



Parliamentary debating on war, violence and peace

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Subject: Social Studies

Grade level: Grades 9, 10, and 11

Brief overview:

A teacher- and student-friendly introduction to parliamentary debating that simulates Canadian parliament. The bills that are brought to the House focus on peace, war and violence in our community, country, and the world.

CIDA development themes:

- Human rights, democracy and good governance
 - Peace building and conflict resolution
 - Civil society and the security of the individual
- Gender equality

BC Ministry of Education prescribed learning outcomes:

It is expected that students will:

- identify and clarify a problem, an issue, or an inquiry (Social Studies 9/10, Applications of Social Studies).
- select and summarize a body of information from primary and secondary print and non-print sources, including electronic sources (Social Studies 9, Applications of Social Studies).
- assess the reliability, currency, and objectivity of different interpretations of primary and secondary sources (Social Studies 9, Applications of Social Studies).
- generate and critique different interpretations of primary and secondary sources (Social Studies 10, Applications of Social Studies).
- defend a position on a controversial issue after considering a variety of perspectives (Social Studies 9, Applications of Social Studies).
- assess and defend a variety of positions on controversial issues (Social Studies 10, Applications of Social Studies).
- apply critical thinking—including questioning, comparing, summarizing, drawing conclusions, and defending a position—to make reasoned judgments about a range of issues, situations, and topics (Social Studies 11, Skills and Processes of Social Studies).
- plan, revise, and deliver formal oral and written presentations (Social Studies 9, Applications of Social Studies).
- co-operatively plan, implement, and assess a course of action that addresses the problem, issue, or inquiry initially identified (Social Studies 9, Applications of Social Studies).
- demonstrate leadership by planning, implementing, and assessing a variety of strategies to address the problem, issue, or inquiry initially identified (Social Studies 10, Applications of Social Studies).

- demonstrate skills and attitudes of active citizenship, including ethical behaviour, open-mindedness, respect for diversity, and collaboration (Social Studies 11, Skills and Processes of Social Studies).
- demonstrate understanding of the political spectrum (Social Studies 11, Politics and Government).
- explain how Canadians can effect change at the federal and provincial levels (Social Studies 11, Politics and Government).
- explain how federal and provincial governments are formed in Canada (Social Studies 11, Politics and Government).
- describe major provisions of the Canadian constitution, including the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and assess its impact on Canadian society (Social Studies 11, Politics and Government).

Time required: five–six classes

List of required materials and/or equipment:

1. overview of parliamentary procedure (appendix one)
2. list of parliamentary debating topics (appendix two)
3. assigned government/opposition debating positions on war, violence and peace (appendix three, one copy per group)
4. seating plan for classroom parliament (appendix four, one copy per group)
5. access to library
6. access to computers
7. internet access to web sites:
 - United Nations Declaration of Human Rights www.un.org/Overview/rights.html
 - Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms www.laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/
 - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/youth/childrights_e.htm
 - International Debate Education Association (IDEA) web site www.idebate.org

Procedure:

1. Explain to the class the marking criteria and the length of time required to complete the unit
Time allotted:
 - two class periods to introduce and prepare speeches
 - at least one period in the library
 - two or three periods to complete the six bills to be brought to the parliament
 - total time five or six periods.

Two separate evaluation/marks:

- a. a group evaluation/mark (students will work in small groups of two or three) based on assigned speech, participation and defense or opposition to their assigned bill. (10 marks or ?)
- b. An individual evaluation/mark based on their total participation, respect for parliamentary procedures (standing when addressing the House, speaking through the speaker - for example, “Mr. Speaker...”) presenting questions and opinions on as many of the six bills as possible, not only their bill, but throughout the parliamentary session. (20 marks or ?).

2. Assign roles and tasks.
 - a. Divide students into heterogeneous, co-operative learning groups of two, three or four.
 - b. Distribute one copy of each of the following handouts to each group:
 - diagram two: seating arrangement for classroom parliament (appendix 2)
 - c. Explain student (member of parliament/constituency riding) roles:
 - In their groups, students are to role-play either government or opposition members of parliament, as assigned.
 - In their roles, as members of parliament, they are to take responsibility for debating an assigned bill.
 - All members of parliament/students will be allowed to express their opinions and ask questions as often as the speaker/teacher allows.

