

“Reading” the News: Media, Research, and Debate

Unit plan by Chalya Pudlewski

Timeline: One week (five 40-minute lessons) or more depending on the number of debates held

Lesson One: Exploring Debate Procedures and Goals	
Bellringer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use a Google form to survey students about current event topics they would like to debate. These topics will then help inform the selection of overarching debate titles that encompass as many of those ideas as possible for the number of debates you would like to hold. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here is an example survey used with students at Cooperstown Junior/Senior High School in Cooperstown, NY.
Procedure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Explain to students that they will engage in debates about current events that interest them. Guide students in a discussion using National Speech and Debate Association resources as examples to address the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is a debate? b. What are the goals of a debate? 3. Guide students in a discussion about which of the following kinds of debate is best suited for our project: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Roundtable: This style allows students to develop a position individually to share in open discussion. I gave two minutes for students to present an opening thesis statement. Next, I asked questions they submitted on research planners about their topics. Finally, I gave students two minutes to present a closing statement that included any additional information they didn't get to present, whether they had changed their minds or learned something new, and what they might like to research further after the discussion. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Teachers note: I like this style because it is informal, easy to teach, and comes naturally to kids. Everyone researches every topic debated. ii. I moderated the debates due to the limited number of students in the classroom and my class's lack of experience debating. Students can be taught to moderate for future debates if desired. b. Public Forum: These styles allow partners or small groups to research collaboratively with more support on a limited range of subtopics presented from the affirmative or negative side, which can be assigned in advance or decided by coin toss at the beginning of the debate for a superior level of challenge. The segments of the debate include a construction speech presenting

	<p>the case, a rebuttal addressing the counterargument, a summary analysis of the major disagreements, and a final focus on evaluating the speeches. Participants question one another in crossfire after each segment, except during the final focus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Teacher’s Note: I have used this style with a different project, and it resulted in high-quality preparation with a dependable structure and impressive results. Teams may participate in every debate, or just one or two and watch the rest. The Policy Debate format is similar but offers even more structure to the planning of the debate. c. Lincoln-Douglas: This style is a value-based one-on-one debate similar in structure to the public forum. This style would be good if you want more responsibility on each student to speak in depth on just one topic or if you’d like to have debates ongoing throughout the quarter, semester, or year while studying other things. Perhaps students could debate weekly or monthly depending on the number of students in your class and the desired duration of the project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Teacher’s note: I could see using this idea as an alternative to book reports. <p>4. Next, guide a discussion about how a person might prepare for a debate?</p>
<p>Guided Practice</p>	<p>5. Students review Pulitzer Center-supported article from the list below, and identify an article they want to review and evaluate as research for their debate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Early Approval of a COVID-19 Vaccine Could Stymie the Hunt for Better Ones b. How Epidemics End c. The Lasting Impact of COVID-19 on Charlotte's Black Residents d. Evaluating "America's Medical Supply Crisis" e. Portraits of a Pandemic: Portraits and quotes from community members in Philadelphia f. Looking For America: <i>Associated Press</i> reports from different parts of the US: g. Poverty and the Pandemic in Mississippi h. Coronavirus in Nile Basin: Dual Dangers- Water shortage and the virus throughout Africa i. Islamophobia and Coronavirus in India j. Projects Related to Vulnerable, Unprotected Areas in a Pandemic

Independent Practice	<p>6. . Students review the video “On-Demand Student Webinar: Responsible Reporting on Epidemics (starting with minute 10) and identify steps they should take to evaluate sources.</p> <p>7. Students then review the Pulitzer Center article they selected and evaluate the article using the tips provided in the webinar.</p> <p><i>Note to teachers: Using the articles that students select, and their responses to the Bellringer survey, identify themes that students will use to structure their debates. These will be shared with students before Lesson 2.</i></p>
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Lesson 2: Conducting Research for a Debate	
Bellringer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will think-pair-share (reflect on their own, and then discuss) with a partner to evaluate how their articles represent under-reported stories in responsible ways. Guiding questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What details stood out to you from the article? b. What was the under-reported story shared in the article? c. What claims did the journalist make in the article, and how did the journalist support those claims? 2. Share the debate themes you have selected with the students.
Procedure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Introduce students to the research guide that they will use to plan and organize their research for the debate. Cooperstown Junior/Senior High School librarian Michelle Hitchcock created this comprehensive guide, which is flexible enough to work with any research project and in conjunction with research software such as NoodleTool. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Using page 6 of the guide, students evaluate the steps to conducting research. b. Using page 8, students practice creating guiding questions for interpreting their research. c. Using pages 10-12, students explore the different kinds of sources that they are using and how to organize the information they find. d. Using pages 28-30, students learn how to cite their sources and create a works cited page. e. <i>Note for teachers: Feel free to substitute your preferred research instruction. I also use Purdue Online Writing Lab for quick topical support.</i>
Guided Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Model the annotation tips from the resources above on a Pulitzer Center reporting resource.

