

## Lesson: Language Arts Grades 4-6 Oral Debate and Fact vs. Opinion



# Listen and Learn

## Introduction

### Objective:

Students will learn the art of debate.

Students will prepare for the debate by gathering information, looking at both sides of the issue, and creating an argument to support their point.

Students will utilize presentation skills in debating their issue with another group.

### Academic Content Standards:

*Students learn to communicate effectively through exposure to good models and opportunities for practice.*

*Students learn to deliver presentations that effectively convey information and persuade or entertain audiences.*

- ❖ Ohio Academic Content Standards for Language Arts: #10 Communication: Oral and Visual, Benchmarks-C, D, E and F.
- ❖ National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association Standards for English Language Arts: #4, #7 and #12.

## Getting Started

### Materials:

*Handout A, Handout B, Handout C, Handout D*

### Technology:

Multimedia software, such as *Hyperstudio* or *PowerPoint*, for the presentation of illustrated student opinion that will accompany a chosen debate issue.

### Vocabulary:

- Debate
- Issue
- Objective
- Subjective
- Opinion

## Lesson

### Orientation Activity:

Present the question, "Should Peter Rabbit be punished for eating and trespassing in Farmer McGregor's garden?" Take a tally of all "no," "yes," and "I don't know" votes. Note the students who voted in each category. Ask the question, "Could there be anything in your life that influenced your opinion, and caused you to vote in the way that you did?"

### Learning Activity:

Review the vocabulary words. Explain to students that the same question ("Could there be...") will be the issue of a class debate with regards to Peter Rabbit's behavior and events in Farmer McGregor's

garden. Explain the process for debate preparation with emphasis placed on the need for clarity in thinking, questioning and speaking.

The first step in preparation is to gather information, facts. On a chalkboard or overhead transparency, record students' responses, listing their knowledge of objective information about Peter Rabbit's situation, include additional information about laws surrounding stealing and trespassing. Students will also record their responses on *Handout A*.

Next, on *Handout B*, students will list their reasons for deciding if Peter Rabbit should be punished or not be punished for his behavior in Farmer McGregor's garden. Have students clearly state their opinion about the issue. Also have students develop thought and strategy for defending their position in the debate. Read the rules for the debate on *Handout C*.

Ask students on both sides of the issue to choose a speaker to represent their group and opinion. Explain to the student representatives that both sides will have ten minutes (time varies) to debate the issue, and then one minute at the end, to summarize with a one-sentence closing statement.

Review *Handout D* for ideas on how to use intelligent language during the debate. Representative speakers can confer with their group members during the debate, but remaining group members cannot talk. Students in the "I don't know" group can sit between the debaters in a separate section. At the end of the ten minutes, this group of students will have a chance to ask either side one question for final clarification on the issue.

After the debate, take a silent vote on the issue and read the final results. Explain that debates are often used in elections and in Congress to decide upon new laws to be passed.

## **Evaluation and Follow-Up**

### Assessment Tools and Methods:

Teacher's observation and recorded anecdotal notes on individual student and group collaboration and contributions. Student completion of both *Handouts A* and *B*, and participation in class debate.

### Interdisciplinary Connections:

Science: Students explore the use of debate to examine issues in science. An example, factories that are allowed to pollute the rivers with their waste, good or bad? Should we use animals for testing new products and drugs?

Writing: Students write position papers about an issue following the debate.

Social Studies: Students use their knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in order to examine and evaluate civic ideals and to participate in community life and the American democratic system. Examine how these ideals would or would not apply to the behavior of Peter Rabbit.

## Handout A

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Gathering Information

Issue \_\_\_\_\_

What do I know about the issue?

What are the facts surrounding the issue?

Where could I gather more information about the issue if I needed to learn more?

## Handout B

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Both Sides of the Issue

Directions: On the spaces below, defend both sides of the issue.

For	Against

My opinion on this issue is

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**Handout C**

## **Rules for the Debate**

### **Before the debate:**

1. Be true to your opinion.
2. Debaters must have pre-debate paperwork complete to participate.
3. Listen to the moderator's instructions.

### **During the debate:**

1. Only the chosen student representatives will speak for their groups.
2. Group members may talk to their chosen representative speaker to assist him or her with ideas for debate arguments.
3. No put downs.
4. No yelling.
5. Wait your turn.
6. Listen to the moderator's directions.
7. Abide by time limits.
8. Representative speakers cannot leave their area during the debate.
9. If rules are not followed, you cannot participate in the debate.

## Handout D

### Ideas for phrases to use during the debate

I agree but...

I disagree because...

You have brought up a good point, but...

My point is...

I'd like to add...

I don't understand...

Could you elaborate more on...

Excuse me...

My opinion is...

When weighing the options, I think...