



everyday **DEBATE** & DISCUSSION

Teacher's edition

A Guide
to Socratic
Conversation,
Informal
Discussion, and
Formal Debate

by Shelly Johnson, PhD



CLASSICAL
SUBJECTS

CREATIVELY
TAUGHT™



Everyday Debate & Discussion Teacher's Edition

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I would like to dedicate this book to my nephews and niece:

Andrew, Joshua, Eli, and Amelie.

May they grow up to be critical thinkers and lovers of wisdom.

Table of Contents

TO STUDENTS: Introduction	vii
TO THE TEACHER: Introduction	viii

Unit I: Introduction to Debate

CHAPTER 1: Welcome to Debate! An Introduction and Overview	1
CHAPTER 2: Why Debate?	9
CHAPTER 3: Debate: The Janus-Faced Discipline	19
CHAPTER 4: Thinking Like a Debater	25

Unit II: Some Basics of Debate

CHAPTER 5: Deciding to Debate.	39
CHAPTER 6: Overview of Debate	49
CHAPTER 7: External Resources	59

Unit III: Logos: Inductive and Deductive Logic

CHAPTER 8: Inductive Logic: Introducing the Common Topics	75
CHAPTER 9: Inductive Logic: Definition.	87
CHAPTER 10: Inductive Logic: Comparison	95
CHAPTER 11: Inductive Logic: Relationship.	103
CHAPTER 12: Inductive Logic: Circumstance	115
CHAPTER 13: Inductive Logic: Testimony	127
CHAPTER 14: The Special Topics	137
CHAPTER 15: Deductive Logic: Categorical Syllogism.	149

Unit IV: Ethos, Pathos, Style

CHAPTER 16: Internal Resources: Ethos	159
CHAPTER 17: Internal Resources: Pathos	169
CHAPTER 18: Style and Rhetorical Devices	181
CHAPTER 19: Humor	191

Unit V: Arrangement

CHAPTER 20: Arrangement: Affirmative	199
CHAPTER 21: Arrangement: Negative	215
CHAPTER 22: Arrangement: Cross-Examination	229
CHAPTER 23: Arrangement: Rebuttal	241
CHAPTER 24: Memory	253

Unit VI: Presentation and Debate Possibilities

CHAPTER 25: Delivery: Keys to Effective Presentation	263
CHAPTER 26: Other Types of Debate	271
CONCLUSION: Debate Opportunities in Life	277
GLOSSARY	279
BIBLIOGRAPHY	287
APPENDIX: Arguments and Appeals Chart	295

Essays

ESSAY 1: Debate and Dynamic, Dialectic Classrooms	297
ESSAY 2: Becoming a Dialectic Teacher	301
ESSAY 3: A Crash Course in Logic	305
ESSAY 4: Socratic Dialogue	311
ESSAY 5: Classroom Debates and Debating Teams	315

To Students: Introduction

You may not know it, but you debate all the time. A debate is simply a discussion in which two or more people present their arguments for a particular view and critique each other's views. If you have strong opinions about certain issues (and who doesn't?), and if you try to convince other people of your opinion (and who hasn't?), you are very likely engaging in a debate. You may debate your family members over dinner or debate your friends on Facebook. You may debate your classmates informally during class discussion or debate other students formally in a setting like a debate tournament.

Debates can happen every day, at any time, and in any place. When they are handled well, debates can be very enjoyable, and the people involved learn a great deal. On the other hand, when debates are handled poorly, they can be an exercise in frustration in which people talk quite a lot but learn very little. I want your debate experience to resemble the former rather than the latter kind of debate. That is why I have written *Everyday Debate & Discussion*.

In *Everyday Debate & Discussion*, you will learn to develop good arguments by using good logic and the resources available in your own thinking, as well as in the world around you. You will learn how to appeal to people's emotions in the proper way and to strengthen your credibility with other people through methods such as the effective use of humor and thoughtful quotes. You will also learn how to critique the opposing view in a debate and develop good skills for organizing your own arguments. In addition to all of this, you will learn how to use these skills in both informal as well as formal debate settings so that whenever you find yourself debating, be it over tea or in a tournament, you will have the tools you need to be an effective debater.

Welcome to *Everyday Debate & Discussion*!
Let's get going.



To the Teacher: Introduction

If you have purchased this book, you probably are one of three types of people. First, you may be in charge of the debate team or class at your school. Secondly, you may be a teacher in a classical school who either teaches logic or who teaches junior high or high school, and you want to create a truly dialectic environment. Or you may be a teacher who simply desires to take your teaching to the next level and to encourage good thinking skills in your students. No matter which of these descriptions fits you best, this book is for you!

We at Classical Academic Press are just like you. We have been teachers in classical schools and regular schools, and we have desired to make our classroom environments rich in critical thinking, meaningful interaction, and deep reflection. We have either used debate as a tool to improve thinking in our classrooms or we have been a part, either as a participant or a coach, of debate teams. Over the years, we have experimented, researched, practiced, and refined, and this book represents the ideas and practices we have discovered and perfected along the way. We are excited to share them with you.

You are starting on an exciting journey just by picking up *Everyday Debate & Discussion* and its teacher's edition. For with this curriculum we desire not only to educate your students, but also to educate and provide tools for you as well. The teacher's edition for *Everyday Debate & Discussion* is an especially important part of this process. At the end of this guide, we have provided you with a mini-crash course in creating dialectic classrooms. The word *dialectic* comes from the Greek word *dialektik*, which means "conversation." Dialectic classrooms are those that capitalize on productive conversation and debate in order to develop sophisticated reasoning and critical thinking skills. To help you develop these types of classrooms, we have provided you with a series of lessons on dialectic thinking in the essays in the Teacher's Edition. Of course, you do not have to do these lessons in order to use *Everyday Debate & Discussion* effectively with your students. However, whether you are a coach or a teacher, you will likely find that if you do these lessons, you will feel more equipped and prepared as a teacher to make the most out of *Everyday Debate & Discussion*, as well as the rest of your teaching curricula.

In your mini-crash course, we will provide you with a clearer picture of dialectic classrooms, and we will also teach you how to use the powerful dialectic tools of Socratic discussion and debate. Although this is first and foremost a textbook about debates, you will find that Socratic discussion is also an effective tool for cultivating the thinking habits that create good debaters.

We applaud you in your desire to help your students engage critically and logically in the world around them, and we are excited to be a part of your process of developing strong debate skills in your students and creating dynamic dialectic classrooms!

