**LESSON PLAN**

**It’s up for Debate: Yellowstone National Park**

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Introduction:

This lesson plan is primarily formatted for use within an English/Language Arts class. The focus of the plan is two-fold: to learn and utilize the Lincoln-Douglas debate format; and, to learn about issues currently faced in the greater Yellowstone National Park area. Ideally, this lesson will be taught as a cross-curricular unit. The issues at play in Yellowstone National Park provide a wonderful opportunity to work together in a multi-disciplinary approach, with English/Language Arts and Social Studies as the anchor subjects. Some sample ideas for a cross-curricular approach are included in this lesson plan. Additionally, the debate fundamentals learned through this lesson can be applied to other areas of interest to your students.

Please also note that this lesson encourages a group approach and divides the students into teams of debaters. If three resolutions are assigned, then an average class size of 30-36 students would be needed for this plan. In this case, each team would consist of 5-6 students. Two teams are needed for each resolution: one team for the affirmative position and one team for the negative position. The lesson, however, can be adapted to a smaller population classes by altering the duties and number of students per team. In upper grade levels or advanced study situations, it may be best to develop additional resolutions and assign one or two students per team (one team for the affirmative and one team for the negative). Alternately, the number of resolutions could be reduced to account for smaller class sizes while maintaining groups of 5-6 students per team.

This lesson does not necessarily call for formal judging of the debate. The purpose of this lesson is to learn about the Lincoln-Douglas debate format and foster an informed and civil discussion of the issues at hand, not to judge debate skills (especially since this will likely be a first debate experience for many students). Students will be assessed through a position paper at the end of the debate. Additionally, it is encouraged that a teacher led discussion would take place after each debate to debrief the students in regard to the debate experience. If a formal judging atmosphere is desired or deemed appropriate, then teachers should seek to obtain judging forms from their school’s speech and debate club or download a form from a simple online search.

**It’s up for Debate: Yellowstone National Park**

**Lincoln-Douglas Debate**

Grade Levels: **8 - 12**

**Lesson Overview**

This lesson presents students with an understanding of the basic Lincoln-Douglas debate format. In addition, it will provide students with the opportunity to research and study current issues faced in Yellowstone National Park. While this lesson focuses on issues related to Yellowstone National Park, this lesson can be adapted to fit a variety of topics. Utilizing current real world situations will help to make the debate process more interesting to students. Similarly, this lesson format can be adjusted to serve any number of whole classes and/or small group situations.

**Objectives**

* Students will use their research skills.
* Students will understand a position well enough to be able to respond to arguments against it.
* Students will understand the Lincoln-Douglas style of debate and the debate process.
* Students will follow the rules and procedures of a good debate.
* Students will judge their own and their peers' debate performances.

**Materials**

* Introductory YNP reference materials (Power Point and/or video)
* Student handout outlining the procedures of a Lincoln-Douglas debate
* References about topic being covered
* Time clock
* Assessment outline

**Procedures**

* 1. Present overview of Yellowstone National Park (power point, video, and/or other resources).
  2. Identify the controversial issues face in YNP: buffalo/brucellosis, bio-prospecting, and winter usage (offer sample affirmative/negative positions on the issues)
  3. Assign teams; distribute L-D debate Student handout.
  4. Discuss the procedures of the debate. Allow students to review the position paper outline.
  5. Allow groups to brainstorm about the position and devise arguments.
  6. Students should research their positions.
  7. Each group will turn in a position paper which outlines the support their position. These papers must have a bibliography. The paper should also identify possible holes in their arguments (areas where the other side of the debate might attack).
  8. Run the debate.

**Sample resolutions (topics to be debated):**

* When in conflict, an individual's personal property or livelihood should not be valued over a bison herd’s right to migrate.
* Snowmobile usage is justified in YNP because the area is public land.
* Bio-prospecting on public lands is unjust.

**Cross-curricular lesson ideas/connections**

**Social Studies -- historical origin of the Lincoln-Douglas debate format**

In 1859, Senator Stephen A. Douglas was up for re-election to his Illinois Senate seat. His opponent was Abraham Lincoln. During the campaign, the two men faced off in a The Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858, a series of seven debates on the issue of slavery. On Election Day, Douglas was re-elected, but Lincoln's position on the issue and his inspiring eloquence had earned him wide recognition that would aid his eventual bid for the presidency in the Presidential Elections of 1860.