	<p>4. Next, guide students in annotating a Pulitzer Center reporting resource connected to the topic they have chosen for their debates.</p> <p>5. By the end of the class, students should annotate at least one paragraph from a reporting resource.</p>
Independent Practice	<p>6. Students finish annotating, and use the research planner and organizer on pages 8-10 of the research guide, to take notes on their source.</p> <p>7. Students then engage in research using outside sources on their debate topic, and use the same research guide to annotate those sources.</p>

Lesson 3: Forming Arguments Supported by Research	
Bellringer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students view an example of a debate format and rules by watching debate footage, such as this video from CSPAN. 2. As they watch, students should note questions they have about the rules and format of a debate.
Procedure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Guide students in a discussion about how to use the OWL at Purdue Rhetorical Strategies to... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Evaluate an argument for the success of its appeals to ethos, logos, and pathos b. Evaluate an argument for the weaknesses of its fallacies
Guided Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Return to the CSPAN clip(s) and evaluate the arguments presented in the debate using the CSPAN debate activities handouts. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Note: This unit was originally taught during the 2020 election, but these handouts can be adapted to suit any debate example. For example, you could use high school debate championship videos from The City Club of Cleveland.</i> 5. Next, students list key points they want to make during their debates.
Independent practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Students should begin building their debate arguments by applying persuasion strategies to key points they identified. They should consider ethos, pathos, and logos strategies while also avoiding fallacies, considering the counterargument, and studying what they plan to say. 7. Here is an example research planner from a student in Cooperstown, NY who participated in the unit in fall 2020. 8. Here is a second example of a research planner from a student in Cooperstown, NY who participated in the unit in fall 2020.

Lesson 4: Engaging in a Debate

Bellringer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students should have a few minutes to set up the resources they will use as part of their debates. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Note for teachers: I allowed them to have access to their planning documents and sources throughout the debate and did not require them to memorize their speeches, although older or more advanced students may be able to do that.</i>
Procedure And Guided practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Students have up to two minutes each to share initial theses on the topic. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Here is an example of an opening argument from a student who participated in the unit in fall 2020. 3. Next, use students' research questions to guide a discussion between the students who are debating. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Note for teachers about virtual debates:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>In addition to classroom debates, I also conducted remote debates for students electing to work from home. At the beginning of these debates, students were quieter and unsure of how to take turns speaking without interrupting each other, so it helped to call on students to share or have them directly address one another. If anyone missed a debate for technical reasons or absence, they had to present their thesis at the next debate. I also held virtual office hours to provide extra support to remote students throughout the research process. Whether in-class or remote, I followed the same procedure.</i> 4. After the discussion, which the educator moderates using students' research questions or their own questions, students present closing statements on what they learned or didn't get to share.
Independent practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Students should use a speaking rubric, such as the 6+1 Traits of Writing Rubric for Oral Presentation, to evaluate their peers as they are presenting. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Here is another rubric from New York City Urban Debate League that students can use to evaluate speakers.
Extension	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Students read an article from a visiting Pulitzer Center grantee and develop questions for the speaker on a shared, editable document. To set up a presentation with a Pulitzer Center-supported journalist, email education@pulitzercenter.org. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Note for teachers: I had the pleasure of working with Melba Newsome, who covered The Lasting Impact of Covid-19 on Charlotte's Black Residents, which many students used as a source in the debates.</i>

Lesson 5: Reflection and Guest Speaker	
Bellringer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students welcome a guest speaker from the Pulitzer Center and listen to an introduction from a Pulitzer Center moderator. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Note for teachers: If it is not possible to host a guest speaker, students can also view an on-demand presentation with a Pulitzer Center journalist. Click here for a list of available webinars.</i>
Procedure and Guided Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Students connect virtually with a journalist who has covered some of the themes explored during the debates. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Reminder for teachers: To connect with a journalist, contact education@pulitzercenter.org.</i> 3. As students engage with the journalist, they should take notes on the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is the role of journalists in informing the people about the pandemic (or other debate topic)? b. How can I be a responsible consumer of information? c. How do I detect bias in my own and other people’s thoughts and words? d. Have I changed my mind about the topics? e. What have I learned during this unit? 4. Students engage in a Q+A discussion with the journalist using questions crafted by students in the previous lesson. Students should take notes on the journalists’ responses.
Independent Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Students write and submit a reflection paper scored with the 6+1 Traits Writing Rubric. The reflection paper should include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. An introduction that hooks the reader’s attention, provides background information on the debates, webinar, and guest speaker, and makes a thesis or claim about learning from the unit. b. Body paragraphs addressing what the student learned from the debate and/or guest speaker about research, public speaking and argumentation, journalism, or the debate topics themselves. c. A conclusion that restates the thesis, summarizes the learning the student took away from the unit, and has a concluding statement about engaging with under-reported issues. 6. Here are examples of reflection papers from Cooperstown Junior/Senior High School students who completed the unit in fall 2020. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Example 1 - teacher comments included b. Example 2 c. Example 3