Note to the Teacher: To ensure that the links provided in *Everyday Debate & Discussion* are correct and current, we have moved all of the URLs from the printed book to a page on the Classical Academic Press website. Therefore, throughout the text, rather than including URLs, we have noted the links like this: (chapter number-link number, e.g., 1-1). When you come across one of these notations in the text, simply go to ClassicalAcademicPress.com/EverydayDebate and you'll find the links listed by chapter. For instance, in the Read and Consider exercise of the Learning from the Masters section of chapter 2, you'll see following: "Read the full dialogue of *Euthyphro* (Link 2-1)." This indicates that you should go to ClassicalAcademicPress.com/EverydayDebate and click on Link 2-1 under chapter 2.

Chapter 1

Welcome to Debate! An Introduction and Overview

“ALL MEN BY NATURE DESIRE KNOWLEDGE.
—ARISTOTLE¹”

Introduction

What would you do if you were having a conversation with a friend and realized that you completely disagreed with her point of view? What if your friend wanted to debate you about this issue? Would you welcome such a challenge as an adventure, or would you shrink from it as a threat? All human beings have a fight-or-flight response that kicks in when we face any kind of danger or challenge. Unfortunately, when it comes to debate and disagreement, the “flight” response often kicks in rather than the “fight” response. Usually, this is because people don’t really understand the nature of debate or disagreement. They automatically assume that it is a hostile, combative activity. Other times people avoid debates because they are afraid of being overwhelmed by the force of another person’s arguments. They are not sure how to respond effectively, or how to craft powerful arguments themselves. More commonly, people view debate either as an extremely intellectual activity in which only university professors engage, or as the attention-seeking self-service often found in political or presidential “debates.” To many people, these debates seem especially rancorous and interminable. Therefore, they decide that while such an activity might be fine for those who make a living by being intellectual, it isn’t necessary or helpful for the normal, everyday person.

If you are one who feels fearful about—or even disgusted by—debate or disagreement, I hope that this book changes your mind, giving you debating confidence and opening your eyes to the benefit of debate, disagreement, and discussion in your day-to-day life. While it is true that some people conduct themselves in such a way as to make their debates disagreeable and unprofitable, participating in debates and discussions conducted in a thoughtful and civil manner can be one of the most rewarding experiences in life. Who knows? By the end of this book, you may find yourself jumping willingly into the debating fray and experiencing quite a few successes along the way.

Whether or not you decide to participate in formal debate, such as in a debate club, or in the kind of informal debate that you might experience in a coffee shop or around your dining room table with your family, this book presents you with tools for success along each step of debate. Furthermore, you will learn techniques that will help you develop a debater’s mind, which is an invaluable asset for your everyday life. Even if you choose not to debate on a regular basis, developing a debater’s mind will help you think more critically about the world around you, enabling you to understand others’ viewpoints better, and to cut through all of the facts and words to find the truth or error in people’s arguments. If you are already curious and excited about debate, this book gives you empowering information. In

1. Susan Ratcliffe, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations by Subject*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 266.

addition, this book will supply some suggestions about finding or starting a formal debate club.

Definition

Before we proceed any further, it is wise to make sure that we have a clear definition of the term “**debate**.” Its first definition can seem intimidating. After all, the word “debate”² comes from the Latin word *battuere*, which itself means “to beat.” However, after looking at several possible definitions of debate, this etymology may become a little less intimidating.

One definition of debate is “to turn over in one’s mind.”³ It is important to realize that a person can debate with herself. She might do this by first considering several different possible answers, ideas, or strategies for a plan she is considering; then contemplating the strengths and weaknesses of each option; and finally choosing what she believes is the correct answer. In this case, it is as if she were “beating” her thoughts into the proper form, working out kinks and inconsistencies (similar to a metal worker beating a piece of metal into the correct shape) in order to arrive at the best possible answer.

Another common definition of debate is “to contend in words” or “to discuss a question by considering opposed arguments.”⁴ This second definition presents a picture of debate that people commonly think of when they hear the word “debate”: two people verbally wrestling over the opposing sides of a topic in order, hopefully, to determine which side is correct. (Of course, it is true that a person might debate merely to win or to prove himself correct, rather than to seek the truth.) However, in the best sense of this definition of the word “debate,” people are also “beating” their own and one another’s logic into proper shape, hammering it out, finding weaknesses and flaws, in order to achieve the best argument. Note that this type of debate can take place anywhere—in a home, in a restaurant, on a street corner, or in an auditorium.

A third type of debate is a formal debate between two people or teams. This debate is regulated by a certain set of procedures or guidelines established ahead of

time.⁵ Webster’s further defines this type of debate as a “series of formal spoken arguments for and against a definite proposition.”⁶ If you are unfamiliar with the word “**proposition**,” it is, simply, a statement that can be proven true or false. When people debate, they argue for or against a statement (proposition) that can be proven true or false, right or wrong, good or bad.

As you can see from these definitions, debate can be both formal and informal. A **formal debate** can be defined as one that takes place before a judge or judges, and follows a set of rules. People might participate in this type of debate in a classroom or as a part of a debate team. Formal debates usually have a very specific kind of format. For example, one common form of debate is organized in the following manner:⁷

First Speaker—Affirmative Team (5 minutes)

First Speaker—Negative Team (5 minutes)

Second Speaker—Affirmative Team (5 minutes)

Second Speaker—Negative Team (5 minutes)

Rebuttal Speaker—Affirmative Team (3 minutes)

Rebuttal Speaker—Negative Team (3 minutes)

As you can see, this is a highly regulated debate format with a specific speaking order and time allotment for each part of the debate. There are several other common formal debate formats that you will examine later. People engage in these structured debates in the classroom or in a formal debate club. The presidential debates that occur before elections are also formalized debates. Some people love this type of debating contest. If you are one of them, there is information in this book that will help you start, join, or prepare for this type of debating organization. Formal debate can be excellent training in thinking and speaking, and it is a great way to explore important topics.

However, even if you never participate in a formal debate, this book is helpful for you because every human

2. Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. “debate.”

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. J. Scott Wunn, “Debate,” in *World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: World Book, 2011), 63–65.

6. Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. “debate.”