**Social Studies – economic impact (focus on opportunity costs of various issues)**

Economic actions have secondary effects which lead to the law of unintended consequences. Students can utilize the economic theory of opportunity cost as a means to evaluate choices and make decisions with regard to the issues present in Yellowstone National Park. This type of evaluation would be particularly advantageous to students as they research and prepared their arguments for the Lincoln-Douglas debates.

**Science – bio-prospecting issues**

Bio-prospecting is the search for useful scientific information from genetic or biochemical resources. Research in Yellowstone National Park has led to important discoveries which benefit mankind. Yet, one must consider the consequences of prospecting in public areas. For instance, is the environment unique? Are there other places the research could be conducted? Students will need to consider who has the right to prospect and potentially profit from lands held in public trust?

**STUDENT HANDOUT**

**Lincoln-Douglas Style Debate Procedure**

This style of debate has two sides. This style is very reliant on time and good decorum. The two sides of the debate are called:

**Affirmative position** – in favor of the proposition

**Negative position** – opposed to the proposition

**Divide the following positions/jobs to your team members. Remember that all team members are equally responsible for the research on the position.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Affirmative Position** | **Negative Position** |
| **Lead Debater** – presents the overall argument of the Affirmative position  **Name**: | **Lead Debater** – presents the overall argument of the Negative position. **Name**: |
| **Question Asker** – Asks the Negative position team questions about its argument. **Name:** | **Question Asker** – Asks the Affirmative position team questions about its argument. **Name**: |
| **Question Answerer** – Responsible for answering questions about team's position. **Name**: | **Question Answerer** – Responsible for answering questions about team's position. **Name**: |
| **Rebutter** – Responds to the arguments raised by the questions. **Name**: | **Rebutter** – Responds to the arguments raised by the questions. **Name**: |
| **Closer** – Summarizes the Affirmative position and refers to new issues raised in the debate. **Name**: | **Closer** – Summarizes the Negative position and refers to new issues raised in the debate. **Name**: |
| **\*\*Moderator** – Announces the debate and calls debate to order. **Name**: | **\*\*Timekeeper** – Notifies speakers of time constraints. **Name**: |

\*\* These positions may be assigned by or held by the teacher.

**Lincoln-Douglas Style Debate Procedures, cont.**

**Read through the following procedures so that you are very clear about what is expected of you.**

**Step by Step Procedures:**

1. **MODERATOR**: announces the debate proposition. For example:
2. **MODERATOR**: introduces each speaker after the Timekeeper calls time.
3. **TIMEKEEPER**: keeps track of the time and lets participants know when they have one minute left to speak and informs them when their time is up.
4. **AFFIRMATIVE LEAD DEBATER**: allotted 5 minutes for the presentation of the Affirmative position.
5. **NEGATIVE QUESTION ASKER**: allotted 3 minutes to ask questions of Question Answerer from the Affirmative position team.
6. **NEGATIVE LEAD DEBATER**: allotted 5 minutes for the presentation of the Negative position argument.
7. **AFFIRMATIVE QUESTION ASKER**: allotted 3 minutes to ask questions of the Question Answerer from the Negative position team.
8. **AFFIRMATIVE REBUTTER**: allotted 3 minutes to respond to the arguments raised by the questions.
9. **NEGATIVE REBUTTER**: allotted 3 minutes to respond to the arguments raised by the questions.
10. **AFFIRMATIVE CLOSER**: allotted 5 minutes to summarize position, referring to new issues raised during the debate.
11. **NEGATIVE CLOSER**: allotted 5 minutes to summarize position, referring to new issues raised during the debate.
12. **OPTIONAL**: conduct a class survey, ballot, or vote to determine the winning position.

**Lincoln-Douglas Style Debate Position Paper Assessment**

*Students should use this outline as a format for their position papers.*

**Members of the team:**

Editor of Position Paper:

Moderator/Timekeeper:

Lead Debater:

Question Asker:

Question Answerer:

Rebutter:

Closer:

Others:

**Position Paper:**

Were the arguments supported and sourced?

Did the introduction present the argument well and did the conclusion wrap up the argument well?

Were the arguments logical and reasonable?

**Debate**

Overall presentation of argument:

Ability to respond to the challenges of the opposition:

Eye contact, voice volume, poise:

Logical and cogent responses:

Ability to work as a group: