

Putting Nuclear Power on Trial

Lesson Overview: Class will be split into 2 teams. One team will present arguments for the use of nuclear power, the other will present arguments against the use of nuclear power

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Subject(s): Social Studies, ELA

Suggested Grade Level(s): 7th-10th

Time Duration: 5 40-45 minute class periods

Common Core State Standards Addressed:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL Standard 4

- Present claims and ideas emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples. (Grades 7-8)
- Present information, finding and evidence clearly, concisely and logically. (Grades 9-10)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI Standard 8

- Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims (Grades 7-8)
- 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. (Grades 9-10)

Objectives:

- Students will research evidence for and against using nuclear power
- Students will evaluate evidence and choose the best evidence to prove their side of the nuclear debate
- Students will present their arguments in the form of a trial
- Students will evaluate their arguments and the arguments of the other side

Materials:

- Suggested shared reading: <http://www.howstuffworks.com/nuclear-power.htm>
- Handout: Note-taking sheet
- Handout: Reflection sheet

Activities and Procedures:

DAY 1: Start research

1. Introduce task for the week: Students will be putting nuclear power on trial, evaluating the arguments for and against the use of nuclear power.
2. Split students into 2 teams – assign 1 team for the use of nuclear power and 1 team against nuclear power.
3. Based on these teams, split students into research groups of 3 students each. Each group should have a researcher, a note-taker, and a time-keeper.
4. Pass out 1 note-taking sheet to each group.
5. Explain that students will first research to define “nuclear power,” then they will begin researching for their side of the argument. They will take notes on the sheet provided.
6. Send students off to research in groups.
7. Students research in their group of 3.
8. Teacher circulating.
9. Students turn in note-taking sheet.

DAY 2: Complete research

1. Hand back note-taking sheet, students continue researching.
2. With 15 minutes remaining in class, students will convene in their team and record research onto chart paper.
3. Students will talk through each piece of evidence, noting relative strengths and weaknesses.

DAY 3: Organizing arguments

1. Students are given the procedure for tomorrow's trial.
2. Students should organize their arguments to fit into the procedure.
3. Have students consider questions the other team might ask to poke holes in their arguments.

DAY 4: Trial

1. **OPENING ARGUMENTS:** Each team gets 5 minutes to present their most compelling arguments.
2. 10 minute recess to talk in teams.
3. Each team gets 5 minutes to respond to the other's arguments with counter-evidence.

4. Each team gets to ask 2 questions and the other team must answer in 3 minutes.
5. CLOSING ARGUMENTS: each team gets 3 minutes to summarize why they should win the case.

DAY 5: Reflection

1. Students and teacher will talk whole-group about the trial, lessons learned, and what our nation's plan should be for the future.

Assessments:

- Research and interpretation recorded on note-taking sheet. See the note-taking sheet attachment for scoring key.
- Group presentation in trial

Adaptations:

All assessment measures can be adapted to fit your population. Some students may be graded simply on how much their thinking grew, their willingness to participate, and helpfulness to others. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to adapt the readings to student ability levels prior to assigning them for homework or using them in class. All materials can be shortened or adapted for language.

CIRCLE: TEAM 1 (for nuclear power)

TEAM 2 (against nuclear power)

Researcher name:

Note-taker name:

Timekeeper name:

What is nuclear power?

SOURCE (ex. EPA.GOV)	EVIDENCE	HOW CAN WE USE THIS EVIDENCE FOR OUR ARGUMENT?

TEACHER KEY

2 pts for accurate description of nuclear power	___ / 8
2 pts for each credible source	___ / 8
2 pts for each description of evidence	___ / 8
5 pts for each interpretation of evidence to use as argument	___ / 20
TOTAL:	___ / 44