7. Kate Shuster and John Meany, *Speak Out! Debate and Public Speaking in the Middle Grades* (New York: International Debate Education Association, 2005), 48.

being participates in informal debates regularly in life, whether we realize it or not. **Informal debate** happens all the time. In this type of debate, two people discuss an idea to figure out truth or a plan or simply to entertain themselves intellectually. There is rarely any kind of deliberative body or previously established rules in an informal debate. Friends debate and discuss whether the latest movie is worth watching. Families debate whether they should get a cat or a dog, or even a pet at all. As you continue reading this book, you will notice that there can be similarities between debate and discussion. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines the word “**discussion**” as “an investigation by reasoning or argumentation.”⁸ Another way to think of discussion is as “a discourse or conversation between two people in which a specific problem or idea is explored.” When people discuss an issue, they identify a problem they want to explore, and they discuss various views and methods for addressing and solving the problem. It is important to note that when people discuss something, they can be on the same side of an issue. For instance, two parents from a school may discuss how they can best raise money for their children's end-of-the-year field trip. Or they may discuss how they can handle a problem with bullying in their children's class. These two parents could agree, essentially, on the general methods for raising money or dealing with bullies. However, they could discuss several different options, and consider the various strengths and weaknesses of each option. The parents might not adopt opposing sides in an argument, but they still could debate the correct choice among several possible “competing” choices.

As a different example, if these same two parents were debating about fund-raising—say, at a meeting of a parent-teacher group—the process would look a little different. In this case, these two parents could believe in two different methods of fund-raising. One might believe in children going door-to-door, selling candy bars. The other parent might believe in holding a schoolwide event, such as a silent auction. In this scenario, one parent would present her idea of the children selling candy bars, and she would likely discuss the strengths of this plan. Then the other parent would speak, critiquing the idea of selling candy, and then

proposing a plan for a schoolwide silent auction instead, discussing the strengths of her idea. After she'd speak, the other parent would have the chance to critique the auction idea as well. As you can see, in this scenario the parents disagree about the means and methods for obtaining an objective. They are debating the best method for raising funds. In order to do this, each must present her ideas for what she believes is best, as well as critique the opposing idea. Be assured that the skills that you learn from this book will help you with all forms of debate, discussion, and disagreement.



8. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. “discussion.”

Why Debate?

Although you are now familiar with what debate is and with its different definitions, you may still wonder why anyone would really *want* to debate. After all, debating takes time, preparation, and energy. Wouldn't it just be easier to live and let live, as the saying goes? Furthermore, a lot of people feel nervous about debating or disagreeing with others, especially people who hold strongly opposing views. We often feel nervous or frightened when we have conflict with other people. Remember the fight-or-flight reflex mentioned at the beginning of this chapter? When we are in situations of emotional or physical danger, human beings have a natural tendency to gear up to fight or to get away as fast as we can. Some people love a good fight, while others want to flee tense situations. Believe it or not, learning debate skills can help you in these emotionally tense situations when you find that you disagree with someone (and we all have those times in life). These skills can be very helpful because they can teach you how to prove your point, critique the opposing point, or search for further truth without getting too emotionally involved in the process, and without hurling insults.

It is safe to say that since humans first had different ideas about things they have had debates. Why have we always felt the need to share our views, discuss the relative merits and problems of our respective views, all in an attempt to discover a right answer? Philosophers, sociologists, lawyers, politicians, psychologists, theologians, and others who study humans and their motivations, ideas, and behaviors all agree that humans have always pondered the big questions of the universe: What is the nature of this world I live in? What's my purpose in life? Why is there suffering in the world? How can we fix the suffering? How can I find happiness?

Everyone thinks about these issues, but we may think about them in slightly different manners. For instance, when a teenage girl wonders, "What college will be the best place for me to pursue learning more about philosophy?" or "What summer job should I take?" she is asking questions about the pursuit of happiness. A college student may wonder, "What are the causes of poverty and inequality in my city?" and this could prompt her to major in sociology or social work. When she asks such a question, she is pondering questions about her purpose in life and the means for achieving happiness and peace. A

father asks himself, "How can I raise my children to have a positive impact on their world?" or "How can I care for the earth responsibly so that I can give my children a clean, safe world in which to live?" Another adult may look around her neighborhood and ask, "Why has crime increased in my neighborhood over the past few years? What can I do to stop it?" or "How can I show kindness and compassion to my neighbor who is suffering from mental illness?" As you can see, these questions are aimed at personal happiness, purpose in life, and the question of suffering in the world.

Many people ask these big questions about things that immediately pertain to their lives, their families, and their neighborhoods. This is natural, as these will always be the most important things in a person's life. However, at some point most people begin to ask these questions as they pertain to society and the world at large. For instance, people ask questions such as, "How can we help developing nations overcome major health issues such as the AIDS pandemic?" or "Should America be the police of the world?" Today, many people ask questions such as, "How far should science be allowed to go in its manipulation of human genes?" or "Is abortion ever permissible?" or "To what extent is human behavior negatively impacting our environment?" Although not all people will become professional scientists, philosophers, and politicians whose job it is to answer such questions, it is valuable for all of us to learn to debate important issues, because they eventually affect all of us through the influence of laws, education, our neighborhoods, and the people we know. It is important to realize that whenever we pursue and discuss questions such as those mentioned previously, we are being politicians and philosophers. That is, we are people who are searching for truth and wisdom, people who are concerned with the welfare of our families, friends, and nation.

As you learn the skills of everyday debate, you will engage in a process that will positively impact your life, as well as the lives of those around you. Before we jump into learning these skills, it is important for you to gain perspective on the role debate and discussion has played throughout world history, and especially in your own country. The following chapters will help you better understand the significance of discussion and debate, as well as the role it plays in shaping culture and society, and it will help you understand why debate is such a worthwhile pursuit.

Review Exercises

List

Give three possible definitions of the word “debate.”

1. To turn over in one's mind.

2. To contend in words, or to discuss a question by considering opposed arguments.

3. “A series of formal spoken arguments for and against a definite proposition” (the dictionary definition).

Explain

1. Explain how a person could express the etymology of debate (from the Latin word *battuere*, “to beat”) in a positive light (i.e., not as just “beating” one’s opponent).

If you think of the etymology of debate, *battuere*—to beat—in a negative light, you will likely think of two people
bludgeoning each other with their words or ideas, or even tangible objects (like a tabloid talk show); however,
you can also think of this etymology in a more positive light. Think of the beating that goes on in a debate as an
action similar to a blacksmith hammering metal to refine it into a beautiful, perfect shape. If you think of debate in
this manner, you will come to realize that in a debate two people can “beat” each other’s thoughts into shape by
examining and critiquing evidence together in order to find the truth.

2. Explain the difference between formal and informal debate. Make sure you explain where each kind of debate is likely to take place.

