

Preparing for an Oral Debate

Grade level: 9-12

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to present strategies that will help students to express opinions on issues of the day in debate. This lesson targets grades 9-10 but can be modified for grades 11-12. It integrates content from EBSCO's Points of View Reference Source database.

*"Care in the choice of one's words is the respect that
the mind pays to the instrument of its own being."*

~ Ashley Montague

Standards

In addition to aligning with Common Core State Standards (see Appendix), this lesson plan provides opportunities for students to achieve several of the learning competencies described in AASL's [National School Library Standards](#).

Objectives

1. Students will read, analyze and incorporate information from news sources and personal experience, in order to understand debate.
2. Students will improve persuasive communication skills, leading to a more organized presentation of thoughts.
3. Students will gain skills in research, critical analysis, and weighing of evidence, to fashion informed opinions and judgments.
4. Students will demonstrate greater self-confidence in expressing opinions, through developing a command of pertinent material.
5. Students will demonstrate an ability to thoughtfully examine, assess and reflect on personal ideas and beliefs.

Skills Practiced

- Critical analysis of opinions in various genres
- Writing
- Forming opinions

- Researching issues of debate
- Posing an argument of discussion
- Oral presentation

Recommended Texts

- Op/Ed pieces in newspapers and magazines
- Selections from Points of View Reference Source
- Persuasive Essay / Debate Worksheet (attached)
- Transcripts of political debates

Activities

1. Tell students that they will study examples of issues under debate, and then create their own work. To provide encouragement, ask this question: What are some examples of things you already do that show you already possess strong persuasive skills?

The answer: Every day they express and try to convince others of their opinions on fashion, sports, current events, entertainment, classes, etc.

2. Move on to a non-threatening oral debate scenario:

Choose 2-3 students to play the role of a teen and parents/guardians to enact the following scene and “play it out” using the steps below or present an example of your own.

- For the teen: You want to go into the city with friends on a school night. Ask permission. Your parents/guardians will voice concern that you might not be able to go and get your homework done, and still have time for enough sleep on a school night. Or they might be concerned that it won't be safe for you to go into the city. How do you respond to persuade them to see it your way?
- For the guardians: Let the teen present the request first. Respond by offering concern and hesitancy about letting him/her go.
- Teacher: Allow the debate to continue back and forth until resolved, or until you end it, once the students gain a sense of their debating skill and style.

Give the role players 10 minutes to prepare. The following steps will guide them and outline the structure of the debate.

- a. State your case.
- b. Listen to the answer.
- c. Respond to their opposition with rebuttal and supporting evidence (additional information, anecdote, etc.).
- d. Stay on the subject.

These steps and those that follow comprise the essence of a strong debate, or a persuasive essay. While the students are acting this out, engage the rest of the class by dividing the non-acting students into two groups, one for each speaker. Give each student a copy of the Persuasive Essay / Debate Worksheet (attached). Instruct them that their task is to identify and assess the issue in debate, depending on their group, Child or Guardian. As the debate unfolds, students will take notes based on what their assigned speaker says using the worksheet that follows.

Looking for a rubric to help students assess their classmates (or political candidates) in debates and election speeches? Check out our [Debate Scorecard](#). (Also available in [A4 size](#).)

3. At the conclusion of the debate, ask the role players to rejoin the class for a discussion of the listeners' notes. Point out the ways in which impressions within the same listening group might differ.

Name(s): _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Persuasive Essay / Debate Worksheet

What issue is under debate?

What point is the speaker trying to make?

What style does the speaker use to discuss points?

First Supporting Evidence (identify topic sentence)

Supporting Evidence #2

Supporting Evidence #3

Supporting Evidence #4

Conclusion

Appendix: Common Core State Standards

English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text » Grade 9-10

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid, and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

Craft and Structure

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.5: Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

English Language Arts Standards » Speaking & Listening » Grade 9-10

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.5: Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

English Language Arts Standards » Language » Grade 9-10

Conventions of Standard English

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

English Language Arts Standards » Writing » Grade 9-10

Text Types and Purposes

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8: Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.