

EXAMPLE PERSUASIVE THEME WITH A COUNTERCLAIM, VERSION 1

Prompt: Choose one of the characters in Romeo and Juliet, and write a Persuasive Theme to argue that your chosen character is the person most responsible for Romeo and Juliet's deaths. Include a Counterargument Paragraph. Be sure to have at least six paragraphs in your theme. Include a reference list, and use the MLA style.

TITLE OF PAPER: Friar Lawrence: Guilty of Causing Two Needless Deaths?

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Friar Lawrence: Guilty of Causing Two Innocent Deaths?

The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare (1992) is a classic play in which the main characters, Romeo and Juliet, commit suicide; however, one might argue that Friar Lawrence is the main cause of this tragedy. To set the scene, the play takes place during Elizabethan times in Verona, Italy. With regard to the main characters, Romeo and Juliet are the children of two families, the Montagues and Capulets, who are feuding with each other. Friar Lawrence is the town priest who counsels members of the two families and, most importantly, Romeo and Juliet. Unfortunately, his counsel and actions in several scenes of the play lead to Romeo and Juliet's tragic deaths.

The first reason that he is responsible for Romeo and Juliet's deaths is that he performs a secret marriage ceremony for them, which is outside of the laws of the church. This secret ceremony takes place because, at the beginning of the play, Romeo and Juliet meet each other secretly, and they fall in love. This is a problem because Juliet's parents are trying to convince her to marry another young man, Paris. In order to save Juliet from marrying Paris, Romeo and Juliet decide to get married in secret. They seek the counsel of Friar Lawrence, and they ask him to marry them. When he agrees to this plan and marries them, he makes his first mistake. His position as a priest is one of responsibility; he needs to counsel members of the church to abide by the laws of the church and to work with their families. Even though he knows that Juliet is too young to marry without the permission of her parents, he marries her to Romeo anyway.

The second reason that Friar Lawrence is responsible for Romeo and Juliet's deaths is that he agrees to become their message carrier when Romeo is banished from the town. By doing this, he is maintaining the secrecy of their relationship, and he becomes responsible for making sure that the messages between Romeo and Juliet are delivered with haste and in time for them each to make decisions based on the messages that have been written. Unfortunately, he does not ensure that Romeo and Juliet get each other's messages right away. As a result, they make decisions that are not based on the most up-to-date information, and their decisions result in death.

A final reason that Friar Lawrence is responsible for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet is that he gives Juliet the means to fake her own death. When Juliet asks Friar Lawrence to help her, he gives her a type of poison which she can take to make her appear to be dead. She hopes to run away with Romeo once her parents believe her to be dead. Nevertheless, priests should not be handing out poisons to teenagers! Priests should not be helping people to fool their relatives that they are dead! Because of this final mistake, Friar Lawrence's actions lead Romeo to believe that Juliet is dead, and Romeo kills himself with a knife. When Juliet awakens and sees that Romeo is dead, she kills herself. Thus, Friar Lawrence's action of giving Juliet the poison creates a chain reaction that leads to the deaths of two young people.

In contrast, some people might argue that other characters in the play are just as responsible for Romeo and Juliet's deaths as Friar Lawrence. For example, Romeo and Juliet's parents might be responsible because they are maintaining a feud that has been going on for generations. If they had made peace with each other and had been accepting of their children's choices for marriage partners, the whole series of events would not have occurred. For another example, Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, might also be responsible for their deaths because he also

maintains the feud. He is a violent man and takes offense at any slight. He starts a conflict with Romeo's friend that results in Romeo getting banned from the town. Nevertheless, although these acts of the parents and Tybolt are damaging, they cannot be blamed directly for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

To conclude, although other characters may play a role in Romeo and Juliet's deaths, Friar Lawrence's actions directly lead to the two tragic deaths in this play. His initial action of marrying the couple in secret set up a series of circumstances related to hiding the marriage. He later makes errors in helping them communicate with each other and then gives Juliet poison to help her convince her parents that she is dead. Although he seems to be trying to be helpful, he is really not fulfilling his responsible role as a priest and a counselor. Certainly, counselors are supposed to be helpful, but they are not supposed to help their church members to act deceptively or deceitfully. Friar Lawrence is just as responsible for Romeo and Juliet's deaths as they are themselves.

Work Cited

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. NY: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1992.

