

## CHAPTER VI

# Suggested Units in Discussion and Debate for Secondary Schools

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**I**N studying discussion and argumentation, it is important that high-school students know fundamental information and principles, but it is equally important that they develop skill in the practices of discussion and argumentation and debate. Both objectives can readily be achieved by the use of a systematic plan for such instruction.

Such a plan is offered in the following units in discussion and debate to aid the organization of work in these areas. The secondary-school debate topic, *Conscription of Manpower*, can be conveniently used in both the discussions and debates indicated. The units can be covered in approximately fifty hours of instruction; if the unit on the debate tournament is shortened, this time can be reduced. General objectives for such units might be:

1. To learn the essential theory and principles of debate and discussion.
2. To develop skill in reasoned discourse in both discussion and debate.
3. To develop skill in reflective thinking.
4. To develop an understanding of, and a consideration for, the opinions of others.
5. To develop the ability to work co-operatively with other students in discussion groups and on debate teams.

### UNIT I. PREPARATION FOR ARGUMENTATION

#### *Specific Objectives*

1. To develop an understanding of the place of discussion and debate in a democracy.
2. To train students in the investigation and use of sources of information needed in discussion and debate.
3. To become proficient in the selection and wording of subjects for discussion and propositions for debate.

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4. To develop skill in the analysis of a problem and a proposition.
5. To improve the ability of the student to solve problems. (Helpful teacher references on Unit I include: James H. McBurney, J. M. O'Neill, and G. E. Mills, *Argumentation and Debate*, Macmillan, New York, 1951; James H. McBurney and Kenneth G. Hance, *Discussion in Human Affairs*, Harper, New York, 1950; Alan Nichols, *Discussion and Debate*, Harcourt, Brace, and Co., New York, 1941; Henry L. Ewbank and J. J. Auer, *Discussion and Debate*, Crofts, New York, 1941.)

### Class Sessions

#### 1. The Place of Discussion and Debate in a Democracy

##### Lecture

- a. The purpose of discussion and debate.
- b. The pattern of discussion as compared to that of debate.
- c. Contemporary uses of discussion and debate.

#### 2. First Steps in Discussion

##### Lecture

- a. Considerations on "the selection of problems for discussion and propositions for debate."
- b. Investigation of the problem and the proposition.
- c. "Preliminary investigation": using the library, collecting information, recording materials.

##### Activities

A conducted tour of the library under the leadership of a librarian.

#### 3. Analysis of the Basic Problem, "Using Discussion Methods."

##### Activities

- a. "Formulation and phrasing of the basic problem." (The subject, *Conscription of Manpower*, can be divided so that small group discussions under staff direction can be held.)
- b. "Analysis of the basic problem." (Attention to present conditions, observable effects, causes, etc. Since this part of the assignment will come at the latter part of the hour, research activities in the library should be prepared and assigned before the conclusion of the session.)

#### 4. Analysis of the Basic Problem (continued)

##### Activities

- a. "Setting the criteria for the solution" should be included.
- b. The instructor should make clear the relation of this portion of the process to the understanding of the issue of *need* in the affirmative debate case to be developed later.

#### 5. Methods of Analysis (continued)

##### Activities

- a. "Possible solutions and evaluations of these solutions." (Again the work can be carried on in small discussion groups. It may be necessary to divide this phase. The

first hour would then be spent in setting the groundwork for the discussion; *i. e.*, getting the major solutions before the group and finding what knowledge is needed. The second part should be spent in research by small groups assigned to work co-operatively in investigating the specific solutions.)

#### 6. Methods of Analysis (continued)

##### *Activities*

- a. "Possible solutions and their evaluation" (continued). (From the previous preparatory stages, this session should be devoted entirely to the discussion and evaluation of the solutions.)

#### 7. Analysis of the Debate Proposition

##### *Lecture and Discussion*

- a. The distinction between the analysis of a problem for discussion and that of a proposition for debate should be restated and explained.
- b. Class discussion of "issues"—their nature, purpose, and methods for discovering them—should be carried on with the group as a whole.

