



1.7 Intro to Arguments

This activity introduces the structure of a complete argument. Students learn about claims, warrants, and refutation while participating in a game.

Objectives

By the end of this activity, each student will:

- be introduced to basic skills of argumentation.
- be introduced to basic vocabulary and technique of claims and refutations.

Time Allotment

15 minutes. Can be extended by repeating the activity with different student speakers.

Materials and Preparation

You may wish to make a deck of “topic” cards (perhaps from the list in Appendix A). Take small pieces of scrap paper and write various controversial statements on them, and have them prepared to hand out. Or, if you have time, you may wish to have students come up with their own topics (described below).

Method

Have students take a small piece of paper (like an index card) and write two controversial statements on them that could be about any topic (for example: Prisoners should be able to vote, or X musical artist stole his material from Michael Jackson).

Collect all the index cards, and put them in a pile face down. Get the class out of their seats and have them form three lines - claim, warrant, and refutation. The first student in each line should step to the front of the class, and the first person from the claim line should choose a card and read one of the controversial statements (claims).

Then, the first person from the warrant line should give a warrant or reason why the claim is correct (for example: Prisoners should be able to vote because otherwise there are few protections for their rights, or X musical artist stole his material from Michael Jackson because he sampled a beat).

Finally, the first person from the refutation line should say “I disagree because ...” and then give a reason for the refutation (for example, prisoners already have means to claim grievances and they gave up claim to some rights when they committed a crime, or X musical artist only sampled Michael Jackson on one song and the rest is all original).

When they have finished, the person from the claim line should go to the warrant line, the warrant line to the refutation line, and the refutation line to the claim line. Then, the next people in line should pick a card and start.