

Article 16 – Everyone Has The Right To Marry

Love and marriage in Romeo and Juliet

Subject

- * English Literature

Context

- * To be included as part of study on love and marriage in William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet

Objective(s)

- * To discuss the link between the theme of marriage in Romeo and Juliet and human rights issues today.

Resources required

- * Article 16 poster
- * Class set of Romeo and Juliet texts

Introduction

1. Introduce the class to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by working through the ‘UDHR Introductory Activity’.
2. Ask the students to look at the poster illustrating **Article 16** of the UDHR, **Everyone has the right to marry**, and read out the information in the top left-hand corner of the poster.

Men and women should have the right to marry whomever they choose and no one should be forced to marry someone against his or her will. Men and women are entitled to equal rights before marriage, during marriage and if the marriage ends.

Activity

3. Organize the class into small groups. Ask each group to complete a table like the one below to illustrate their ideas on men and women’s rights, before marriage, during marriage and if the marriage ends. Reinforce the UDHR assertion that men and women should have equal rights at all stages of marriage.

	Before Marriage	During Marriage	If the Marriage ends
The rights of men and women			

4. Remind students that **Article 16** of the UDHR states that men and women “**of full age**” should “**have the right to marry and have a family**” and that “**marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of intending parties**”.
5. Make sure everyone has access to a Romeo and Juliet text. Now, working in pairs ask the students to complete a list, like the one below, to help them consider the

extent to which Romeo and Juliet have been given or denied their **Article 16** rights throughout the play.

	Evidence to show show Article 16 rights have been given	Evidence to show show Article 16 rights have been denied
Romeo		
Juliet		

6. When they have completed their lists, reconvene as a larger group and ask individuals to give their views on the questions below.

- Overall, have Romeo and Juliet been mostly given or denied their **Article 16** rights? Give evidence to support your answer.
- Have Romeo and Juliet been equally given or denied their **Article 16** rights? If no, which character has been most denied these rights and why?

Conclusion

7. Point out that that arranged marriages were common in the time of Romeo and Juliet and continue to be common in many different countries around the world today. The pros and cons of arranged marriage are often debated, however the human rights issue is not necessarily with arranged marriages themselves, where both the bride and groom are willing participants, but with forced and under age marriages, where people are denied the choice of who they are to marry or may be too young to make an informed decision.

Further Study

Imagine Romeo and Juliet is set in modern times. Juliet is convinced that she is being denied her **Article 16** rights and takes her case to the European Court of Human Rights. Write a speech for Juliet to help her convince the court that she has been denied these basic human rights.

<http://www.unicef-icdc.org/publications/pdf/digest7e.pdf>