Formal debate is the kind of debate that is likely to take place in a classroom or on a debating team. Formal debates take place before a judge or set of judges and proceed according to a certain set of rules. Informal debates, however, can take place anywhere: in the car, around the kitchen table, in a coffee shop, or on a walk with a friend. This type of debate is often more like a discussion or a disagreement. People involved in informal debate may or may not be on opposite sides of an issue. They can discuss various views surrounding an issue and decide which one is the truest or the best decision.

Define and Relate

What is definition of the word “discussion”? How is discussion related to debate?

A discussion is an investigation by reasoning or argumentation. Another way to describe a discussion is as a discourse or conversation between two people in which a specific problem or idea is explored.

A discussion is similar to a debate because people explore ideas and critique them for their relative strength or weaknesses. However, a discussion is almost always informal, whereas debates can be informal or, more often than not, formal. In addition, in a discussion it is possible for everyone to be on the same side of an issue, even as they explore strengths and weaknesses of various ideas. A true debate always has two sides—one that argues for a topic, and the other that argues against the topic. All of us, whether we realize it or not, are little politicians and philosophers. That is, we care, or should care, about the world around us—our neighborhoods, our cities, our country—and we want to understand how to make our world a better place for us, our families and friends, and humanity. In addition, all of us wish to answer the big questions of life such as, “Who am I?” and, “For what purpose am I on earth?” Debate can help us to answer both of these types of questions, even if it is just an informal debate and discussion around the kitchen table.

Everyday Debate^{A TE}

This symbol indicates that more information is provided in the teacher's pages at the end of the chapter.

List

Think back over the last couple of weeks or months of your life. List three controversial topics that you have heard people discussing or debating. They can be small or large. They can be in day-to-day life or on TV. They can also be topics that pertain just to your family or the culture at large.

Here are several examples students may list. Families often debate about the following topics:

- a. Which movie should we watch on a particular night?
- b. How often should kids watch TV or play video games?
- c. What vacation destination should we choose?
- d. How should our family spend money we have been saving?
- e. Who should do the chores?
- f. When, how, and where should homework be accomplished?
- g. Should kids get an allowance and, if so, how much?
- h. What kinds of pets should the family adopt?

The following are examples of current hot topics:

- a. *Government bailout plans*: Is it the government's responsibility to fix failing businesses? Can our economy recover if the government doesn't fix failing businesses or provide bailout money? What is the best way to hold the businesses accountable?
- b. *Peak oil*: Are we running out of oil? If so, what should we do about it?
- c. *Health care*: Should the government pay for health care for everyone? Should health care be privatized?
- d. *Outsourcing*: Is the practice of businesses outsourcing labor to other countries (where they can pay workers less) harming the US economy? Is outsourcing fair to Americans? Is it good for people in less economically developed countries?
- e. *Capital punishment*: Is capital punishment ethical? Does it effectively deter crime?

Develop

Pick one of the topics you mentioned in the “Everyday Debate” section that your class could debate without much research. Now, sum up that topic in a proposition (i.e., a statement that can be proven true or false). For instance, if you wanted to debate the topic of capital punishment, you could write the following proposition: “Capital punishment is inhumane and ought to be prohibited by the federal government.” Once you choose a topic, your teacher will divide the class into two teams. One side is the affirmative side, which means that team will argue *for* the proposition. The other side is the negative side, which means that they will argue *against* the proposition. (The affirmative and negative sides are discussed further in chapter 5.) It's OK to be on a side that doesn't necessarily reflect your actual belief (i.e., you may personally agree with the proposition but actually end up on the negative side for the purpose of the class debate). It's good practice to argue against a proposition you believe, or to argue for a proposition you do not believe; this exercise helps you learn how to examine topics from all sides.

Once the class has been divided into teams, make sure that everyone on your team has at least one argument that she can make for or against the proposition. Everyone should have a key point that supports or critiques the proposition, and each person should also have some facts that develop that point. Each argument doesn't have to be long—a few sentences will suffice.

In addition, think of the potential arguments that the other side may bring against you and how you could counteract those arguments. There are several basic ways to disprove (or rebut) an argument: prove it is based on faulty information; prove it is a misinterpretation of the information; or prove that the reasoning behind the argument is faulty. Don't worry if you aren't sure how to go about rebutting an argument right now. Just keep these points in mind. Once you have spent some time talking through this with your team, your teacher will tell you how to debate.^B



Learning from the Masters^C



Discuss

The Great Debaters, starring Denzel Washington, is a movie that is based on a true story and details the adventures of the first African American debate team to debate with Harvard College.⁹ Watch the movie and answer the following questions:^D



1. What role did debate play in the lives of the main characters in this movie?
2. What skills did these students need in their debates?
3. What are some things that the debate coach did to improve their debate abilities?
4. In what ways were the main characters on the debate team especially effective debaters?
5. In what way did these students effect change in their world through debate?

9. Todd Black, et al, *The Great Debaters*, directed by Denzel Washington (2007; New York: Weinstein Co., 2008), DVD.

Chapter 1

Welcome to Debate! An Introduction and Overview

Everyday Debate

^AThe purpose of the “Everyday Debate” exercises in this book is to help students practice forming arguments and debating on a consistent basis. The more students practice argumentation and debate, even small arguments and debates, the more comfortable and proficient they will become in this activity. Therefore, in the rest of the chapters of this book, students will learn how to form arguments and practice debate. These activities certainly are not mandatory—you may use them or skip them as best suits your classroom needs or your time schedule—however, you will find that they will build debating and arguing confidence in your students if you use them consistently.

Develop

^BIn subsequent “Everyday Debate” sections, exercises will be provided that allow students to engage in many debates. Don’t worry about getting debate “perfect,” and don’t be afraid if you have never participated in debates yourself. Just jump in (plenty of teachers have done this), and you will start to see how debate works. Throughout this book, there are numerous tips that allow you to structure debates to meet your specific class needs.

Here are a couple of tips to actively start debates:

1. The more your class debates, even in small debates, the more they will feel comfortable doing it, and their understanding of the debate process will grow. Therefore, aim to hold debates regularly in class, even if they are short.
2. For this first debate, use this recommended format:
The affirmative side presents their arguments (3 minutes).
The negative side rebuts (1 minute).
The negative side presents their arguments (3 minutes).
The affirmative side rebuts (1 minute).
3. If you think your students might be too shy to do a debate as a whole class, consider choosing a few of the more outspoken students in the class for the first couple of debates. You can have the rest of the class judge the debate points and outcome. In this way, all of the students can participate in some aspect and learn how the process works.
4. Whether the whole class or only a couple of students are doing the debate, give the teams time to prepare.
5. Make sure you pick a topic that students do not have to research. Here are some examples:
Cats are better pets than dogs for the average American teenager.
Middle and high school students should receive an allowance.
All high school students should have a midnight curfew.
Gum chewing should be allowed in school.