Government members—within student groups:

- one group member is to take on the role of the Prime Minister and, with the help of the other group members, prepare a two to three minute speech outlining the reasons why the bill should be passed.
- another group member, in the role of Member of Parliament, is to rebut the leader of the opposition speech (one minute rebut).

Opposition members—within students groups:

- one group member is to take on the role of Leader of the Opposition and, with the help of the other group members, prepare a two to three minute speech on why the bill should be defeated.
- another group member is to rebut the Prime Minister's speech (one minute rebut).

- d. Distribute a copy of diagram one: list of bills/topics to be debated to each group. (appendix 2)
- e. Assign a bill to each group (the bills are listed from the easiest to the most difficult) and assign the group to the affirmative (government) or negative (opposition) side of the debate/bill.
- f. Briefly describe the parliamentary debating procedure to students. A short explanation of the role of a devil's advocate is probably a good idea right from the beginning. Remind the class, however, that on all the bills other than the one specifically assigned to them, they are not required to argue against their personal beliefs.
- g. Stress that everyone in their group of two or three students (representing a member of parliament/constituency riding), will get the same group mark, out of ten, but remind them there is also an individual mark out of twenty. The individual mark requires very little out-of-class work, if any. A good listener, thinker, and debater will be able to accumulate marks just by participating in the parliamentary session.
- h. Note: the students should try to quote from the *UN Declaration of Human Rights* www.un.org/Overview/rights.html and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* www.laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/ when debating).

3. Small group work:
 - Allow student groups time to prepare for the debate. Inform them that they all have to be ready with their initial speeches on the first day of the parliament. This will allow you to see what groups are ready to start work on a prepared debate and will assist other groups who are not as well prepared and are still confused.
 - Hint: attempt to introduce the assignment on a Friday. That gives them a half a period in the library on the Friday and the weekend to get together and work on their speech. A full period on Monday should be enough time to allow the students to be prepared for the opening of parliament on the Tuesday.
4. Library and research time
 - Prior to this session, discuss the unit and your resource needs with the teacher librarian.
 - Proceed to the library to conduct preparatory research. Discuss with each group/riding their speeches and strategy. To get the class started, direct each group/riding to the IDEA web site appropriate to their specific topic (see appendix two).
 - Note to the teacher: The International Debate Education Association (IDEA) web site will give you access to hundreds of pros and cons and context on relevant and controversial issues. To view the complete list of topics go to www.idebate.org. The web site is free to access and joining is optional, but if you wish to support it, it is very inexpensive to join.
5. Proceed with the parliamentary debate.

Assessment strategies:

1. Two separate evaluation/marks:
 - a. a group evaluation/mark based on the assigned speech, participation and defense or opposition to the assigned bill. (10 marks or ?)
 - b. an individual evaluation/mark based on the student's total participation, respect for parliamentary procedures (standing when addressing the House, speaking through the Speaker, for example, "Mr. Speaker...", listening skills...) presenting questions and opinions on as many of the bills as possible through out the parliamentary session. (20 marks or ?)
2. The Performance Standards for Social Responsibility for Grades 8-10 www.bced.govbc.ca/perf_stands/s8to10.pdf may be used to assess, through oral discussion and journal responses, the development of the student.

Appendices of lesson resources:

1. Overview of parliamentary procedure
2. List of parliamentary debating topics
3. Assigned government/opposition debating positions
4. Seating plan for classroom parliament

Overview of parliamentary procedure

Explain to the class how the room will be set for the simulation. They will be seating with their group/riding as shown in the seating plan (appendix four).

If possible, invite an administrator or local politician to open your parliament in the role of Governor General and to give a throne speech which outlines the importance of decisions to be made on all of the bills. Give your guest the bills a few days before the session begins so they will be able to say something intelligent and, of course, neutral. It is parliament that makes the laws. If you set a time for the Throne Speech, around fifteen or twenty minutes into the first period, the class will be ready and you will have time to check out which groups are ready to start the debate. When the Governor General knocks on the door, the House will rise and then be seated at the direction of the Governor General. A large Canadian flag placed behind the speaker will give the House a feeling of reality and formality that will help the students take the parliamentary session seriously

Procedure for debating bills:

1. The Government introduces the bill. The group has chosen a Prime Minister to present their speech. The speech should be addressed to the Speaker. Try to have the students use the term Mr. Speaker four or five time in their speech and also insist they to refer to you as Mr./Madame Speaker.

