

Let's talk about climate change

Class debate on climate change

Teacher's guide

Major concept: A debate is a structured discourse about a given problem or issue. This lesson is based on a modified version of the well-known Oxford Debate format, taking into account the constraints of lesson time while maximizing student involvement.

Total time: 45 min (one class period).

Learning objectives:

- ❖ deepening the topic of climate change by role-playing
- ❖ introducing students to the use and critical analysis of various types of source materials
- ❖ developing the ability to argue and defend one's position
- ❖ supporting values such as respect, tolerance, acceptance of other opinions, freedom of speech

Debates are part of the development of key life competences or the so-called "4Cs of 21st Century Skills" ie: communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity (Kivunja, 2015).

*“It is important in a democracy to learn to disagree well, to realise that people with whom you disagree are not necessarily misguided, malicious or out to harm you. Their own life experience, education and moral or value commitments, might just mean that they see and interpret the world differently. Being able to recognise this, **being able to engage in respectful debate and to learn from your antagonist, is the essence of learning.**”*
(Hulme, 2020)

Preparation:

You will need to prepare the students before conducting this activity. In a class-based debate, preparation for the debate takes a week. One week before the scheduled debate:

1. Select and announce the topic for the debate. The topic should be a clearly formulated statement (thesis). You can choose one of the topics listed in the annex 1 or come up with your own.
2. Ask students to learn about the issue in order to learn the definitions and arguments for and against the thesis, find reliable, credible and up-to-date sources of knowledge. Let students know that they do not actually have to agree with or accept any position, but that they must create the best arguments possible supporting both positions based on the resources founded. You can indicate to the students specific sources of information, including those prepared under the project STUDENTS IN CLIMATE ACTION. Provide students with a worksheet for preparing arguments and counter-arguments (annex 2).
3. Give students some practical tips on the culture of debating. You can print the ones in annex 3 or prepare your own.

You can read more about the debates and skills they develop¹:

- ❖ Hulme M. (ed.) (2020). *Contemporary Climate Change Debates. A Student Primer*, Routledge, London, New York.
- ❖ Kivunja Ch. (2015). *Exploring the pedagogical meaning and implications of the 4Cs “Super Skills” for the 21st century through Bruner’s 5E lenses of knowledge construction to improve pedagogies of the new learning paradigm*, Creative Education, 6(2), 224-239.

The debate:

1. Introduce the activity by telling students what is the topic about (2 min).
2. Organize students and explain the roles (6 min):
 - choose two teams of 3 students, assign them roles (FOR or AGAINST the thesis) - you can use a coin for this
 - explain to the rest of the students that they will act as the audience and that their task will be to evaluate the debate based on the presented arguments therefore they must follow the debate very closely
 - explain that the debate has three rounds: 1st round - statements by both teams, 2nd round - response to the arguments of the opposing team, 3rd round – closing speeches
 - ask each team to choose who will speak for each round

¹ In English, but we also can find some readings in national languages.

- explain that the speaker in the first round should present the arguments of his team within 3 minutes; the speaker in the second round should listen carefully to the arguments of the opposing team in order to be able to answer them in 3 min (advise students that it is good to take notes); the speaker in the third round must summarize all arguments formulated by the team and may express his opinion (3 min)
 - explain that the teacher is the moderator or the main judge, whose task is to ensure that the debate is conducted correctly and that the rules are respected by the participants.
3. Give each team some time to divide the roles and gather the arguments prepared in advance. During this time, you can explain to the other students (audience) what they should pay attention to during the debate (5 min).
 4. 1st round (6 min)
 - ask the representative of the supporting team to speak for 3 minutes - to provide arguments FOR the thesis
 - ask the representative of the opposing team to speak for 3 minutes - to provide arguments AGAINST the thesis
 5. 2nd round (6 min)
 - ask the representative of the supporting team to speak for 3 minutes – to provide response to the arguments of the opposing team
 - ask the representative of the opposing team to speak for 3 minutes – to provide response to the arguments of the supporting team
 6. 3rd round (6 min)
 - ask the representative of the supporting team for a 3 min closing speech
 - ask the representative of the opposing team for a 3 min closing speech
 7. Ask the audience to ask questions for both teams (3 min).
 8. When the audience has no more questions, a vote takes place that decides the outcome of the debate. Ask the audience to vote by raising their hands - first for the first team, then for the second team (1 min).
 9. Summarize the debate (10 min). The summary is to analyze it and identify its key moments. The following questions can be used to conclude and evaluate the debate:
 - What arguments were the most convincing?
 - Has anyone been convinced and changed their mind?
 - What new interesting views were presented?
 - What should be improved in the next debate?

Optional: use a second class period for extra practice. This could be a lesson a week before the debate. During the lesson, you can introduce issues related to climate change², explain the rules of the debate, you can also do exercises to prepare for the debate (warm-up excersises).

Exercise 1. Finish the sentence

At the beginning, the teacher should write many incomplete theses on the blackboard. You should leave some space next to each of them.

Examples:

- Solar radiation is essential because.....
- The best way to protect the environment is.....
- Coal mines should be closed because....
- Coal mines should not be closed because...

The teacher then reads each statement and asks the class to complete it.

It is important to remember that there are no right or wrong answers - getting students to express their views and encouraging discussion is the most important.

Exercise 2. Who is to be thrown out from the balloon?

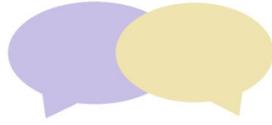
Pick five or six people each of whom chooses a historical or famous person to impersonate. Alternatively, the teacher can allocate the speaker a historical or famous person. Ask them all to imagine that they are together in a hot air balloon that is rapidly falling. One person must be thrown overboard in order to save the others, but who will it be? Each participant must make a speech saying why they should be allowed to stay in the balloon. The rest of the class votes, and the loser is disqualified from the rest of the debate. This continues, until only one pupil is left in the balloon.

More exercises: <https://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/Training%20Games.pdf>

² For example by using materials developed under the project STUDENTS IN CLIMATE ACTION.

Annex 1.

Climate change – topics for the debate for secondary school students



- 🗨️ My lifestyle has an impact on climate change.
- 🗨️ There is a global warming problem, but it cannot be prevented.
- 🗨️ Students must learn about climate change at school.
- 🗨️ Organic tomatoes from Spain are more environmentally friendly than local greenhouse tomatoes.
- 🗨️ We should spend money on new technologies to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy sources.
- 🗨️ It is too late to stop climate change.

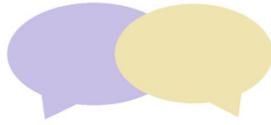
Annex 2.

Worksheet for students to prepare arguments and counter-arguments

Thesis:	
Arguments FOR	Arguments AGAINST

Annex 3.

Practical tips on debating:



- remember that the first impression is the most important
- it is worth starting your speech with the strongest argument
- use a variety of arguments
- arguments should be logically combined
- support arguments with evidence, e.g. statistical data, views of various authorities
- avoid making extreme statements
- stick to the main thread of the discussion
- try to predict your opponent's strategy
- listen carefully to the arguments of the opponent in order to be able to formulate counter-arguments, look for the opponent's weak point
- make intentional breaks in your speeches
- don't read from a piece of paper - only read quotes and statistics
- take notes, it will help to prepare counter-arguments
- try to use your sense of humor
- leave a good impression at the end of the debate