
Lesson Name: The Great Debates

Category: Society: Challenge and Change

Course Code: HSB 4M1

Instructor: Rob Cotey

School: Markville Secondary School

Level: Grade 12

Time: 3-4 research periods, 5-8 periods of debates.

Rationale:

The Great Debates: The Great Debates is an exercise that encourages students to analyse a potentially divisive social issue and prepare a defence of their views on the issue. At this stage of the course students have been versed in preliminary research techniques, various debate styles, and encouraged to have conviction in supported beliefs. The Great Debates brings students to the level that they debate issues with solid evidence to support everything they say.

Expectations:

The Great Debates while focusing on Content Expectations, the key lies in addressing effective Methods of Political Inquiry

Overall Expectations

- correctly use social scientific methods to gather, organize, and synthesize information;
- demonstrate an understanding of the social forces that shape such challenges.
- communicate knowledge, beliefs, and interpretations of politics and citizenship, using a variety of formats;

Specific Expectations**Researching, Recording, and Organizing Information**

- use appropriate social science research methods effectively and ethically;
- conduct research to determine the critical differences and similarities among the approaches and concepts of anthropology, psychology, and sociology, and summarize their findings;
- effectively communicate the results of their inquiries.
- demonstrate an ability to select, organize, and interpret information gathered from a variety of print and electronic sources;
- communicate the results of their inquiries effectively.

Responsible Citizenship

- think creatively and analytically to develop potential resolutions to a series of given issues and issues that they select;
- work effectively both individually and in groups;
- demonstrate the ability to seek and respect the opinions of others;
- communicate and exercise their own political views and convictions in a responsible, democratic manner.

Instructions:

1. **Introduction:** Students are asked to look at handouts provided in the Course Pack. After thoroughly dissecting the instructions and evaluation criteria, students are given the opportunity to find a partner, topic and two people to debate against.
2. The instructor must then organize the resources for the students. We use the Taking Sides series of books. I will usually refer students to both the YES and NO articles of their debate issue, this is the first step that they must tackle prior to research. The Taking Sides books frame the issue. Depending on how many students you have you may choose to make the teams 2v2, 3v3 or even 4v4. The essential element is that all students understand that they must speak during the debate.
3. Students are given 3 periods to prepare for the Great Debates. If possible book time in the Resource Centre at the school, or ask students to prepare themselves with research. The internet is also useful for this assignment.
4. For the actual debates it is necessary to have a Moderator and Timer that understand the Debate format below.
5. **Debate Format** 1 Debate per period
Intro Yes: 2 Minutes
Intro No: 2 Minutes

1st Argument: Yes Side 5 Minutes
1st Rebuttal: No Side 3 Minutes

1st Argument: No Side 5 Minutes
1st Rebuttal: Yes Side 3 Minutes

2nd Argument: No Side 5 Minutes
2nd Rebuttal: Yes Side 3 Minutes

2nd Argument: Yes Side 5 Minutes
2nd Rebuttal: No Side 3 Minutes

Free for All: 10 Minutes

Closing: Yes 2 Minutes

Closing: No 2 Minutes

Question Period from Audience: 10 Minutes

Debriefing and Decision of Winner: 10 Minutes

6. **Activity Closure:** Each debate will be debriefed at the end, led by the instructor. I usually ask questions to analyze the debate: “What were the strongest arguments? Weakest Points? Turning Points? Best and Weakest Evidence? General Impressions?” This is also an opportunity to assess the accuracy of facts and relevance of arguments presented.

Upon the conclusion of all the debates, another short session can be held to debrief the assignment as a whole, and make connections to the formation of public policy and social and governmental debate.

Materials:

- ⇒ Taking Sides series of books (Political Issues, Moral Issues, Environmental Issues, etc... should be used. Also Taking Sides: World Politics edition can be used remembering that it will be the focus of the PSDs.)
- ⇒ Debate Days (Overhead, TV if required, Computer/LCD if required)
- ⇒ Course Pack
- ⇒ Research Period at Metro Reference Library
- ⇒ Great Debate Handouts

Assessment & Evaluation:

1. The Great Debates is evaluated on the oral component during the debate according to the rubric provided for the activity. If there is any question about the validity of sources or materials, students may be required to submit or justify sources.
2. Assessment is constant throughout the research phase of the debates. Students should be assisted in developing their ideas from the moment they choose a topic. Due to the nature of the assignment, students will have opportunities to receive assistance during the development of the assignment.