



Have a Debate In Your Classroom About a Controversial Issue Related to Drinking Water

Objective: Students will use debate style dialogue to explore the pros and cons of an environmental topic related to drinking water from various viewpoints.

Suggested topics/viewpoints:

Alberta's oil sands – industry, environmental supporters, Aboriginal peoples, other citizens. Students must consider Canada's economy, environment, and global responsibility.

Fracking – industry, environmental supporters, citizens. Students must consider Canada's economy, environment, and global responsibility.

Fluoridation of municipal drinking water – municipal politicians, health officials, parents/concerned citizens. Students must consider local economy, health and responsibilities of the municipality toward their constituents.

Time: Introduction to topic, plus student preparation for debate: 2-3 class periods

Rules of Debate/Process: 1 period (needed prior to first debate only)

Debate/Dialogue: 1 class period

Materials:

- Videos related to topic
- Readings related to topic
- Balance of factual information and opinion-based sources

Learning Activities:

- Divide class into 3-4 groups depending on topic and number of viewpoints.
- Each group is given a "role" or viewpoint that they will represent. This should include a short bio of the group and some starting sources of information so that students may effectively research their position.
- Students are given two class periods to research their position.
- Each student will complete a preparation worksheet that outlines their speaking points, as well as a summary of the research that the group has completed.
- Students may be assigned to complete research independently or as a whole group, depending on the desired outcome (collaboration or independent research skills).
- The entire class will participate in the debate – each member of every group will be given a speaking turn and opportunity to make rebuttals.
- Ensure that the setup of the room creates a sense of equality (put desks into a triangle for 3 groups, or square for 4 groups, etc.).



Debate Roles

Opening Statement Presenter: _____

Gathers the main arguments into an introductory statement. Does not give specific information; just says "this is true because of A and B and C."

1. _____

Topic Presenters: _____

Present the main arguments for the team. Each presenter gives specific details that prove A and B and C.

(2 or 3)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Rebuttal Presenters: _____

Answer the arguments of the other team. These presenters must take notes as the other team is presenting their arguments and respond to every argument, using specific information to disprove them.

(1 or 2)

1. _____

2. _____

Closing Statement Presenter: _____

Presents the closing arguments for the team. Repeats the main idea for this and this and this reason.

1. _____

Debate Rules

No put downs.

You must raise your hand if it is not your turn to speak.

Teams lose 1 point for each interruption.

Teams lose 1 point for whispering while another speaker is talking.

TIMES

Opening statements for both/all sides = 3 minutes each

Arguments for both/all sides = 3 minutes each

Rebuttal conference = 1 minute

Rebuttals = 2 minutes each

Closing statements for both/all sides = 3 minutes each



Debate Scoring Rubric

Debate Topic: _____

Team Members: _____

Viewpoint: _____

Category	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs Improvement	Score
Points	4	3	2	1	
Addresses Issues	Always addresses topic	Usually addresses topic	Rarely addresses topic	Did not address topic	
Supports with Facts	Uses many facts that support topic	Uses some facts that support topic	Uses few facts that support topic	Does not use facts that support topic	
Persuasiveness	Arguments clear and convincing	Arguments are sometimes clear and convincing	Arguments are rarely clear and convincing	Arguments are never clear and convincing	
Teamwork	Used all team members effectively Equal timing (and everyone spoke)	One member does the talking 50% of the time	One member does the talking 75% of the time	One member does the talking 100% of the time or no one talks	
Organization	Electrifies audience in opening statement Closure convinces audience	Grabs attention Brings closure to the debate	Introduces topic and brings some closure to the debate	Does not introduce topic; no closure	

TOTAL _____/20



Resources on the SDWF Website to Help Your Students with Their Research

Topic: Alberta's oil sands

[Oil Fields Fact Sheet](#)

[Downstream Film and Panel Discussion](#)

[Tar Sands Webinar \(Andrew Nikiforuk\)](#)

Topic: Fracking

[Fracking Fact Sheet](#)

[Hydraulic Fracturing Editorial](#)

Topic: Fluoridation of Municipal Drinking Water

[Fluoridation of Drinking Water Fact Sheet](#)