

**Dialogue,
Discussion,
and
Debate**

Social Studies

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Contents

Introduction v

Part 1: Why Is Social Studies Discourse Important? 1

Part 2: Exploring Discussion in Your Classroom 8

 Discussion: Global Nuclear Power 11

 Student Summary: Discussion 19

Part 3: Exploring Dialogue in Your Classroom 26

 Dialogue: Separation of Church and State 30

 Student Summary: Dialogue 37

Part 4: Exploring Debate in Your Classroom 43

 Debate: Immigration 45

 Student Summary: Debate 53

Part 5: Activities for Discussion, Dialogue, and Debate

 Discussion: National Health Care 62

 Discussion: Preventing Genocide 72

 Discussion: Spreading Democracy 82

 Dialogue: Equal Education for All 91

 Dialogue: Eliminating Teenage Pregnancies Through Abstinence 100

 Dialogue: Sharing Music Files 109

 Debate: Free Trade 117

 Debate: Free Speech 129

 Debate: Gun Control 143

Introduction

If one thing is certain about adolescents, it is that they love to talk. From the bus to the classroom and from the gym to the mall, they talk everywhere they go. Adolescents gossip about popular culture and relationships, of course. They also converse about substantive issues relevant to the world they live in. Their innate desire to be heard creates an exciting opportunity to channel natural conversations into teachable moments and meaningful discourse. Dialogue, discussion, and debate are three forms of discourse that can be easily integrated into classrooms, harnessing the energy that students bring to conversations about important current topics.

Dialogue, Discussion, and Debate: Social Studies provides a springboard for students and teachers to talk about controversial topics in a fun and consequential manner. This groundbreaking book develops students' skills in creating, sharing, and analyzing sound explanations for ideas supported by evidence.

This book includes:

- Rationale and examples of three types of discourse as tools to support the development of student understanding
- 12 detailed plans for dialogue, discussion, and debate with identified standards and possible student preconceptions
- Options for classroom formats
- Student handouts
- Recommended resources
- Suggested criteria for assessment

In *Dialogue, Discussion, and Debate: Social Studies*, you'll have all the materials you and your students need to get the conversation rolling.

Part 4

Exploring Debate in Your Classroom

How Does Debate Create a Good Learning Environment?

Debate has always served a special role in education. Your students may have re-enacted historic events, or predicted political challenges. Yet, despite the benefits of the experience, most students have limited exposure to debate.

Debate addresses the four characteristics of a good learning environment: student-centered, knowledge-centered, community-centered, and assessed (Donovan and Bransford, 2005). In your classroom, students will work to find their own voice and develop their own opinions on an issue. This will require them to examine their beliefs, bringing their own interests and reasoning to the subject matter. Your students will also need to become fully informed on an issue, reading materials that support both their own opinions and those of their opponents. The purpose of the debate is to engage their peers in thinking about the issue, working to possibly change their opinion. The entire class becomes engaged with the debate teams, making it a community event. The success of your students' presentations is assessed by the response of their peers.

Not only is debate engaging, it also requires a high level of cognitive thinking. It forces students to clarify arguments through delineating opposing views. This entails researching an issue, which often calls for extracting conclusions from incomplete or conflicting statements (Hines, 2001). Preparation also requires that students collect, organize, analyze, and synthesize information and data. Sound reasoning must then form the basis of any argument construction. In addition, student debaters must present their arguments clearly, precisely, and accurately, and with an understanding of their audience. Finally, students must be able to quickly assess their opponents' reasoning, revise their information in rebuttal, and summarize their statements of position and opposition to their opponents (Parcher, 1998). When debate is compared with other academic techniques of similar duration, research has found that competitive debate shows the largest gain in critical-thinking skills (Allen, Berkowitz, and Loudon, 1995).

Debate not only provides a good learning environment that develops cognitive thinking and communication skills, it also has the potential to increase your students' interest in social studies. As students become engaged in investigating issues, their motivation to learn increases (Van Rooy, 1995). Debate also provides a unique glimpse into the dynamic nature of social systems as they delve into both the history and the current developments of emerging issues (Hines, 2001).

How Do I Prepare Students for a Debate?

Debate is simply an argument with rules. In contrast to dialogue, which encourages students to achieve common understanding, debate is focused on persuasion—winning over the audience to a given position. When your students debate, they use and hone skills acquired through discussion and dialogue. They need to organize their ideas into a brief presentation and to rebut any opposition. Rather than discouraging argumentation, debate motivates and engages students to form opinions on current controversial issues. It encourages them to argue within bounds—a process often favorably compared to a good soccer match!

