagers. Others argue that the Romeo and Juliet’s love is the kind of love everyone should aspire to find. What proof (evidence) does the play provide that their love is “real love,” not just infatuation?

39. Through words and actions, Shakespeare’s characters show how adults respond to the needs and problems of teenagers. Analyze the ways in which any two adults in the play react to teenagers, and comment on their words and actions.

40. In your opinion, what is the job of a good parent? Explain.

41. How is loved portrayed in the media? How is this similar to or different from how love is portrayed in Romeo and Juliet? How accurate is this portrayal?

42. Some characters in the play are static and do not change very much; others are quite dynamic and change a great deal. Choose one character and analyze how he or she changes in the course of the play.

43. Does loving someone make us better people or more selfish? How does it affect us?

44. Explain the importance and relevance of this quote:
   
   O Romeo, Romeo Wherefore art thou Romeo?
   Deny thy father and refuse thy name,
   Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
   And I’ll no longer be a Capulet.

45. How did Romeo’s actions affect others? What does this show about how one person’s actions affect others?
46. Why do humans turn to secrecy in order to solve their problems and how does this affect everyday life?

47. What do you think about Montresor’s motivation in “The Cask of Amontillado”? Do you think that Montresor is insane?

48. "The Cask of Amontillado" is a chilling story, but Poe also uses humorous elements as the narrator recounts his experience with Fortunato.

49. Can you identify elements in the story that might be regarded as humorous? What does the humor add to the story? Can you think of any other stories, books, or movies that blend horror and humor in a similar way?

50. "The Cask of Amontillado" uses a first-person narrator (a narrator that is a character in the story), and, sometimes, first-person narrators can be unreliable. How reliable or unreliable do you regard the narrator? Are there any ways that the narrator might be manipulating the truth? How would you describe the narrator's attitude toward himself and his actions?

51. Although the narrator seems to assume that his actions are justified, he certainly can be interpreted as a villain. What characteristics of the narrator make him an effective villain? Can you think of any other villains from stories, books, television shows, movies, or "real life" that share some of the narrator's villainous characteristics?

52. Is there anything about the narrator that you find attractive or likeable?

53. Explain the cause of the feud between the families of Ulrich von Gladwitz and Georg Znaeym in “The Interlopers”.

54. What brought the two men out into the disputed territory that night? What happened to them?

55. Why was Ulrich not able to shoot at his enemy?

56. What do you think happened to them? Why? How could this be considered ironic? Why do you think the author chose to end the story this way?

57. Explain the points that the author is making about hatred, friendship, and forgiveness. Use examples from the story.

58. How would the story be different if was told from the point of view of the wolves?