

TOPIC: SPRUCE OR SYNTHETIC:
WHICH TREE SLEIGHS?



THE GREAT DEBATE

SCIENCE MATTERS



Support opinions with facts

Develop communication skills

Each debate has 8
character cards - 4
roles are pro topic and
4 roles are against topic

ANYA SNOW

Mother of Seven

Nothing compares to a real Christmas tree. Every year, we make our annual trip to the Real Tree Farm, where our family ritual unfolds: a solid hour of arguing over which tree is the one. My kids dash around like they've never seen trees before, poking each other with branches and "connecting with nature" by getting covered in pine needles. And while the scent of fresh pine is masked by complaints of "my hands are sticky" and "I can't feel my toes," - it's still the most magical time of year and our favorite tradition.

Point: The experience of picking out a family creates a unique experience a fake tree can't replicate.

Probing Question: How could a fake tree evoke the same nostalgia and close nature my family will cherish for generations?

JETT JINGLE

Small Business Owner

Getting a real Christmas tree isn't just a holiday spirit. When you buy from a local tree farm, you give a high-five to those who work hard to grow real trees. If you buy from a tree farm, you're not just getting a tree but supporting your local economy. Why hand your money over to a big store for a plastic tree that'll shed needles all over your attic? A real tree brings life and cheer into your living room and looks much merrier than a sad, lonely imposter hiding in the corner.

Point: Buying real Christmas trees supports the local economy.

Probing Question: Shouldn't we prioritize supporting local, sustainable businesses over purchasing mass-produced, synthetic alternatives from overseas factories?

 **THE GREAT DEBATE**
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**Spruce or Synthetic:
Which Tree Sleights?**

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DEBATE TOPIC:

Spruce or Synthetic: Which Tree Sleighs?

Student worksheets for students actively debating OR for students in audience

Research Topic:

Research using articles and/or websites that help you understand the controversy behind the topic. Write down the information you find in the debate.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Questions:

Think about
Questions s

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

DEBATE TOPIC:

Spruce or Synthetic: Which Tree Sleighs?

Character Name: _____

Character's Position: For / Against

Supporting Evidence:

Read your characters argument, research some facts to support your evidence below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Planning your rebuttal:

Think about the opposer's defense and plan a rebuttal. Use the resources, write your response below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL DEBATE:

- Do not interrupt when others are speaking
- Keep answers short and concise
- Listen carefully to your opponent and ask questions
- Speak calmly and politely
- There are no bad ideas
- Do not raise your voice

RECORD THE DEBATE:

Those who are for the position
feel this way because

Both sides agree that

Those who are against the
position feel this way because

TAKE A STANCE:

You have just heard compelling arguments from both sides. Use the space below to explain your own opinion using supporting facts.

Teacher Guide provides objectives, benefits, and options for a successful debate.

DEBATE OBJECTIVES:

- To practice debating and
- Think about different point
- Use facts to support opinio
- To structure and argumen
- Understand debates have

KEY VOCABULARY:

Fact – a thing that is known or proven to be true
Opinion – a belief or attitude about something
Point – a short sentence that explains why you
Explanation – how and why your point is true.
Pro – An argument or consideration in favor of
Con – An
Rebuttal

BENEFIT

- Build co
- to speak
- Become
- reasoned
- Develop
- assess m
- Evaluate
- ideas and
- Collabo
- Accept
- and relat

TEACHER GUIDE

FOR BEGINNERS, MODEL A DEBATE:

In order to get your students into the Great Debate mindset, begin by modeling a debate like "Homework should be

opinion, point, explanation, meaning.

TEACHER GUIDE

NOW YOU'RE READY TO START THE GREAT DEBATE:

Choose your debate style (see character cards). Each debate position for/against the topic is a point that helps the student when they find facts to support their question which they will use to present opposite points of view.

Students Actively Debating

If students are actively debating, first, they will fill out their character cards and find three facts for each side of the debate. The other side of the debate should plan to come up with

When prep and research are presented first.

Students As Audience:

If your debate option includes having articles or websites read, controversy of the topic. Ask up with questions to ask both

After Debate:

After the debate is complete, information presented during the debate. Was there anything they agreed on what they just heard using

Assessment:

- A grading rubric has been
- A peer assessment has been
- behavior of each team.

TEACHER GUIDE

DEBATE OPTIONS:

THREE QUESTION DEBATE (ONE CLASS PERIOD)

Divide the class into two teams. Small groups focus on their character cards.

Alternate which team delivers main points first.

15 minutes: Prep/Research

3 minutes: Team A Main Points from character cards

3 minutes: Team B Main Points from character cards

2 minutes: Team A Rebuttal (Q1, Q2, Q3)

2 minutes: Team B Rebuttal (Q1, Q2, Q3)

Debrief

SMALL GROUP DEBATE (ONE CLASS PERIOD)

Generate two debate teams of 2-4 students (cards assigned).

Often done multiple times per semester until each student has had a chance to debate a topic

5-10 minutes: Prep/Research

5 minutes: Opening Statement (Team A)

5 minutes: Opening Statement (Team B)

5 minutes: Rebuttal (Team A)

5 minutes: Rebuttal (Team B)

15 minutes: Audience ("media reporters") questions both teams

Debrief

TOWN HALL (ONE CLASS PERIOD)

Assign some students roles to represent.

Introduce topic.

5-10 minutes: Prep/Research

2 minute persuasive speeches (pro)

2 minute persuasive speeches (con)

2 minute: Q and A each side

10 minutes: Audience ("citizens") question both teams
 "Citizens" vote



Debate Team Name: _____

There are two Assessment Rubrics provided—one for the teacher to grade and one for students to assess debate teams based on their behavior in debate.

GRADING RUBRIC:

Criteria
Organization & clarity Main argument outlined in a clear and orderly way
Use of evidence Reasons are given that are supported by cited facts
Use of rebuttal Ability to uphold position against questioning from opposing side
Presentation style Ability to clearly express opinion & persuade audience
Comments



Debate Team and Position: _____

Speaker Behavior	Tally	Points	Subtotal
Speaks directly to the topic		+1	
Uses "because" statements to support their side		+1	
Makes good eye contact		+1	
Showed good listening skills		+1	
Builds on or adds to statements of team		+2	
Disagrees using appropriate responses		+2	
Speaks off topic		-1	
Repeats information without adding own statements		-1	
Interrupts or deliberately disrupts discussion		-2	
Negative, demeaning, or rude		-3	
Total points			



Name of Assessor: _____

Debate Team and Position: _____

Speaker Behavior	Tally	Points	Subtotal
Speaks directly to the topic		+1	
Uses "because" statements to support their side		+1	
Makes good eye contact		+1	
Showed good listening skills		+1	
Builds on or adds to statements of team		+2	
Disagrees using appropriate responses		+2	
Speaks off topic		-1	
Repeats information without adding own statements		-1	
Interrupts or deliberately disrupts discussion		-2	
Negative, demeaning, or rude		-3	
Total points			



**Classroom posters
also included!**

I'd like to take
issue with
what you just
said.

According to
other side,
opponent

USEFUL D



KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL DEBATE

Speak
calmly
and politely



Listen
carefully
to your
opponent and
ask questions



Do not raise
your voice



Keep answers
short and
concise



Do not
interrupt
when others
are speaking





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