The debate format is best used when students have a good understanding of content. It may be a new application of their understanding, but they are not learning about the ideas under discussion; rather, they are learning to apply, synthesize, and communicate the ideas.

Rules for debate can be either rigid or more relaxed, depending on the purpose of the debate. When first conducting a debate with your students, rules can provide structure to the process. However, students do not need to be penalized for small infractions as they might in a debate competition. That refinement can be added as their experience grows. It may also be helpful to contact English language arts teachers to identify common debate procedures.

There are four key parts to most debate formats:

- opening statements for both pro and con opinions
- presentation of evidence for each opinion
- rebuttal of each opinion by the opposing side
- summary of argument for each side

In each instance, students work in teams, often with each team member taking a different role. An alternative is a tag-team approach in which any member can present one part.

To establish teams, a few strategies are available. For a class of twenty-four students, eight teams of three can be created. The teams can be formed by student self-selection, by drawing names from a hat, or by assigning students to teams. If all teams are not debating the same topic, assign at least two teams per topic. Again, students could self-select a topic so that six students (enough for two teams) are assigned to each content area. Then teams can be formed using one of the strategies mentioned above.

The role of the audience may vary. Students who are not actively debating should vote and/or provide peer comments on the presentations. Or, for more involvement, you can add a segment after the initial presentations of opinion and evidence in which students can pose questions to the teams (a cross-examination session). Be sure to adhere to time limits.

Once your students are familiar with the debate format, you can have them research a topic thoroughly, without knowing the position statement or which side they will be assigned to support. It is important that students research both sides of an issue when getting ready for their presentation. This allows them to be prepared for rebuttal of the opposition's statements, and to respond to their opponent's rebuttal of their statements. In order to properly prepare for a debate, students must develop skills in research techniques, reasoning, correlating evidence and explanation, and public speaking.

Debate: Immigration

TEACHER PAGE

What Is the Issue About Immigration?

As of January 2006, there were an estimated 11.6 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States. Nearly 4.2 million entered the country in 2000 or later. An estimated 6.6 million of the 11.6 million unauthorized residents were from Mexico. Of these, approximately 4.4 million live in California and Texas (Hoefler, Rytina, and Campbell, 2006). In 2007, more than 1,206,000 unauthorized immigrants were deported back to their home countries. Nearly 1,800,000 were from Central America, with over 1 million from Mexico.

Over 30 million individuals visited the United States from other countries in 2006. Of these, nearly 28 million were considered temporary visitors here for business or pleasure. These visitors and their families do not require visas. Nearly 900,000 additional foreigners are students. Over 1 million are here for work, with an additional 100,000 family members. Over 200,000 work for foreign governments or foreign non-profit organizations.

In 2006, 1,226,264 immigrants obtained legal citizenship. Of these, 411,475 were Asian, and over 58,000 were from Central America. Half of these new immigrants were relatives of American citizens; more than 330,000 were spouses. Of these, over 20,000 were adopted orphans. Over 50,000 of the new citizens were priority workers, or highly skilled with advanced degrees. In addition, more than 99,000 were refugees, with most coming from Cuba, Africa, and Europe. There were over 60,000 asylum seekers with over 40,000 family members. (OIS, 2007)

In 2007, President George W. Bush suggested a plan for Comprehensive Immigration Reform. His plan would do the following:

- secure the borders
- hold employers responsible for the workers they hire
- create a temporary workers program
- resolve the immigration status of illegal immigrants already in the country
- find new ways for newcomers to become assimilated into society

Opponents of this bill feel it is giving amnesty to those immigrants who have illegally lived in this country. These opponents believe that illegal immigrants should be deported. Many also feel that businesses should not be responsible for ensuring that a worker's proof of citizenship is authentic. They say the system of verifying documents is too cumbersome for employers. These same individuals also identify the real need for migrant laborers, particularly in agricultural businesses.

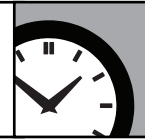
Is This a Dialogue, a Discussion, or a Debate Topic?

Opinions about immigration reform vary widely. Immigration levels, both legal and illegal, are increasing dramatically. As a topic for discourse in high school social studies classrooms, immigration provides an excellent framework for debate. It can also be used as a topic for discussion before debate, to allow clarification of the social circumstances and their implications. You may also want to have a dialogue after the debate in order to model the process legislators undergo to debate an issue, and then work within committees to come to a consensus on addressing the issue.

Current events make this subject too engaging to omit from the debate format. One of many position statements is presented in this model. You could address other aspects of immigration such as the following:

- How do immigration laws in the United States vary from other countries?
- How has immigration varied over the past decades?
- What is causing the high levels of immigration into the United States?