Learning from the Masters

^CIn the “Learning from the Masters” portion of the “Everyday Debate” section, various movies, speeches, and debates are suggested that students can watch to learn from people experienced in the various elements of debate. Many of these can be found on YouTube or elsewhere online. (I recommend this site to get you started: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html>.) For examples that cannot be found on the Web, there are wonderful written, audio, and video collections of great speeches. A great selection of these can be found on Amazon or at your local public or university library. One theme that constantly popped up in the interviews with teachers and debate coaches for this book (as well as something I have learned from my own experience) is that students learn to debate primarily through watching skilled speakers and debaters, and by doing debate themselves. The purpose of this section is to provide your students with examples of speakers and debaters who can model what to do—and what *not* to do—in debates.

Discuss

^DWhile this is generally a clean film, there might be some content in this movie that is mildly objectionable to middle school and high school students and/or their parents (i.e., there are a few curse words and one suggestive scene). Therefore, please screen this movie before showing it to determine if it is appropriate for your students. Furthermore, excerpts of this movie are referenced in later chapters. Many scenes in this movie aptly illustrate the chapter points under discussion. Even if your students do not watch the entire movie, they will benefit from watching the noted scenes, which illustrate various important aspects of debate and serve as teaching points for following exercises.

1. What role did debate play in the lives of the main characters in this movie?
Debate was a tool by which the African American students in this movie could escape from oppression and racism. It was also a way in which they could “prove themselves” in a society that did not treat them with respect.
2. What skills did these students need in their debates?
These students needed to be able to amass an array of facts, quotes, and stories to have at their fingertips as support in proving their points. They also needed to be able to convey their conviction and emotion to convince their audience. Furthermore, they had to be able to speak loudly and clearly.
3. What are some things that the debate coach did to improve their debate abilities?
Melvin Tolson, the debate coach, did a variety of things to help his students become effective debaters. He would put them on a stage and ask them a variety of questions, requiring them to answer on the spot. This was good training of impromptu thinking.

In one scene, Tolson had them stand on the shore of a lake with corks in their mouths and recite a sort of debate catechism to him, as he sat in a boat farther out on the lake. This helped them develop projection and articulation. Although the movie did not show it, it was implied that he had them memorize quotes and stories. Furthermore, he constantly involved them in debates, even against really difficult opponents, to practice their debating skills.
4. In what ways were the main characters on the debate team especially effective debaters?
The debate team in this movie was skilled in combining excellent research with powerful emotions. In addition, at times—such as in the debate in the final scenes of the movie—the characters displayed an ability to think on their feet and narrate life experiences that were especially evocative and pertinent to the discussion at hand.
5. In what way did these students effect change in their world through debate?
Debate was a way in which these students could fight for racial equality and could work to improve the civil rights of minorities.

Chapter 2

Why Debate?

DARE TO KNOW! HAVE THE COURAGE TO
USE YOUR OWN REASON!

—IMMANUEL KANT¹

Introduction

If you have any doubt about how powerful debate and discussion can be, all you have to do is look at history to see how they have radically changed, and often improved, our world and culture. Most of the major breakthroughs, discoveries, and decisions in history have happened because of debate and discussion. Sometimes the format was formal debate that took place in universities, parliament, congress, or before church councils. Other times this important historical debate was much more informal, having taken place between friends as they debated science or theology, as they learned from each other's thoughts and discoveries. Sometimes it took place in people's letters or in books they wrote in response to previous ideas. When we debate and discuss ideas with others, even if it can be tense at times, we often come away with a clearer understanding of the topic at hand.

Definition

We can say that history is the history of **dialectic**. The word “dialectic” comes from the Greek word *dialektikos*, which means “conversational.”² Dialectic is “a discussion and reasoning by dialogue as a method of intellectual investigation . . . the techniques of exposing false beliefs and eliciting truth . . . investigation of eternal ideas.”³ You will notice that dialectic is closely related and connected to debate. In fact, debate always involves dialectic, for debate is nothing more than a formal, organized conversation that allows the intellectual exploration of a topic for the purpose of discovering truth and error in thinking. People have used dialectic and debate throughout history. That is, through discussion and debate, they have discovered new ideas and truths through exposing false beliefs and eliciting true ideas. It is important to note that historically, the practical and philosophical always intertwine. Both are necessary and often inform each other. We must have a reason and foundation for doing what we do—this is our philosophy; yet philosophy should always work practically in the world. On one hand, why think about some practical matter if it has no ultimate or eternal significance? On the other hand, if we have a philosophical theory but it doesn't appear to make sense in the world, how useful is it? A quick overview of history demonstrates how people have debated and discussed the practical and philosophical in order to figure out the best way to live.

1. Susan Ratcliffe, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations by Subject*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 267.

2. J.T. Pring, *The Pocket Oxford Greek Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 49.

3. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. “dialectic.”

The Ancient Greeks

Socrates once said, “This is an experience which is characteristic of a philosopher, this wondering: this is where philosophy begins and nowhere else.”⁴ Socrates argued that philosophy springs from wonder, and the same thing can also be said of debate. People have always wondered about the criterion for truth in all areas of life, such as science, philosophy, theology, and politics. This has led to significant debates that have profoundly affected the way we view our world and the decisions we make because of these views. The ancient Greeks were some of the people who first took debatable issues seriously. For instance, the Greeks were fascinated about how the world worked and debated the nature of it. One of the first questions the ancient Greeks debated was, which substance constitutes the world? One early Greek philosopher, Thales, posited that the

basic substance of all matter was water, while another one, Empedocles, proposed that all matter was composed of four basic elements: earth, water, fire, or air.⁵

Still another philosopher, Democritus, stated that all substance must be composed of small particles that we cannot see: atoms. In fact, the word “atom” comes from the Greek word meaning “too small to cut.”⁶ As you can see, this idea later influenced our scientific views about matter.

Of course, people have always wondered about the world around them, but they have also wondered about a world beyond the one they see. Throughout history, people have always asked questions such as: Is there anything beyond this life? Are there moral laws of the universe that tell us what to do? What is the good? Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, very well-known Greek philosophers, often discussed or debated about ideas such as these. Plato (429–347 BC) was a student of Socrates and wrote down Socrates’s

theories—in fact, the only way we know any of Socrates’s ideas is through Plato, because Socrates didn’t record anything in writing.⁷ Socrates loved to walk around Athens to discuss and debate ideas with people, including what morality is; what the good is; and whether it is better to stay in your country and protest injustice, though it may lead to your death, or to flee from your country to preserve your life (this was a choice Socrates actually had to make at the end of his life).

