

Debate Overview

Beable’s Debate courses introduce the art of argumentation along with current and relevant debate topics. Addressing the Common Core argument writing and listening and speaking standards, students first learn what an argument is and the basics of how to develop one using reasons and relevant evidence. Then, in subsequent debate lessons, students learn about an issue, its origins, and the reasons behind a pro or con position.

After completing the debate lessons, teachers can invite their students to write an argument essay by developing their own claim on the issue and using the information in the lessons as evidence to support it. Teachers can also hone their students’ speaking and listening skills by holding a mock debate, where students work in teams to craft a claim and organize the evidence found in the lessons into mini-speeches and rebuttals.

Beable has designed its Debate courses so that each year students engage in two debates a year. If a district or school would like these lessons to be combined into one large debate course, please contact us.

Topic

Introduction to Arguments

All Grade Levels

Summary

The first unit of each grade’s debate course teaches students the basics of argumentation. Students learn the academic definition of an argument and what makes it different from persuasion. Then students discover the parts of an argument. The final lesson of the unit explains the importance of Aristotelian appeals—Ethos, Pathos, and Logos—and how to watch out for logical fallacies.

Lessons

Lesson 1: What’s Worth Arguing About? It’s Debatable

Lesson 2: Prove it!

Lesson 3: That’s Very Appealing!

Topic

Leveling the Playing Field

Recommended:
Grade 6 Debate

Summary

When it comes to sports, should women receive the same pay as their male counterparts? The U.S. Women’s National Soccer Team (USWNT) has recently brought this debate to national attention after their second consecutive World Cup win when they took the USSF (United States Soccer Federation) to court over the pay gap between the men’s and women’s teams. While USWNT is leading the charge, this has been an ongoing debate in other sports—tennis, basketball, and golf—as well.

Lessons

Lesson 1: An Introduction to Equal Pay

Lesson 2: Equal Pay for Equal Work

Lesson 3: Greater Revenue, Greater Salaries

Lesson 4: Title IX and Women’s Sports

Lesson 5: Media and Marketing

Unit

Hello, Mars!

Recommended:
Grade 6 Debate

Lessons

- Lesson 1:** Introduction to Mars Travel
- Lesson 2:** The Rewards of Space Travel
- Lesson 3:** The Cost of Space Travel
- Lesson 4:** Colonizing Mars
- Lesson 5:** Man Vs. Machine

Summary

Andy Weir’s novel *The Martian* and its feature film starring Matt Damon captivated the American imagination with visions of traveling to Mars. However, there are many who believe that there are better ways to spend our tax dollars. Is this next great milestone of American exploration worth the price tag?

Unit

On the Chop-ing Block

Recommended:
Grade 7 Debate

Lessons

- Lesson 1:** Introduction to Football in America
- Lesson 2:** The Dangers of Football
- Lesson 3:** The Dangers of Youth Football
- Lesson 4:** Football’s American Legacy
- Lesson 5:** Football’s Economic Impact

Summary

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) is a degenerative brain disease caused by repetitive hits to the head over a several-year period. The effects of CTE include depression, dementia, and other Alzheimer’s-like symptoms. In 2015, researchers at Boston University confirmed CTE in the brains of 87 out of 91 deceased NFL players tested, which has led people to ask the question—is football too dangerous to play?

Unit

The United 51 States of America?

Recommended:
Grade 7 Debate

Lessons

- Lesson 1:** A Controversial Capital
- Lesson 2:** Statehood and the Constitution
- Lesson 3:** “No Taxation Without Representation”
- Lesson 4:** The Politics of Statehood
- Lesson 5:** An Alternative to Statehood

Summary

Washington D.C. was written into the U.S. Constitution to be an independent capital—a city that was to remain autonomous and unclaimed by any state in the union. Since the writing of the Constitution, D.C. has grown to be a bustling metropolis with more than 700,000 residents, who are not allowed to elect a congressional representative in Congress or two senators to advocate for them in the U.S. Senate. There are lots of solutions on the table, and in this unit, students take a closer look at the problem and how people on different sides of the political aisle hope to solve it.

Unit

Wild But Not Free

**Recommended:
Grade 8 Debate**

Lessons

- Lesson 1:** Uncaging the Zoo Debate
- Lesson 2:** Zoos as Breeding Zones
- Lesson 3:** Appreciated Animals or Assets
- Lesson 4:** Zoos and Science
- Lesson 5:** The Effects of Captivity

Summary

For many, a family trip to the local zoo is a source of fun, amusement, and education. While viewing real lions, polar bears, and elephants, zoo goers can learn about these animals, their habitats, and the efforts to conserve and protect both. But for many other people, zoos are not so amusing. There are those who believe zoos are inhumane, a source of constant misery for the animals unlucky enough to be placed in enclosures for human entertainment. So do zoos perform useful functions in society and nature, or do they only benefit the people who visit and those who profit from their captivity?

Unit

Are You Still Watching?

**Recommended:
Grade 8 Debate**

Lessons

- Lesson 1:** Tune in to the Binge-Watch Debate
- Lesson 2:** Binge-Watching and Relationships
- Lesson 3:** Stress-Relief or Addiction?
- Lesson 4:** Better Living through Binge-Watching
- Lesson 5:** Health Hazards of Binge-Watching

Summary

Have you ever watched two or more episodes of a TV show in a row? This practice, known as binge-watching, has become part of our culture, especially among young people. Many people love to watch for hours on end, seeing it as a harmless distraction that relieves stress and provides important conversational subjects with family and friends. But there is a darker side. Binge-watching can negatively impact both the physical and mental health of viewers. Some even argue that binge-watching generates harmful addictive behaviors. Even though binge-watching is likely here to stay, the question remains—is binge-watching bad for you?

Unit

No Phone Zone

**Recommended:
Secondary Debate**

Lessons

- Lesson 1:** Mobile Devices in School
- Lesson 2:** Mobile Devices and Learning
- Lesson 3:** How Much Communication Do We Need?
- Lesson 4:** Mobile Devices and Cyberbullying
- Lesson 5:** Mobile Devices and Creative Thinking

Summary

Not long ago, if you were trying to remember the formula for a parallelogram or which Chinese dynasty made the Terracotta warriors, you'd have had to go to some trouble to get the answers. Finding the information might have involved a trip to the library or leafing through an old textbook your uncle happened to have had lying around. Today, things are very different. To find these answers, most of us simply reach into our pockets, pull out our cell phones, and the answer is ours in seconds. But just because we can use our phones and other mobile devices so readily, doesn't mean everyone thinks we should—especially in schools. Personal devices are still controversial in classrooms. Do mobile devices enhance learning? Or do they damage the learning experience?

Unit

The Writing on the Wall

Recommended: Secondary Debate

Lessons

Lesson 1: Graffiti Art

Lesson 2: Graffiti as an Art Form

Lesson 3: Graffiti as Vandalism

Lesson 4: Graffiti Brings Communities Together

Lesson 5: Graffiti Harms People and Communities

Summary

If someone says the word “graffiti,” how do you feel? For many, the word signals vandalism that damages personal property and communities, and is a mark of crime that drives away businesses and decreases the value of property. But others hear “graffiti” and think of art— or the artists, like Banksy, whose work attracts tourism and high-dollar sales. They see graffiti as an important form of self-expression, particularly for diverse voices that would otherwise be silent. Given these opposing views, we are left with some lingering questions: Is graffiti art? And is it beneficial to society?