TIME
Preparation—15 minutes in class, plus homework

Instruction—four 45-minute class periods; one class period for each pair of debate teams (3 students per team)


Position Statement

I (support/do not support) the position that the government should focus all its efforts on deporting all illegal immigrants in the United States.

Classroom Format

Students should have a good understanding of immigration and some of the reasons it occurs before preparing for this debate. This will allow them to focus on why the phenomenon occurs before thinking about government policy. It is best used as an application of the new ideas they have learned. It may also be helpful for students to practice creating explanations supported with evidence and to practice analyzing reasoning for fallacies.

This position statement covers only one small aspect of immigration. You may want to broaden the debates across the class by offering a variety of position statements on different aspects of immigration that could be debated.

As an alternative, instead of all students debating this issue, you may want to spread debates over a whole course. Teams can be selected at the beginning of the course, and different topics scheduled every month. The format and your overall pre-instruction would be the same for all topics, varying only in content.

The number of students on each debate team is determined in the following directions based on a classroom of 24. If you have fewer students, adjust the number of teams, and make sure you have an even number so you are able to have pairs of debate teams. This will then allow you to decide the number of students on each team.

Preparation (15 minutes during prior class)

1. Copy and distribute the Student Summary: Debate section and the student pages as homework.
2. Explain the debate format, including time limits.
3. Create debate teams with three students each.
4. Based on your students' experience, either assign the pro and con positions or have students choose for themselves. (If you have more experienced students, you can have them prepare for both sides and then assign the pro or con position just before the debate.)
5. Have the debate teams decide which part of the debate each member will give.
6. Students should come prepared with notes on their solution, supported by evidence.
7. Review criteria for assessing debate teams.

During Class

1. Review the debate process, including time limits.
2. Explain that for each debate, those in the audience will be given time to write notes on the good points and possible suggestions for each debate team. They should have a sheet of paper for each team and write *Pro* or *Con* on the top of each paper. These will be collected at the end of each debate and given to the teams after all the debates are completed.
3. Set up the order of presentations by teams. (10 minutes for 1 to 3 teams)
4. Have a pair of teams come to front of room.
5. Begin with the pro-position statement. (3 minutes)
6. Have the first member of the team presenting the con position give the team's position statement. (3 minutes)
7. Have the second member of the pro team give an evidence statement. (3 minutes)
8. Have the second member of the con team give an evidence statement that supports the team's position statement. (3 minutes)

9. Give teams 3 minutes to prepare three rebuttal questions for the opposing team. Have audience members take notes on the positive points and make possible suggestions for each team. (3 minutes)
10. Alternate between the debate teams on each question they ask. Each audience member should ask the other team one question. The other team selects one person to respond. The responder can ask the questioner for clarification on any point in the question. The responder has one minute to reply. The audience then switches to the other team. This continues until all questions are asked. (12 minutes)
11. Give teams 3 minutes to organize their summary statements. Have the audience write comments on the presentations. (3 minutes)
12. Give each team 3 minutes to present their summary statements. (3 minutes)
13. Give the audience 2 minutes to write their comments and their vote on their assessment sheets.
14. Collect the comments to distribute later.
15. Continue with the same format for the next three sets of presentations.

Assessment Criteria

- Content is accurate.
- Supporting evidence is linked to the statements that are made.
- Opinion is clear, well reasoned, and without fallacies.
- Presenters speak clearly, look at the audience, and are well organized.
- Questions to the opposing side are clear and well targeted at weaknesses in the argument.
- Rebuttals specifically respond to questions and give supporting evidence where possible.
- Presenters are respectful of their audience and opposing team members.

Standards

National Council for the Social Studies

III. People, Places, and Environments

- h. examine, interpret, and analyze physical and cultural patterns and their interactions, such as land use, settlement patterns, cultural transmission of customs and ideas, and ecosystem changes
- i. analyze and evaluate social and economic effects of environmental changes and crises resulting from phenomena such as floods, storms, and drought

VI. Power, Authority, and Governance

- i. analyze and explain ideas and mechanisms to meet needs and wants of citizens, regulate territory, manage conflict, establish order and security, and balance competing conceptions of a just society
- i. evaluate the extent to which governments achieve their stated ideals and policies at home and abroad
- j. prepare a public policy paper and present and defend it before an appropriate forum in school or community

IX. Global Connections

- b. analyze the causes, consequences, and possible solutions to persistent contemporary and emerging global issues such as health, security, resource allocation, economic development, and environmental quality