Socrates was devoted to finding the truth of these matters, and he often upset the people he was talking with by exposing the error of their views on these matters. He actually made some people so angry by his questions and teaching methods that he was eventually executed on the charge of corrupting the youth of Athens and teaching them to worship different gods than the established gods of Athens.⁸ Socrates’s student, Plato, carried on his teacher’s pursuit of knowledge. One of Plato’s most important philosophical ideas was something he called the forms. Plato was interested in how we can make sense out of a world that is constantly changing, and in many of his dialogues, Plato suggests that it is only through the forms that we are able to make sense out of a world that changes all the time. The forms are perfect and eternal, nontemporal, nonspatial, perfect patterns or essences that act like standards to help us make sense of the particular things in the world.⁹ This is a philosophical idea Plato worked on a lot throughout his dialogues. He was also very interested in the nature of virtues such as justice and courage and piety.

4. Plato, *Theaetetus*, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 1997), 155d.

5. Bryan Magee, *The Story of Philosophy* (New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2001), 13, 17.

6. *Ibid.*, 13–14.

7. Marcus G. Singer, “Philosophy,” in *World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: World Book, 1992), 386.

8. Magee, *Story of Philosophy*, 24.

9. Allen Silverman, “Plato’s Middle Period Metaphysics and Epistemology,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, July 14, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-metaphysics/#3>.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between what Socrates believed and what Plato believed. Socrates was Plato's teacher, but Socrates never actually wrote anything down, so a great deal of what we know about Socrates's philosophy comes from Plato's dialogues. In almost all of the dialogues Plato wrote, Socrates is the main character, and Socrates discusses a wide variety of ethical and moral issues with his interlocutors. It is important to note that Plato never appears in his own dialogues. The absence of Plato as the main character of the dialogues can sometimes make it difficult for us to determine which of the views Socrates seems to advocate in the dialogues are Socrates's views and which ones are Plato's views. One way that some philosophers have tried to solve this problem is by dividing Plato's dialogues into early, middle, and later dialogues and by arguing that while the views Socrates promotes in the early dialogues are actually his own views, Socrates increasingly becomes a mouthpiece for Plato's own views in many of the middle and later dialogues. So, some philosophers argue that early dialogues such as Plato's *Crito*, *Euthyphro*, and *Gorgias* are dialogues in which the views that Socrates proposes are actually his own views. These philosophers will also argue that in the middle dialogues such as Plato's *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and later dialogues such as *Theaetetus* and *Parmenides*, Plato uses Socrates to express his own views. No matter what view people hold about the distinction between Plato and Socrates's views, it is certainly true that Plato cared a great deal about philosophical ideas such as the forms and nature of justice.¹⁰

10. Richard Kraut, "Plato," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, September 11, 2013, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato/>.

Aristotle (384–322 BC),¹¹ a student of Plato, followed in their tradition and solidified the passion of Greek philosophy for seeking knowledge and truth and the meaning of existence. One of the things he was most interested in was the ultimate cause of things. He wrote about and discussed this idea a great deal in books such as *Metaphysics*.¹²

All this is pretty heady stuff, but people from this time period also wondered about what to do from a practical standpoint. For instance, one of their practical concerns pertained to the purpose of government. Aristotle wrote a book called *Nicomachean Ethics* in which he argued that the purpose of government is to help people find happiness by pursuing a life of virtue.¹³ Another Greek statesman, Demosthenes, used his oratorical and debating skills to speak against King Philip of Macedonia, a nearby king whom Demosthenes believed was a threat to Athens. Although Demosthenes's *philipics* ("speeches against" Philip) are orations rather than debates with another person, there is no doubt that they grew out of discussions he had with others about whether Philip truly posed a threat to Athens. Unfortunately, Demosthenes was not as

persuasive of the Athenians as he would have liked, and Athens was later conquered by Philip of Macedonia's son, Alexander the Great.¹⁴

The Ancient Romans

The Romans, whose empire was highly influenced by the Greeks and who became the most powerful people in the world, were a very practical people, intent on conquering Europe and establishing the Roman Empire. They were known for their vibrant political and oratorical life, and most of the famous debates during the Roman Empire were about political issues. For example, the famous orator Cicero delivered some of his most well-known speeches against Catiline, a fellow Roman, concerning whether Catiline had plotted to overthrow the Roman government.¹⁵ Catiline was a Roman from a wealthy family, but by being greedy, ruthless, and corrupt, he ruined his reputation with many of the leaders and wealthy men of Rome. Catiline wanted to be a powerful ruler of Rome, but because of his bad reputation, many people were not willing to vote him into high government offices. Therefore, he hatched a

11. Christopher Shields, "Aristotle," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, July 29, 2015, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle/>.

12. Singer, "Philosophy," 386.

13. Magee, *Story of Philosophy*, 38.

14. Donald Kagan, "Demosthenes," in *World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: World Book, 1992), 131.

15. Joseph R. Tebben, "Cicero," in *World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: World Book, 1992), 552.

plot with some other malcontent Romans to lead a revolt and seize control of the Roman government by force. Cicero, who rightfully held a Roman consulship, the highest office of Rome, discovered Catiline's conspiracy and exposed it to the senate. Given that it took four speeches for Cicero to convince the senate of Catiline's guilt, this was probably an issue of great debate in the senate.¹⁶

Later on, another famous Roman named Julius Caesar became a hero and lifelong emperor of Rome. Although there was no publicized debate, we can be sure that many men in the senate debated whether Caesar was a threat to Rome's liberty and tradition as a republic. We know this because, as history tells us, a group of men—including Caesar's best friend Brutus—conspired and successfully murdered Caesar. Following Caesar's death, the emperor's supporters were able to defeat his enemies and continue his legacy, building a successful career for themselves, ostensibly by quelling people's fears about Caesar's power.¹⁷ In Shakespeare's famous play *Julius Caesar*, Mark Antony, Caesar's friend and heir, delivered a eulogy for Caesar right after Brutus gave a speech explaining why he had killed Caesar, though he loved him.¹⁸ Although Shakespeare does not present Brutus and Antony's speeches as formal debates, Mark Antony's speech is a clear rebuttal (or refutation) of Brutus's purported reasons for killing Caesar. In a later chapter you will examine this debate. Throughout history, many debates occurred that either soothed angry crowds or whipped them into frenzied rage.