(See James M. O'Neill and R. L. Cortright, *Debate and Oral Discussion*, Century, New York, 1931, Chap. V; Russell H. Wagner, *Handbook of Argumentation*, Ronald, New York, 1938, Chap. II; Ray K. Immel and Ruth Whipple, *Debating for High Schools*, Ginn, New York, 1929, Chap. III.)

#### 8. Analysis of the Debate Proposition (continued)

##### *Activities*

- a. In small discussion groups attempt to find the basic issues in the proposition for debate.
- b. Each discussion group works as a study unit and prepares issues from the materials at hand.
- c. Each group then sends a representative to meet with representatives from the other groups in a general session, where the issues are considered in a "forum discussion."

#### 9. Analysis of the Debate Proposition (continued)

##### *Activities*

- a. Panel discussion and forum on the issues of the debate proposition; session to include the entire group.

#### 10. Analysis of the Debate Proposition (continued) (Special study of materials and information, and of their relation to the issues of the proposition)

- a. This period should be under the direction of a member of the staff.
- b. The basic purpose is to find material for case construction, which is related to the issues that have been discussed.

- c. It is wise to have careful supervision of this research period because of the essential nature of the program and the need for developing good habits of research.
- d. It is suggested that the supervisor check carefully on methods of research.

## UNIT II. CONSTRUCTION OF THE DEBATE CASE

### *Specific Objectives*

1. To teach the form, methods, and technique of outlining arguments.
2. To develop the ability to organize the debate case.
3. To learn the kinds, uses, and tests of evidence.
4. To secure an understanding of reasoning, and to acquire skill in its use in argumentation.
5. To learn methods of support and development of the affirmative and negative cases.

### *Class Sessions*

#### 1. Methods of Outlining

##### *Lecture*

- a. General methods of outlining.
- b. Applied methods of outlining as they relate to use in debate: case outlines and briefs.

##### *Activities*

- a. Have students outline argumentative material that is given to them in written form. (This will provide the instructor with a method for determining just how much work on this basic outlining needs to be done.)
2. The Development of the Case from the Issues  
*Lecture on the development of the case from the issues.*

- a. Methods of division and partition.
- b. Methods of case construction.
- c. Methods and philosophy of:
  - (1) Burden of proof.
  - (2) *Prima facie* case.
  - (3) Presumption.
 (See McBurney, O'Neill, and Mills, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-169.)

#### 3. Methods of Support

##### *Lecture*

- a. The relationships between evidence and reasoning, and their application to the case. (See O'Neill and Cortright, *op. cit.*, Chaps. VII and VIII; Immel and Whipple, *op. cit.*, Chaps. III and V; Wagner, *op. cit.*, Chap. III.)

##### *Activities*

- a. In small groups have each person present both evidence and reasoning in support of some argument from the case which

has been under consideration. This work should be informal in the group. Each person should present his argument and support; and then submit to questioning.

- b. Again in small groups working co-operatively, develop an affirmative case.
- c. In a general session (to follow the group meetings and study period) representatives of each group should present the outline of the case which their group developed. This session should be a panel-forum type of presentation.
- d. This period should be a supervised research period to develop materials relating to both cases.
- e. In small groups, run a series of direct-clash discussions on the major issues of the debate. Have one person present the affirmative and one person the negative case on an issue; then have the group discuss the merits and weaknesses of the case. Have the group as a whole discuss the affirmative case on an issue, and then discuss the negative case on that same issue. (For details see E. H. Paget, "Rules for the Direct-Clash Debate Plan," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, XXIII, pp. 431-433.)

#### 4. Affirmative Case

##### *Activities*

- a. The entire session should be taken up with the general discussion and evaluation of the cases being reported by members of the panel; *i. e.*, checking the reasoning and the evidence used to support the case.

#### 5. Negative Case

##### *Activities*

- a. Develop a negative case in small group study as in No. 3.
- b. Present the negative case as in No. 4.

