

DREAM OF A NATION

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10th Grade Common Core Alignment Solution Debate

Class debates give your students an opportunity to develop 21st century skills they will need throughout their professional lives: information literacy, problem solving, persuasion, public speaking and civil dialogue. This unit plan gives teachers tools to aid students in crafting an argument for an in-class, solution debate. A position debate differs from a congressional debate in that students are not required to craft pro and con arguments on one topic. Rather, students are given a problem and then asked to determine the best solution to the problem, presenting this position to their peers in a persuasive and informative way.

This process is aligned to English Language Arts Common Core Standards for 10th grade and utilizes the rich resource of *Dream of a Nation*. *Dream of a Nation* is a high Lexile level (1340), non-fiction text which aptly supports the Common Core emphasis on text range, quality and complexity. All *Dream of a Nation* chapters and articles are applicable for this Unit Plan. The standards addressed are the following:

Common Core Information Reading Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.5 Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

Common Core Writing Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1a Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1b Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1c Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1d Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1e Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Common Core Speaking and Listening Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1c Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1d Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Common Core Language Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.6 Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will gain understanding of a problem related to a current social, political, environmental or economic issue found in *Dream of a Nation*.
- Students will complete further research on the topic independently, take effective notes on the topic, and synthesize the information they research into a persuasive statement, in which they offer a solution they find most compelling.
- Students will present their solution to their peers, using their notes but not reading directly from their notes, in a clear voice and utilizing the conventions of Standard English.
- Students will be able to respond to questions and comments made by their peers after their speech, in a clear voice and utilizing the conventions of Standard English.

Teacher Planning:

This is a unit plan. Depending on length of class time and student reading and writing ability this unit can take from two to five weeks. Students need to have read one chapter from *Dream of a Nation*. Strategies for helping students understand readings are located in the [teacher resources section of our website](#).

Unit Plan: Class Debate using *Dream of a Nation*

1. Choosing a Problem

Student positions will be determined by the problem you present to them. There are many potential problems addressed in *Dream of a Nation*. Below is a list, which corresponds to the chapters of *Dream of a Nation*. This is a list of suggestions only and does not represent all potential problems presented in *Dream of a Nation*.

1. **A People Centered and Accountable Government:** How the government can: increase citizen's trust, enable more opportunities for direct democracy, empower active citizenship, make elections fair, lessen campaign spending, reduce military spending, lessen corporate influence, reduce the partisan divide, promote transparency in government.

2. **Citizen Stewardship:** How Americans can: reduce carbon emissions, reduce individual and family ecological footprints, eliminate overconsumption, implement sustainable living, redefine the American Dream, organize local and global communities to implement meaningful change, empower youth.
3. **Creating a Stable and Equitable Economy:** How American can: address the wealth imbalance, increase employment, rectify the salary imbalance between CEOs and average workers, increase expenditures in locally owned businesses, create more equitable tax codes, switch from GDP to GPI, educate Americans to be employed in Green Industries, advance a New Economy.
4. **A News Media that Informs and Empowers:** How Americans can: enable more independently owned media, enable more diversity in media representation, change the content of media from sensationalism to constructive journalism, increase confidence in the media, increase local reporters covering national issues, increase public spending on public media, increase thoughtful conversation in media.
5. **Aiming for the Best in Education:** How America can: fund all students in US public schools equally, increase student achievement, eliminate the achievement gap, increase funding to rebuild public education infrastructure, eliminate drop outs, ensure quality teachers and classes for all students, incorporate environmental literacy into all academic curricula, make higher education more affordable.
6. **Re-Powering America:** How America can: lessens our reliance on coal, increase conservation efforts, encourage behavior modifications which result in energy conservation, reduce carbon emissions and domestic oil consumption, generate electricity without generating carbon, increase energy efficiency at home and school, cultivate alternatives to nuclear energy, promote cleaner transportation, reduce logging and clear-cutting.
7. **Improving Health and Avoiding Alarming Trends:** How Americans can: reduce childhood obesity, reduce risk of preventable diseases, reduce GDP spending on healthcare, eliminate for profit health care, increase American overall health system performance as is measured by the WHO, change the negative health impacts of Western lifestyles, make whole foods more affordable than processed foods, reduce subsidies to agribusiness, reduce toxins in our environment
8. **Ending Poverty and Building a Common Wealth:** How America can: expand tax credits, increase availability of childcare, implement a living wage—rather than a minimum wage, reform the welfare system, implement free job training, fund Pell Grants, increase affordable housing, end global extreme poverty, help people to build self-reliance globally, reduce foreign aid food grown in the US.
9. **Re-Imagining Business:** How America can: reduce importation of forced and child-labor manufactured products, reduce deforestation, increase sustainable farming, become contentious consumers, boycott companies who contribute to social and environmental issues, encourage innovation in business and technology, redefine the bottom line for business, reduce foreign oil and wood dependency, insist on ethically produced goods.
10. **Strengthening Communities:** How American can: reduce the number of incarcerated persons in the US, increase incomes for Native Americans, increase compensation for America's farmers, extend civil rights to all persons residing in the United States, improve urban environments for environmental equality, increase food security, reduce food monopolies.
11. **Waging Peace:** How America can: reallocate military spending, reduce the US global military presence, reduce influence of weapons manufacturers and other military industries on national government, encourage nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, see negotiation as a viable alternative to war and foster non-violent alternatives to resolve conflict.
12. **A Nation that Shines:** How American can: address irreversible tipping points immediately, encourage real wealth creation, embrace technological and social innovations, increase social entrepreneurship, encourage concern for global rather than national humanity.