X. Civic Ideals and Practices

- c. locate, access, analyze, organize, synthesize, evaluate, and apply information about selected public issues—identifying, describing, and evaluating multiple viewpoints
- g. evaluate the effectiveness of public opinion in influencing and shaping public policy development and decision-making

Possible Student Preconceptions

- There are a number of misconceptions about immigration that are known to be held by the general public. It is logical to believe that high school students would also have these preconceptions.
- Many believe that if you enter the country illegally, you cannot become a citizen. This is not the case. An illegal immigrant living in the United States can apply for a visa, green card, or temporary worker visa.
- It is also commonly thought that it is necessary for an immigrant to be able to speak and write in English to become a citizen. This is not the case. However, they must pass a citizenship test to be naturalized, and the test is given in English.
- Another misconception is that legal immigrants, who are in the country on a visa, can be deported for minor legal infractions, such as traffic tickets or DWIs. Again, this is untrue, except in extreme circumstances. (U.S. Immigration Lawyers Advice, www.explore-mex.com/immigration/html/immigration-misconceptions.html.)

Teacher Resources

2006 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics

www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/statistics/publications/yearbook.shtm

This site provides a summary of statistics compiled by the Department of Homeland Security.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform Fact Sheet

www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/06/20070627-12.html

This site features a summary of President Bush's proposed legislation to improve immigration laws submitted in June 2007.

Debate Central

www.debate-central.org

This site provides general information on debates, debate formats, and resources for other topics.

Estimate of Unauthorized Immigrants

www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ill_pe_2006.pdf

This site for the Department of Homeland Security includes a summary on illegal immigration.

Evaluating Web Sites

www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/webeval.html

This site from the Cornell University Library features a compilation of resources and lists of criteria for examining web sites for reliability.

Federation for American Immigration Reform

www.fairus.org/site/PageServer

The Federation for American Immigration Reform is a non-profit organization working towards immigration reform.

International Debate Education Association

www.idebate.org/teaching/index.php

This site covers all aspects of debate, including different formats, classroom activities, and practice exercises. This site also includes lists of background resources on a wide variety of topics such as global climate change, and identifies questions with pro and con positions for the topics.

Justice for Immigrants

www.justiceforimmigrants.org

This site features support for immigration reform.

Polling Reports/Immigration

www.pollingreport.com/immigration.htm

This site compiles polls on immigration from major news agencies.

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Name: _____ Date: _____

Student Summary: Debate

VOCABULARY

debate (from the French *debatre*, meaning “to fight”)—
a regulated discussion of a proposition between two
matched sides

What Is a Debate?

Debate is an important tool for presenting two different opinions on a question that needs to be decided by a vote. It is common in politics, when two opposing candidates for office present their solutions to a social problem.

Debates can be held between individuals or teams. Each side has a set amount of time to present their argument and evidence. The opposing side then has a chance to respond to their opponent’s ideas with counter arguments. Once completed, each side summarizes their opinions, best evidence, and best justification of why their ideas are better than the other side’s. The audience then votes for the opinion with which they agree.

How Do I Prepare for a Debate?

1. Debate teams of three students are formed.
2. Your debate team is given a Position Statement.
3. Your team researches the topic to understand both sides of the position so you can be for or against it.
4. Your team is assigned one of the argument to defend.
5. Each member of the debate team chooses to complete the position statement, the evidence statement, or the summary. All team members review the sections and take part in the cross-examination.
6. The person completing the position statement prepares a short presentation (3 to 5 minutes) on why he or she believes the statement is true or false.

Name: _____

Date: _____

7. The person completing the evidence statement writes a short statement (3 to 5 minutes) about the evidence that supports the reasoning given in the position statement.
8. The person completing the summary prepares a short statement challenging the opponent's argument. The summary statement also restates your team's argument to dispel any doubt your opponents may have placed on your argument.
9. All members of your team should try to spot the potential weaknesses in your argument. You should also prepare to respond to possible questions (rebuttal).
10. All members of your team should work together to spot the weakest points of your opponent's argument. You should also create questions for your opponents that can show why their view might be unreasonable (cross-examination).
11. During the debate, teams take turns giving presentations. The positive position statement comes first, then the negative. This is followed by alternating evidence, cross-examinations, and finally, alternating summary statements.
12. At the end of the debate, the audience votes to show whose position was most persuasive.

How Can Our Debate Team Improve Its Presentation?

1. Closely examine both sides of an issue to predict your opponent's statements and evidence.
2. Together, outline the reasoning behind your debate team's position. Then identify data that support your ideas.
3. Check your argument make sure there are no fallacies in your reasoning. (See the web site on fallacies from the University of North Carolina, www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/fallacies.html#2.)
4. Identify the weakest points in both your own and your opponent's arguments.
5. Create targeted questions that show the faults in your opponent's arguments. Create rebuttals to possible questions your opponents might ask.
6. Organize your notes so you can respond to the specifics of your opponent's rebuttal questions. Be sure to prepare a counterargument for your summary that addresses the weaknesses in your argument that were pointed out.
7. Be sure to support every point in your argument with reliable data from multiple sources if possible.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Debate: Immigration

What Is the Issue About Immigration?

As of January 2006, there were an estimated 11.6 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States. Nearly 4.2 million entered the country in 2000 or later. An estimated 6.6 million of the 11.6 million unauthorized residents were from Mexico. Of these, approximately 4.4 million live in California and Texas (Hoefer, Rytina, and Campbell, 2006). In 2007, more than 1,206,000 unauthorized immigrants were deported back to their home country. Nearly 1,800,000 were from Central America with over 1 million from Mexico.

Over 30 million individuals visited the United States from other countries in 2006. Of these, nearly 28 million were considered temporary visitors here for business or pleasure. These visitors and their families do not require visas. Nearly 900,000 additional foreigners are students. Over 1 million are here for work, with an additional 100,000 family members. Over 200,000 work for foreign governments or foreign non-profit organizations.

In 2006, 1,226,264 immigrants obtained legal citizenship. Of these, 411,475 were Asian, and over 58,000 were from Central America. Half of these new immigrants were relatives of American citizens; more than 330,000 were spouses. Of these, over 20,000 were adopted orphans. Over 50,000 of the new citizens were priority workers, or highly skilled with advanced degrees. In addition, more than 99,000 were refugees with most coming from Cuba, Africa, and Europe. In addition, there were over 60,000 asylum seekers with over 40,000 family members. (OIS, 2007)

In 2007, President George W. Bush suggested a plan for Comprehensive Immigration Reform. His plan would do the following:

- secure the borders
- hold employers responsible for the workers they hire
- create a temporary workers program
- resolve status of illegal immigrants already in the country
- find new ways for newcomers to become assimilated into society

Name: _____ Date: _____

Opponents of this bill feel it is giving amnesty to those immigrants who have illegally lived in this country. These opponents believe that illegal immigrants should be deported. Many also feel that businesses should not be responsible for ensuring that a worker's proof of citizenship is authentic. They say the system of verifying documents is too cumbersome for employers. These same individuals also identify the real need for migrant laborers, particularly in agricultural businesses.

Position Statement

I (support/do not support) the position that the government should focus all its efforts on deporting all illegal immigrants in the United States back to their countries of origin.

Assignment

1. You will be assigned to a three-member debate team and given a position to defend, either for or against the position statement.
2. With your debate team, you will present the position for or against the proposed plan for comprehensive immigration reform.
3. Each member of your debate team should select one part of the debate to present: position statement, evidence statement, or summary (see the Student Summary: Debate section). Every member of the team will take part in the cross-examination, asking their opponents a question.
4. Research both sides of the position—for and against it—so you will be familiar with what your opponents might say. Be sure to take notes, and record where you find your information (page numbers from books or web site addresses).
5. Using your team's research notes, outline your position, the supporting evidence, and any weak points in your argument.
6. Prepare a list of possible weaknesses in the opponent's argument.
7. Using your team outline, each member should individually prepare the position, evidence, and summary statements.
8. All team members will review the statements and suggest improvements.

Name: _____

Date: _____

9. Based on the identified weak points in your position, all team members will write at least five questions the opposing team may ask. Prepare answers to these questions.
10. All team members will identify the weak points in the opposing team's position, and create at least five questions to ask them.
11. Review your presentation and questions, keeping in mind who the audience is and what might help persuade them.
12. Practice the statements, and make sure they are within the allowed time limits. Learn your position well enough so that you can look at the audience (rather than your notes) when you are presenting.

Debate Format

Team A—for the position statement (pro)

Team B—against the position statement (con)

Team A makes position statement (3 minutes).

Team B makes position statement (3 minutes).

Team A gives evidence in support of position (3 minutes).

Team B gives evidence in support of position (3 minutes).

Break for each team to form questions (3 minutes).

Team A presents question 1 to Team B.

Team B responds to question 1 (1 minute).

Team B presents question 1 to Team A.

Team A responds to question 1 (1 minute).

Team A presents question 2 to Team B.

Team B responds to question 2 (1 minute).

Team B presents question 2 to Team A.