

The Shakespeare Authorship Debate: Stratford vs Oxford

Debate Format and Rules:

- Two teams: Team Stratford and Team Oxford
- Each team will have 5 minutes for opening statements
- 30 minutes for main arguments and rebuttals
- 3 minutes for closing statements
- Teams must use evidence to support their claims
- Teams must cooperate and share responsibility for effort
- Teachers: use the Research Component and other materials provided to help students prepare

Opening Statements Structure (5 minutes each team)

1. Present your main claim about authorship
2. Outline your three strongest pieces of evidence
3. Address why this question matters

Main Debate Topics (30 minutes)

Round 1: Education and Knowledge (10 minutes)

- Team Stratford: Discuss the Stratford grammar school education
- Team Oxford: Present de Vere's elite education argument
- Rebuttals and discussion

Round 2: Contemporary Evidence (10 minutes)

- Team Stratford: First Folio and contemporary references
- Team Oxford: De Vere's literary recognition
- Rebuttals and discussion

Round 3: Literary Evidence (10 minutes)

- Team Stratford: Name on publications, long history of people accepting that Stratford man wrote the plays
- Team Oxford: Travel knowledge, cultural and legal expertise
- Rebuttals and discussion

Key Arguments for Each Team

Team Stratford's Main Points:

1. Contemporary Recognition

- Name on published works
- Ben Jonson's testimony
- First Folio attribution

2. Documentary Evidence

- Baptism and burial records
- Business records from the Globe Theatre
- Legal documents and will

3. Historical Context

- No authorship disputes in his lifetime
- Long history of scholarship accepting Stratford narrative
- Theater connections

Team Oxford's Main Points:

1. Educational Background

- Extensive formal education
- Multiple language fluency
- Court experience

2. Travel and Knowledge

- Italian travel experience
- Legal expertise
- Court customs knowledge

3. Literary Connections

- Known patron of the arts
- Contemporary praise as a writer
- Connection to themes in sonnets

Debate Tips:

1. Use specific examples from the plays to support your arguments
2. Be prepared to counter opposing team's claims
3. Keep track of timeline inconsistencies
4. Consider the historical context of Elizabethan England
5. Focus on documentary evidence over speculation

Closing Statements Structure (3 minutes each team)

1. Summarize strongest evidence
2. Address major counterarguments
3. Explain why your candidate is the most likely author

Evaluation Criteria:

- Use of historical evidence
- Logical reasoning
- Effective counter-arguments
- Speaking clarity
- Team coordination

Teacher Notes:

This debate helps students:

- Analyze historical evidence
- Develop critical thinking skills
- Practice argumentative speaking
- Understand Elizabethan context
- Evaluate source reliability

Remind students that this is an ongoing scholarly debate with respected academics on both sides. The goal is to examine evidence and practice argumentation skills, not necessarily to definitively solve the authorship question.

Rubric for Debate: The Shakespeare Authorship Debate - Stratford vs Oxford

Criteria	A (5)	B (4)	C (3)	D (2)	F (1)
Use of Historical Evidence	Presents thorough, accurate, and relevant historical evidence from multiple reliable sources; clearly supports claims with detailed examples	Presents mostly accurate historical evidence with some relevant examples; generally supports claims well	Presents some historical evidence but with limited accuracy or relevance; support is unclear or superficial	Presents minimal or mostly inaccurate historical evidence; weak support for claims	Fails to present historical evidence or presents irrelevant/inaccurate information
Logical Reasoning	Arguments are highly logical, well-organized, and clearly connect evidence to claims with strong reasoning	Arguments are mostly logical and organized; connections between evidence and claims are clear	Arguments show some logic but are inconsistently organized or connections are weak	Arguments are illogical or poorly organized; connections between evidence and claims are unclear	Arguments lack logic or organization; no clear connection between evidence and claims

<p>Effective Counter-Arguments</p>	<p>Skillfully addresses opposing claims with well-reasoned rebuttals and evidence; anticipates counterpoints</p>	<p>Addresses opposing claims with reasonable rebuttals and some supporting evidence</p>	<p>Attempts to rebut opposing claims but with limited reasoning or evidence</p>	<p>Provides minimal or unclear rebuttals; weak or no supporting evidence</p>	<p>Does not address opposing claims or rebuttals are missing or irrelevant</p>
<p>Speaking Clarity</p>	<p>Speaks clearly, confidently, with excellent pacing and volume; language is precise and persuasive</p>	<p>Speaks clearly with good volume and pacing; language is mostly precise</p>	<p>Speech is somewhat clear but may be too fast/slow or quiet; language is basic</p>	<p>Speech is often unclear or difficult to hear; language is vague or inappropriate</p>	<p>Speech is unclear, too quiet, or too fast; language is inappropriate or confusing</p>
<p>Team Coordination</p>	<p>Team members demonstrate excellent collaboration; smooth transitions; balanced participation from all members</p>	<p>Team members mostly collaborate well; transitions are mostly smooth; most members participate</p>	<p>Team shows some collaboration but with uneven participation or awkward transitions</p>	<p>Team has poor coordination; participation is uneven or some members dominate or stay silent</p>	<p>No team coordination; one or few members dominate or no participation from others</p>