

LESSON PLANS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

IS THE INTERNET ERODING GOOD CHARACTER?

A debate is a great way to raise awareness of a topic and to get students involved as they practice reasoning and critical thinking skills. The topic of this debate is “Is the Internet eroding good character?”, but you can choose any topic that will appeal to your students and help raise awareness of what character is and how it can be developed or eroded.

PROCEDURE

1. Have the class research the topic. If you use the erosion of good character, make sure they are all able to identify what good character is as a baseline. Hold some preliminary discussions on the topic and generate interest.
2. Once the students are aware of and have agreed upon the definition of good character, tell them they are going to participate in a formal debate on the issue. Set the rules for debating and expose them to some exemplary debates by searching YouTube for school debates.
3. Point out the roles each speaker has (see organization sheets in this lesson), how well arguments are presented, and the time each person has.
4. Explain the format of debating (see organization sheets in this lesson) and have the students self-select for the roles of the three speakers for each team. Allow a good amount of time to research the motion and prepare speeches.
5. During this period, explain to the class what they are to expect if they've never debated before, and how to vote (use the organization sheets in this lesson).



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IS THE INTERNET ERODING GOOD CHARACTER? DEBATE ORGANIZATION SHEETS

Adapted from 2003 David Leuser, Ph.D. Plymouth State University, NH.

Debate Format

6 minute Position Presentation - Pro

6 minute Position Presentation - Con

5 minute Work Period

4 minute Rebuttal - Pro

4 minute Rebuttal - Con

3 minute Work Period

2 minute Response - Pro

2 minute Response - Con

1 minute Work Period

2 minute Position Summary - Pro or Con

2 minute Position Summary - Pro or Con

5 minute Tallying of Ballots/Announcement of Winner



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Debate Procedure

The debate will take the form of timed individual and/or group presentations and responses separated by timed group work periods. The rules applied may deviate from the formal rules of debating. When questions arise, the judgment of the instructor will provide the definitive ruling.

Prior to the beginning of the class period, both teams are to position their desks facing each other at the front of the room. Each team is to write its team name, debate position, and debate position statement on the blackboard behind their desks. Note that absolutely no changes may be made to the position statements presented below. You must argue them exactly as written!

Team members may speak either from their desks or from the podium, as they desire. Audio-visuals may be used at any time, including, but not limited to, handouts, flipcharts, transparencies, slides, audio and videotapes, etc. While a team is not required to use all of the time allocated to each debate component, speakers must stop immediately when the allocated time runs out. Team members are prohibited from speaking to the audience or opposing team except at the times specifically allocated to them. Thus, there can be no immediate, reciprocal interchange of comments between the teams. The sequence of the position summaries will be determined by a random procedure at the conclusion of the final work period. Note that no new information may be introduced during the summary. Doing so may result in disqualification of the offending group. If either team feels that their opponents are introducing new information during the summary, they may challenge them immediately and request a ruling from the instructor.



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Selection of Winner(s) and Allocation of Points

The instructor reserves the right to allocate fewer than the default or class voted points to a group, if, in his opinion, the quality of preparation and/or presentation was inadequate. Debate “losers” who prepare and present adequately will receive 30 points for their efforts.

Debate “Winners” will be selected in two ways, as follows:

Audience Vote: Class members in the audience will vote by secret ballot for a debate winner. Votes are to be based upon presentation quality only, and not upon personal agreement or disagreement with the position espoused. At the conclusion of each component of the debate, class members will be asked to assign a point rating along with explanatory comments to each team for their performance during that component. When the debate is over, the point ratings will be summed. Whichever team has the higher sum will be the winner on that ballot. After all ballots are collected, the number of votes for each team will be announced. Whichever team has more votes will be the winner, and will also receive 10 bonus points in addition to the 30 for basic preparation. In the event of a tie, the instructor’s vote will decide the winner.

Instructors’ Vote: The instructor will also evaluate both teams according to the above procedures and criteria, and select his choice for the winner. The team of his choice will receive 10 bonus points. Thus, depending upon the nature of the vote split, the “Winner(s)” may receive 10 or 20 bonus points, for a total of either 40 or 50 points for the debate.



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QUICK-TURNAROUND PROJECT

Throughout our installments for this year's Worldwide CHARACTER COUNTS! Week we've introduced ideas and rubrics to get you and your class started on project based learning (PBL) ideas to include students in developing celebrations for CHARACTER COUNTS! Week. If you have just registered, it's probably too late to engage in a long-term PBL activity, but don't let that stop you! Use our resources from all three installments to create a quick turnaround project during CHARACTER COUNTS! Week.

PROCEDURE

1. Tell the class that they are to come up with ideas that can be implemented to raise awareness of the importance of character education throughout their school. They have no budget and have access only to those resources that are already readily available (school supplies, students, staff, etc). They also have very little time. You want something that can be implemented the next day.
2. Make sure the students understand the values of the Six Pillars of Character. You can visit charactercounts.org for information. Divide the class into six groups, assign one Pillar to each, and have each group research their allocated Pillar. They should be able to clearly explain the key points associated with the Pillar, and then begin to define the parameters of their project.
3. Give the groups enough time to conduct their research and propose their project to the rest of the class. You can use the rubrics from Installment 2 in this year's CHARACTER COUNTS! free resources to assess research and presentation skills.
4. Once each group has presented their project, select one (or more) to follow through with and celebrate Worldwide CHARACTER COUNTS! Week with millions of other students!