### UNIT III. REFUTATION

#### *Specific Objectives*

1. To acquire an understanding of the nature, principles, and uses of refutation.
2. To understand fallacies, both regular and special types.
3. To develop practical skill in refutation.

#### *Class Sessions*

##### 1. Methods of Refutation

###### *Lecture*

- a. The principles and methods of refutation and rebuttal; their place in debate; their use and misuse.
- b. Fallacies: their detection and disposal.

**Activities**

- a. Demonstration of refutation and rebuttal before the entire group by members of the class.
- b. Evaluation of the demonstration and discussions of weaknesses and merits.
- c. In small groups, have individuals present arguments; then allow others to refute them. The following procedure may be used: each member of the group presents an argument, affirmative or negative; another then refutes that argument as well as possible; the group then evaluates the work, and proceeds to another argument.
- d. Prepared slips stating a single argument are distributed, each student receiving one; he prepares his refutation, then delivers it before the class; the group and the instructor criticize the work.

(Consult O'Neill and Cortright, *op. cit.*, Chap. XI; McBurney, O'Neill, and Mills, *op. cit.*, Chap. XVI.)

**2. Fallacies****Lecture**

- a. Expand the earlier presentation on fallacies.
- b. Show the relationship between the fallacies of reflective thinking and fallacies of demonstration.

**UNIT IV. ORAL LANGUAGE AND DELIVERY****Specific Objectives**

1. To understand the principles of effective oral language.
2. To understand the principles of effective delivery of argument.
3. To develop proficiency in the use of oral language and in the delivery of argument.

**Class Sessions****1. Methods of Style and Delivery****Lecture**

- a. Use of language as it relates to argumentative discourse.
- b. Methods of delivery in argumentation.

**Activities**

- a. Demonstration by members of the group in a short class debate. (See O'Neill and Cortright, *op. cit.*, Chap. XIII.)

**UNIT V. A DEBATE TOURNAMENT****Specific Objectives**

1. To provide experiences in competitive debating in which the study of theory and practice can be applied.
2. To develop standards for criticism and to evaluate performance in debate with respect to them.

3. To develop teamwork, a code of ethics, and sportsmanship among students participating in debate.

### *Class Sessions*

In the hours which remain, the group can very easily be organized into debate teams in order to provide experiences in competitive debate for each student. A suggested plan of organization follows:

1. The Proposition

The question used in the first four units (*Conscription of Manpower*) or any other question.

2. Teams

Two-speaker teams are recommended. Students should be permitted to express a first and second choice for partners and sides of the question. The schedule may be planned by the instructor and posted with dates, opponents, and all essential information.

3. Chairmen and Timekeepers

Students should be appointed for each of these duties.

4. Judges and Criticism

The instructor can serve as a critic judge, with each student in the audience also submitting his decision and reasons for it on a ballot prepared for the debates. Either a shift of opinion or an ordinary type of ballot may be used. The instructor should give a specific critique following each debate, stressing criteria for evaluation, standards, and accomplishments of individual debaters, rather than merely *announcing* a winner.

5. Length of Speeches

The length of speeches is determined by the length of the class hour. In a forty-five minute period, constructive speeches of six or seven minutes in length and rebuttals of two or three minutes in length could be used. Such a plan would allow time for discussion and criticism.

6. Miscellaneous Arrangements.

If time permits, students should debate both sides of the question. As the schedule proceeds, the two strongest teams, as indicated by performance in class debates, may be selected to debate in a school assembly for a "championship" contest. Such a possibility is a strong motivation for good preparation in the tournament. It is also good training for the debaters. It should, likewise, be educationally valuable for the student body, as well as be effective publicity for the speech class. (See Carroll P. Lahman, *Debate Coaching*, H. W. Wilson Co., New York, 1936, pp. 329-403; Karl F. Robinson, *Teaching Speech in the Secondary School*, Longmans, New York, 1950, pp. 315-351.)