PUBLIC DEBATE: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY

LEVEL
Intermediate-Advanced

GOALS
Learn about the importance of public debate
Learn about democracy through a reading and a class election
Develop speaking, listening and note-taking skills through participating in a debate

MATERIALS
• Trace Effects Chapter 2
• Trace Effects Comic Chapter 2
• Public Debate: International Day of Democracy Reading (included in this activity packet)
• Organizing a Debate: Guidelines handout (included in this activity packet)
• Debate Speech Template (included in this activity packet)

PREPARATION
1) Read through all the materials carefully. Several class periods could be used for this activity, or it could be shortened for use in a single class. Decide which approach is best for your class.
2) Before class have students play Trace Effects Chapter 2. In this chapter, two students are running for student body president. Emma wants vegetables served at lunch while her opponent, Riley, wants junk food served. Alternatively, students can read the Trace Effects Chapter 2 comic book.
3) Review the words in bold in the Public Debate: International Day of Democracy Reading handout. Be prepared to help students with these words. Prepare enough copies of this reading for your class.
4) Read the Organizing a Debate: Guidelines included in this activity. Familiarize yourself with the structure of a debate.
5) Prepare copies of the Debate Speech Template to give to students.
6) Prepare ¼ sheets of paper for students to use as ballots for the class election.
7) Decide several topics that could be used for a class debate. These can be fun issues such as ‘Teachers should not assign homework’ or more serious topics such as ‘Higher education should be free for all students’.

PROCEDURES
1) In class have students outline Emma’s argument on why she wants vegetables on the menu. Students can hear her argument when Trace finds her at the Farmers’ Market. For the full dialogue see the Trace Effects Teachers’ Manual. Ask if they would vote for Emma or Riley.
2) Tell the class that you will hold an election for class president. Pass out the Public Debate: International Day of Democracy Reading handout and read together as a class. At this time ask if any student would like to declare their candidacy and nominate themselves for class president. Try to elicit two candidates from the class.
3) Give each candidate a chance to speak. Make this an informal activity to warm up the class. Students can speak about why they would be a good class president.

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4) After each candidate has spoken, have students divide up the class into three groups: students who support the first candidate, others who support the second candidate, and also an undecided group. Inform students they are free to switch their support when it is time to vote!

5) Inform the class that they will have a debate. Supporters can help their candidate write their argument. Undecided voters in class can work together to create a list of questions they have for each candidate. Give the candidates the debate prompt. Inform them that one must support the prompt, while the other must disagree with the prompt. To decide each role, have the candidates draw a card with numbers. The higher number gets to choose if they will agree or disagree with the prompt.

6) Give each candidate time to write their argument. Each candidate may get help from their supporters in writing their argument. Remind each candidate that a debate is about how persuasive their speech can be. Remind supporters to listen carefully, their notes can be used for their candidate’s rebuttal.

7) Post on the board or give as a handout the Organizing a Debate: Guidelines graphic included in this lesson plan. Familiarize the students with the debate structure. Candidates will alternate speaking opportunities followed by a chance to challenge their opponent’s ideas.

8) At the end of the argument phase, give students a five to ten minute break to prepare a rebuttal where they can challenge the other speaker’s arguments.

9) Once the debate has concluded give students time to ask questions. Undecided students should be allowed to ask questions first. Remind students that they are allowed to switch support to the other candidate if his or her debate was more persuasive!

10) Finally, end the activity by having the students cast ballots. These ballots should be filled out in secret. Students can write the name of the candidate they would like to win on a sheet of paper. Students can fold the paper in half and drop it into a box. Count the votes and determine the winner. Give the winner a chance to make a victory speech!

**ADAPT IT TO YOUR CLASS**

- In this classroom activity, students that are strong speakers may nominate themselves. Other students who are shy or have lower speaking skills may be reluctant to be nominated. This is acceptable as the speeches students give can serve as a listening and note-taking exercise for the other students.

- In your classroom, many students may want to be nominated. However due to time constraints it may not be possible to have them all speak. In this case choose two students to become candidates to fit the class time limit. Or, if possible, make this a weeklong activity and during each class have two students debate while others take notes. At the end of the week, students can review their notes and choose their favorite candidate.
In America, many young people first experience democracy in school elections. Elections take place in individual classes or in the entire school. Students who win the election are known as the class president or school president.

In *Trace Effects* Emma Fields wants to be class president because she disagrees with Riley. Riley wants the school to have junk food for lunch. Emma wants the school to only serve health food for lunch like vegetables.

To decide who will be class president students can announce their candidacy, or volunteer to become class president. Usually several students will announce their candidacy. This requires the class to have an election. Each student candidate will have a campaign. A campaign is when students take time to convince their class to vote for them. Campaigns can be simple, with each student giving a speech, or campaigns can be much bigger with speeches, posters, and debates. In a debate, candidates choose a topic important to the voters and try to persuade voters to agree with them. For Emma and Riley, they debated on the topic: **The school should serve junk food at lunch.** Emma’s argument is vegetables should be served for lunch. Riley’s counter-argument is vegetables should not be served for lunch.

After the campaigns are over, the class will have an election day. On election day, all the students – including the candidates – cast their votes for class president. Students write their favorite candidate’s name on a ballot. With voting over, the ballots are counted and the candidate with the most votes wins.
In this class activity students will hold a debate on a topic of interest to the class. As a group, students can decide the topic or a topic can be assigned. If students are unsure of which topic to debate, choose a topic that is accessible and one on which students will have an opinion. A good starter topic is: Teachers should not assign homework on the weekends.

Outline the following debate structure on the board:

- **The argument speaker** introduces the topic and states their first argument.  
  - 3 minutes

- **The counter argument speaker** states their first argument.  
  - 3 minutes

- **The argument speaker** states their second argument.  
  - 3 minutes

- **The counter argument speaker** states their second argument.  
  - 3 minutes

5-10 minute break for each team to prepare a rebuttal speech.

- **The counter argument speaker** states a rebuttal for the argument’s position and summarizes his/her own position.  
  - 2 minutes

- **The argument speaker** states a rebuttal to the counter argument and summarizes his/her own position.  
  - 2 minutes
DEBATE SPEECH TEMPLATE

Introduce yourself and your position

Argument topic #1

Argument topic #2

Phrases for Opinions:
I think..., In my opinion..., As far as I'm concerned..., I'm convinced that..., I strongly believe that...

Rebuttal to Opposing Argument

Phrases for Disagreeing:
I don't think that..., I don't agree. I'd prefer..., Shouldn't we consider..., I'm afraid I don't agree..., The problem with your point of view is that...

Closing statement / Thanks

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