

Lesson Plan

Classroom Debate

Book: *The Debate about Medical Marijuana*

Series: Pros and Cons

Level: Voyager

Objective

To help students practice constructing arguments that are supported by specific facts, presenting those arguments in speeches, and responding to objections raised by people who support an opposing view.

Supplies

- At least two copies of *The Debate about Medical Marijuana*
- Paper and pencils
- Timer

Before the Activity

Have students read *The Debate about Medical Marijuana*.

Activity

Lawmakers around the United States are debating whether medical marijuana should be legal. Some states have already made medical marijuana—or even recreational marijuana—legal. But it is illegal in other states. People on both sides of the issue use reasons and evidence to argue their points when they debate this issue. Today, students will practice using evidence to support their statements by having an in-class debate.

Divide students into two teams. One team will be the affirmative team. This team will argue that medical marijuana should be legalized. The other team, the negative team, will argue that medical marijuana should remain illegal. Explain that the two teams will face off in a four-part debate. First, the affirmative team will give a speech that lists reasons why medical marijuana should be made legal. Second, the negative team will give a speech that refutes, or gives evidence against, those reasons. Third, the affirmative team will give a speech that negates, or explains away, the points raised by the negative team. Finally, the negative team will give one last speech that sums up why medical marijuana should remain illegal, countering the affirmative team's points with more evidence. Each speech should be about five minutes long.

Give each team half an hour to read through *The Debate about Medical Marijuana*, writing down specific facts, studies, and points that support their argument. Each team should choose two

students to be their speakers. Each of these students should take notes, using the facts and points their team members found to construct a speech. The speech should include statements about why the team's position is correct, specific evidence that supports those statements, and logic or reasoning that explains why that evidence is important.

When it is each student's turn to speak, that student should come to the front of the class. Students can bring their notes up with them to the front of the class when they give their speeches. However, they must stay within the five-minute time limit. Use the timer to keep track of how long each student's speech is, giving the student a warning when there are only 30 seconds left. At this point, the student should start concluding their speech. Then have the next speaker come to the front of the class. Remind each speaker to make sure to address any points brought up by the previous speaker and to explain why these points are incorrect or unimportant.

Evaluation

Did the students speak persuasively? Did the speakers refer to specific facts and studies from the text? Did the speakers remember to address the opposing team's points and explain why that team was not correct? The team that did the best job of supporting its position with evidence and reasoning wins the debate.

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' speaking and listening standards, grade 8 (SL 8.3; SL 8.4).