Debate over the Centuries

Some Greek and Roman philosophers, such as the Stoics and Epicureans, debated the best way to achieve a happy life. The Stoics argued that happiness came

from accepting one's fate and maintaining tranquility of emotion. The Epicureans, however, argued that the best way to have a happy life was to pursue the pleasure that comes from simple, healthy food, and fellowship with good friends.¹⁹ During the Middle Ages, after Rome fell, philosophers became increasingly concerned with theological debates. For example, when people began to discover ancient teaching and literature (e.g., works by Plato and Aristotle), people debated whether ancient Greek teachings and Christian teachings were compatible. Philosopher Saint Thomas Aquinas believed they were, and, in fact, he used ancient Greek philosophy to try to prove the existence of God.²⁰

Often throughout history, major debates developed because of significant developments in knowledge and learning. For example, during the Renaissance (1400–1600), which was a transitional period between the Middle Ages and modern times, many people began developing ideas and theories that were hotly contested. For instance, as knowledge and learning began to flourish more in the Renaissance, people began to place more emphasis on human knowledge and theories, rather than church doctrine. Furthermore, during the Protestant Reformation (1517 is often considered the starting date of the Reformation),²¹ people began to question the supremacy of the Catholic Church and started to debate ideas that would have been considered indisputable only a century before. As these conflicts continued, many people began to see religion and science as enemies, locked in an eternal struggle with one another. Some argued that religion should always be favored over scientific and human views. Others believed that science should always be favored over religious views. Still others believed that science and religion were compatible, and that supposed contradictions were due to people incorrectly interpreting either religion or science. For example, in 1542 Copernicus wrote a book claiming that the sun was the center of the universe, which contradicted the previously held geocentric (or earth-centered) theory of the universe.²² For years, this was fiercely debated, and many scientists who held this view

16. Lilian Hines and Ruth B. Howard, *Our Latin Heritage*, Book III (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1967), 118–119.

17. Suetonius, "The Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Volume I: Julius Augustus. Tiberius. Gaius, Caligula," in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. by Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 113; www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6400. See also Plutarch, "The Parallel Lives," in *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. by Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 597–599.

18. William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (New York: Dover Publications, 1991), act 3, scene 2.

19. Magee, *Story of Philosophy*, 44–46.

20. Ibid., 58–59.

21. Lewis W. Spitz, "Reformation," in *World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: World Book, 1992), 197.

22. Magee, *Story of Philosophy*, 64.

were persecuted and threatened with imprisonment, and even execution. However, the Church later decided that it was interpreting Scripture incorrectly on this issue, and the geocentric and heliocentric (or sun-centered theory of the universe) debate ended.

As the world moved into the 1600s, people attempted to apply scientific thinking and reason to all areas of life. At this time, one area of life people began to debate more frequently was the role of government in people's lives. That is, they began to ask, "What is the best way for the government to rule the country?" For many years, countries had been ruled by absolute monarchs who, supposedly, had inherited their right to rule from God and who ruled their respective countries with absolute power. However, people began to question whether this type of government was legitimate. For example, in 1690 in a book titled *Second Treatise of Government*, a man named John Locke challenged the notion of monarchical absolutism when he theorized that all people have inherent rights, and that they contract with the government to help protect these rights and provide social stability.²³ Furthermore, Locke posited that if a government becomes destructive of these rights, the people have a right to abolish their government and establish a new one.²⁴ These ideas, discussions, and debates were quite revolutionary. Suddenly, the reality of government in the world and the nature of authority were up for debate. Although many people were influenced by this thinking, others continued to hold to a much more traditional view of the government's power.

As you have probably figured out, one of the most profound results of this debate about government was the American Declaration of Independence (1776) that came out of the American Revolution and ultimately resulted in the formation of the United States. It is important to notice that, from its inception as a loose collection of colonies, debate has always been an important part of the United States because, since the colonies had to rule themselves given their great distance from Britain, they had to make many decisions about their own self-governance and about the way they wanted to run their towns. In fact, their survival

depended upon their discussing and debating the most effective way of governing themselves and the people and resources of their colonies. As the colonies became more established, and as they began to question the benevolence of Mother England, debate took on an even more significant role. Many people believed that England was treating the colonists in an unfair, ill-informed, unlawful manner, and that this behavior might eventually jeopardize the well-being and survival of the colonies and their colonists. These people began to argue for independence from Britain. Others argued that Britain was their lawful ruler, and that to declare separation was foolhardy and, perhaps, even suicidal.

Because of the great emotion that went into the debate, and the significant consequences hanging on the outcome of it, this debate produced some of the finest thinking and oration in history. Because America has been such a grand experiment in democracy and participation of the people in government, our history is marked by numerous monumental debates. For instance, we have had significant public debates about



23. Stephen A. Erickson, "John Locke," in *World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: World Book, 1992), 417.

24. Magee, *Story of Philosophy*, 107.

the issues of slavery, the right of the South to secede from the North, civil rights, women's right to vote, and the rights of workers. Political debate still remains an important part of our country today. After all, if America is truly a democracy and our government leaders rule at our behest, then the people of the United States need to debate issues so that we can make informed choices about how our leaders should govern us. Unfortunately, many people believe that American political debate has become increasingly rancorous and illogical and that it does little good to the people involved with or listening to the debate. In addition, many other people feel that the American people as a whole have lost interest in debating these crucial issues that define who we are as a nation.

Debate has certainly played a critical role in the development of America as a great, innovative nation. However, as we look at how other countries have changed and developed through time, it is clear that debate over philosophical, political, and practical issues has only increased, rather than decreased, over the years. In the 1800s, the world saw the rise of such earth-shattering theories as Darwin's theory of evolution and Karl Marx's political theories.²⁵ As these new ideas became more mainstream, people debated them fiercely. For example, people debated whether new scientific theories contradicted religious teachings, and whether the theory of communism (which people attributed to Marx) addressed the problems of society more adequately than its rival economic system, capitalism. For years, communism and capitalism were locked in an intense, and sometimes violent, debate.

Debate Today

As world wars and rapidly changing technology have continued to revolutionize the world, philosophers and social theorists posit new ways of thinking about the world and new belief systems, many of which became significant topics of debate. These debates are still going on today. We still debate over religious and scientific issues. We debate over politics and the government's role in people's lives. We continue to debate life's purpose, and what the goals of our lives should be. We debate

social issues, including whether capital punishment should be legal, whether interrogation techniques such as waterboarding are appropriate for Americans to use on suspected terrorists, and whether scientific endeavors such as human cloning and stem cell research is permissible.