The prepared speech by the Prime Minister should be two to three minutes in length, explaining the reasons for the bill, clarifying the language in the bill, and persuading the House as to the compelling reasons for passing the bill and why it is good/utilitarian for Canada. Have the Prime Minister finish by appealing to the House to pass the bill.

(Note: Heckling is probably not a good idea in this situation.)

2. The Opposition has one minute to rebut the Prime Minister. One Member of the Opposition, with assistance from their whole group, makes notes when the Prime Minister is speaking and rebuts by asking for clarifications and bringing up a few negative points; this rebut is done mostly (a few prepared points are probably necessary) spontaneously.
3. The Leader of the Opposition presents a prepared two to three minute speech outlining the reasons why the Bill should be defeated.
4. A Member of Parliament from the government side has one minute to rebut the leader of the oppositions' speech
5. Role call: After the government Member of Parliament has rebutted the Leader of the Opposition (allow each group a few minutes to formulate questions and opinions), have each group/riding present their questions or opinion to the House. The students should

always refer to the speaker as the Honourable Member from riding 1 to 12. Remind them to stand and speak through the speaker, saying, for instance, “Mr. Speaker, this Bill should be passed/defeated because...”

6. Open speakers list: After the role call, call for an open speakers list. Keep a running list of the groups/ridings that want to address the House. Remind them they are not only to support or not support the bill, but to ask questions of any other group/riding that has expressed an opinion they agree or disagree with. For example, “Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member of the House from riding 7 is misleading the House with statistics that are not relevant, and I will explain...., and I would like a response from them.”
7. The question: Once the speaker feels the debate has gone on long enough the question is called. The Prime Minister now has one last chance to address the House before the role call vote is taken. This one minute speech should address all the concerns raised in the debate.
8. The vote: Each riding now must decide how to vote. One vote is allowed for each riding, unless a member rises and calls for a free vote. If this should occur, then a vote must be taken on the request for a free vote versus one vote for each group/riding. If the majority of groups/ridings agree with the request for a free vote, then each member of the class gets one vote. When the vote is completed the Bill either passes or is defeated.
9. Proceed to the next Bill.

Parliamentary debating topics

Topic one:

BIRT that violent video games be banned.

www.idebate.org/debatabase/topic_details.php?topicID=493

Topic two:

BIRT that children should not be physically disciplined (spanked) by their parents.

www.idebate.org/debatabase/topic_details.php?topicID=319

Topic three:

BIRT women be allowed to serve in combat roles in the military.

www.idebate.org/debatabase/topic_details.php?topicID=425

Topic four:

BIRT the invasion of Afghanistan was a wise decision.

www.idebate.org/debatabase/topic_details.php?topicID=145

Topic five:

BIRT the Canadian government strongly urges the USA government to withdraw immediately from Iraq.

www.idebate.org/debatabase/topic_details.php?topicID=419

Topic six:

BIRT Canada supports the USA government and its allies in the use of torture when interrogating terror suspects.

www.idebate.org/debatabase/topic_details.php?topicID=358

(Note: BIRT = Be it resolved that)

Assigned government/opposition debating positions

Parliamentary debating on war, violence and peace:

Government	Opposition
1. BIRT violent video games be banned.	12. Opposed to: violent video games be banned.
2. BIRT children should not be physically disciplined (spanked) by their parents.	11. Opposed to: children should not be physically disciplined (spanked) by their parents.
3. BIRT women be allowed to serve in combat roles in the military.	10. Opposed to: women be allowed to serve in combat roles in the military.
4. BIRT the invasion of Afghanistan was a wise decision.	9. Opposed to: the invasion of Afghanistan was a wise decision.
5. BIRT the Canadian government strongly urges the USA government to withdraw immediately from Iraq.	8. Opposed to: the Canadian government strongly urges the USA government to withdraw immediately from Iraq.
6. BIRT Canada supports the USA government and its allies in the use of torture when interrogating terror suspects.	7. Opposed to: Canada supports the USA government and its allies in the use of torture when interrogating terror suspects.

(Note: BIRT = Be It Resolved That)

Seating plan for classroom parliament

	Speaker	
7		1
8		2
9		3
10		4
11		5
12		6