



DEBATE THE ISSUE

(Two 45-minute sessions)

OBJECTIVE

Students debate a topic and communicate effectively with one another.

MATERIALS

Debate The Issue handout; *Debate Ballot* handout; stopwatch; debate films

GET READY

- ✓ Generate a resolution (topic) for the debate. Activities in this resource may lead you to a topic or the class may vote together on a choice of resolution.
- ✓ Phrase the resolution in the affirmative, such as “Resolved: that our state must fund education better.”
- ✓ Thoughtfully select two teams (an affirmative team and negative team). Each team needs four students.
- ✓ Make eight copies of the *Debate The Issue* handout, so that each of your debaters has one.
- ✓ Copy the *Debate Ballot* handout so that you have enough ballots for your class.
- ✓ Have a stopwatch nearby.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ On Day 1, assign eight students to one of the two teams of four: the affirmative team and the negative team.
- ✓ Have the class watch a film of presidential debates, preferably the 1960 or 1992 Presidential Debates (The Great Debates or 1992 Live Debate Analysis, in “Recommended Films,” Appendix) while debaters prepare.
- ✓ Give each of your debaters a *Debate The Issue* handout.

- ✓ Ask team members to choose parts. The least threatening is Opening Argument which may be written ahead of time and simply read aloud; the hardest and longest is Question Session.
- ✓ Ask debaters to prepare their ideas in two columns on a separate piece of paper: “Our Arguments” and “If They Say, We Say.” Students may finish preparations as homework that night.
- ✓ On Day 2, hand out the ballots and hold the debate, keeping to time limits. Have students circle the winning side and list the most convincing argument, but leave their names off the ballots. Read the most convincing arguments as the results are compiled.
- ✓ Have a different group of students participate in a debate at another time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ Which arguments impressed you most and helped you make a decision?
- ★ Was it difficult to separate argument values from performance and personality aspects? How does this relate to Kennedy/Nixon or Bush/Clinton (or another set of presidential debaters)?
- ★ Is this an effective format to discuss democratic ideas? Why? Why not?

MORE!

Students could watch and evaluate winners of political debates on TV, applying the same standards they used with their peers.



DEBATE THE ISSUE

Topic: “Resolved: that _____.”

Affirmative Team Members

1.

2.

3.

4.

Negative Team Members

1.

2.

3.

4.

Sequence of the Debate (follow the numbers for proper order of speakers):

Affirmative Team		Negative Team	
	Time		Time
1. Opening Statement	3 min.	2. Opening Statement	3 min.
3. Rebuttal Argument	3 min.	4. Rebuttal Argument	3 min.
5. Question Session	5 min.*	6. Question Session	5 min.*
7. Summary	3 min.	8. Summary	3 min.

*Debater answers 4 questions, one from each member of the opposite team; if time, also answers questions from the floor.



DEBATE

The winning team was (circle one): **AFFIRMATIVE** **NEGATIVE**

This team won the debate because (List at least one argument which convinced you that this side won):

In making your choice of the winner, you may consider only the evidence and logic which is actually presented during this debate. Any additional knowledge which you individually may possess about the topic must not enter into your decision about the debate. Remember, you are judging the relative strength of each team's arguments, not your personal opinion.

Try to be objective in your decision, by ignoring everything except the ideas presented. Forget about personalities of the debaters, any pet theories that you may have about the topic, and any awkwardness in the manner in which the debaters express their ideas.

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