2. Identifying a Strong Position

Once the problem has been chosen then students need to decide which solution they find most compelling. Students can re-read particular articles they found interesting and take notes. They may find through reading that the most compelling solution is listed in the reading. Students can also go to the [solution page](#) on the *Dream of a Nation* website. They can click on the relevant chapter and find partner organizations and relevant legislation, media and discussion regarding some of the proposed solutions listed in the text. These pages can help students decide which solution is the strongest—in their opinion.

3. Gather Facts

Once students have a good idea of the solution they find most compelling have them take notes on this solution. They should explain:

1. What problem does this solution address
2. What is this solution? Explain the details in a concise way so others can understand what this solution entails.
3. The most positive benefits of this proposed solution (usually limited to three strong points).
4. Some potential drawbacks to the proposed solution and why they are not substantive.
5. Actions people can begin immediately to support the proposed solution.

In order for students to find the answers to these questions teach them the Trash or Treasure method of note taking instruction:

<http://mrjhlbrary.pbworks.com/f/Reading+for+Information+T+%26+T+note+taking+jansen.pdf>

They should organize the information they take down on this graphic organizer:

<http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/idearake.pdf> Coach them to only write down information which directly answers the above questions.

5. Write an Outline

Prior to their first draft have students complete an outline in which they organize the information they have gathered in their note taking. [This outline](#) should be used to organize their speech.

6. Speaking

Students should be called upon to speak. They should stand in front of their audience and deliver their solution in a convincing manner. Each of these speeches allows a maximum of three minutes, with a one-minute questioning period.

Speeches should be delivered **extemporaneously**, which means spoken spontaneously based on an outline of notes, rather than recited word-for-word from a manuscript. To do this, a speaker must be well researched and prepared with ideas before arriving at the contest. S/he will deliver the specific solution and introduce new ideas and perspectives rebuilding his/her own solution, rather than simply repeating ideas shared by other speakers.

In refuting, speakers should refer to specific arguments made by peers and **never** attack the individual (*ad hominem* fallacy). Be kind, generous and gracious with remarks, for example: “While Joe’s argument to close the military base is well-intentioned...” It is also effective to refer to general themes/threads made in arguments on a particular side, synthesizing and weighing the overall “big picture” impact.

Effective speeches that respond to problems with viable solutions and come as a result of critical **reading** and **thinking**— in addition to thorough research.

Asking **questions** helps clarify confusing points in the solution and shows a genuine interest in what other speakers are saying. *Questions* usually are not scored by judges, but how well **speakers answer** is scored. Answering questions well shows a judge the speaker can defend his/her claims and has sound knowledge of the topic. When answering, it’s best to succinctly answer just the question – no more, no less. Coach students to not avoid answering questions and give their best effort.

7. Evaluation

Speeches can be evaluated by the classroom teacher, students in the class, students on the school debate team, administrators or community members. Any judges should be given the [scoring rubric](#) and [guide](#). Students should take notes on each presentation in order to ask questions as soon as the speaker is done. Teachers should also collect students' outlines after each speech in order to evaluate student research and note taking.

Debates can be filmed and each winning presentation can be shown on the school news, local community access channel or schooltube.

Please send *Dream of a Nation* examples of your students' finished essays and suggestions for improvement of our Unit Plan. We appreciate your feedback and insights.