
Lesson Guide

Time	45–55 minutes (one class period)
Classroom Setup	Independent, Small Group, Whole Group
Materials	Student Handout (four pages), one or more ThinkCERCA texts, T-Chart
Management Tips	<p>Take time to train students in the routines and protocols of debate. The quality of your students' efforts and their depth of learning will be greater. Walk through a couple debates with the students.</p> <p>Review debate protocol (page 2 of student handout) as well as your class discussion guidelines prior to each debate.</p> <p>Adhere to debate structure. The “rules of the game” add to the fun, and they help make debate accessible to all students. For modifications see the “Variations” section.</p> <p>Take advantage of the richness of debate preparation and execution as a learning tool. Debate's research, writing, and speaking and listening components are all strongly aligned with the Common Core and transfer well to other projects and subject areas. Post debate reflection is essential for sealing in learning and critical thinkings.</p>

Part I

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| Steps for Strategy | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Show students the Debate Game question. Have students pair off and assign them a side. If you intend to have students write a CERCA later about the question, assure students they may take a different side when they write.2 Have teams develop reasons and evidence supporting their assigned side and record these on the chart (page 1 of the student handout).3 Have teams imagine a couple of their opponents' strongest argument, and record those and their rebuttals on the chart.4 Have teams record a brief closing argument on their chart. |
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Part II

- 1 Time for the debate game! Pair up the two-person teams with a team that has prepared the opposing side.
- 2 Review debate protocol (page 2 of the student handout) and class discussion guidelines.
- 3 Have students practice for the debate by championing their assigned side and offering rebuttals to the other side. Have students take notes in the chart during and immediately after the debate.

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**Steps for
Strategy****Debate Game Protocol****Affirmative (yes) side of argument**

2 minutes to present claim, reasons, text evidence and reasoning.

Negative (no) side of argument

2 minutes to present claim, reasons, text evidence and reasoning.

Both sides

1 minute to prepare a rebuttal for the points heard from the opposing side.

Affirmative

1 minute to rebut and close.

Negative

1 minute to rebut and close.

Typically, the affirmative side is the first to offer its opening argument and the second to deliver its rebuttal/closing.

Part III

- 1 Have students reflect individually or as a class: What side were you first leaning toward in the debate? Has that changed? What role did your peers have in your learning?
- 2 As a whole class, discuss: Which arguments were the strongest on both sides during the debate? Which evidence?
- 3 Have students synthesize their thoughts on page 3 of the student handout.
- 4 Have students take advantage of the debate's momentum and outline their CERCA's. They should have plenty of material to support any side they wish to take.

Variations

To reduce the binary nature of a debate, assign two additional students per debate group; these students listen to both arguments and offer alternatives or compromises following the rebuttals. Or, as part of the post-debate discussion, have the class discuss more nuanced perspectives.

For a more traditional debate setup, have two teams of two or three students debate in front of the rest of the class. The remainder of the students take careful notes and, after the debate, offer feedback about which side won them over and what parts of the debate convinced them.

For more experienced or older students, increase speaking/rebuttal times to 3–5 minutes. For larger teams, add more rounds of back-and-forth.

For a more physical experience, have two teams debate while listeners move physically along a line in the classroom, from Yes Definitely to No Way, as they listen to the debate and are swayed one way and then the other.