Debate, in some ways, has become even more important today because, due to our advances in science and technology, the consequences of our actions can be so much more drastic. When we engage in debate effectively, it is a powerful tool because we can positively affect each other's actions. Because we are all limited by personal biases, prejudices, and blind spots, discussing things together helps us think more clearly.

And now we come to you. You must realize that you are becoming a part of, and helping with, the creation of history. Right now, your concerns probably revolve mainly around issues directly related to you, rather than some of the big topics we have mentioned in this chapter. However, realize that the discussions and debates you have today—whether they are about which movie you plan to see, how you should spend your money, or which topic to write about in your history report—can be significant, if you let them. Have you ever heard of the saying “Rome wasn't built in a day”? This saying means, in essence, that it takes time to build complex things. Excellent debating is a complex skill. When learning a complex skill, it is perfectly reasonable to start with simple practice activities before moving to more complicated ones. As you learn the skills in this book and begin applying them to simple debates such as the ones mentioned previously, you will find that not only do you approach these issues more thoughtfully, but also your improved thinking skills lead you to larger, more significant issues.

25. Singer, “Philosophy,” 389.

Review Exercises

Explain

In this chapter, we have looked at how history has been marked by the way people have debated and discussed important ideas. In fact, much progress in philosophy, government, and science has occurred because of these debates. Below are some of the major time periods of history, as well as key figures who were involved with great debates or discussions during this time. For each period, name the major accomplishment of the figure (or group) listed and also briefly explain the major debate he (or it) was involved with.

1. Ancient Greece: Answers will vary. The following are examples of correct responses:

Thales: He believed everything was made of water.

Empedocles: He believed everything was made of four elements: earth, water, fire, air.

Democritus: He believed everything was made of particles too small to cut.

Debate: These three men were involved in the debate over what everything was made of.

Socrates: He was an ancient philosopher who was known for the Socratic method, a method of questioning people that forced them to defend their ideas. He was concerned with what the good was and discussed this with people.

Plato: He was a Greek philosopher who immortalized the words and philosophy of Socrates. He wrote a lot about the forms, which are perfect and eternal nontemporal, nonspatial perfect patterns or essences that act like standards to help us make sense of the particular things in the world. This is a philosophical idea Plato worked on a lot throughout his dialogues. He was also very interested in the nature of virtues such as justice and courage and piety.

Aristotle: He was a Greek philosopher who wrote books such as *Metaphysics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, which discussed and debated ideas such as the causes of things in nature and the best way to run society.

Debate: All of these philosophers were concerned about the good, the meaning of life, and the cause of things.

2. Ancient Rome: Answers will vary. The following are examples of correct responses:

Stoics: They argued that happiness came from accepting one's fate and maintaining tranquility of emotion.

Epicureans: They argued that the best way to have a happy life was to pursue the pleasure that comes from simple, healthy food and fellowship with good friends.

Debate: The Stoics and Epicureans both debated the best way to have a happy life.

3. Middle Ages: Answers will vary. The following are examples of correct responses:

Aquinas: Thomas Aquinas pondered whether Greek philosophy could benefit developing Christian doctrine. He used Greek philosophy to try to prove the existence of God.

Debate: People debated whether Ancient Greek teachings and Christian teachings were compatible.

4. Renaissance/Reformation/Scientific Revolution: Answers will vary. The following are examples of correct responses:

Copernicus: Copernicus was a scientist who was involved with the debate about whether the universe was geocentric or heliocentric. He helped to prove that it was heliocentric.

John Locke: Locke was involved in the debate over the source of rulers' authority. He argued that all people have inherent rights, and that they contract with the government to help protect these rights and provide social stability.

Debate: During this time, many debated whether the Church had ultimate authority, and whether religion or science was a better source of truth. People also debated whether rulers were established by God or by the people.

5. Colonial United States:

Debate: A major debate in early America was over whether the colonies should secede from Great Britain. A later controversial debate was about whether the South had a right to secede from the Union, a debate which eventually led to the American Civil War.

6. Modern Times:

Karl Marx: Marx advocated communism as a superior economic system to capitalism.

Charles Darwin: Darwin developed the modern theory of evolution as an explanation for the origin of life and
species diversification.

Debate: In modern times, people have debated key developments in science and in politics.

Everyday Debate

Develop

There is a lot of debate in our culture right now about the importance of saving energy. Consider this debate resolution: “Resolved: People should ride their bikes more than they drive cars.” Take a few minutes to develop at least one argument for and against this resolution. Later, you will receive specific instruction to learn how to develop an argument. Right now, just do the best you can. To help yourself develop an argument, think about the answers to the following questions:

- **What** do you believe about this resolution?
- **Why** do you believe that? (This is your evidence for your belief.)
- **How** does your evidence support your belief?

Learning from the Masters

Read and Consider

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the masters of debate and thoughtful dialogue was Socrates. To see how he cleverly used questions and dialogue to probe his opponents’ ideas and undermine weaknesses in their reasoning, read the Socratic dialogue *Euthyphro* and answer the following questions.

To give you some background knowledge on this dialogue, you should know, as we implied in this chapter, that Socrates was eventually put on trial, and later executed, for corrupting the youth of Athens. The dialogue *Euthyphro* actually takes place while Socrates is waiting to be called to trial. In this dialogue, he encounters a young man,

Euthyphro, who is prosecuting his father for murder. Upon questioning Euthyphro, Socrates discovers that a slave belonging to Euthyphro's father cut another slave's throat. Euthyphro's father was so angry with the slave that he bound him hand and foot, and threw him into a ditch until he could discover what the law would do with him. While the father was seeking this out, however, the slave died from cold and hunger.

Therefore, Euthyphro decided that he would prosecute his own father for murder. Upon even further questioning, Socrates finds out that Euthyphro is overly confident in himself and his own judgment. Euthyphro believes his intelligence level is quite a cut above average, especially in matters pertaining to justice and the will of the gods. This was just the kind of person with whom Socrates enjoys discussing matters: someone who is not wise but believes he is. Through clever questioning, Socrates shows Euthyphro that he holds contradictory beliefs.

Read the full dialogue of *Euthyphro* (Link 2-1). Then answer the questions that follow.

1. What contradictory belief does Euthyphro hold concerning what piety is?

At first, Euthyphro claims that piety is that which is pleasing to the gods, and impiety is that which displeases them. However, Euthyphro also believes the stories about the gods warring and fighting against each other and showing hatred toward each other in heaven. This is a contradictory belief because he believes that piety is that which is pleasing to the gods, but he also believes that the gods war and fight about what pleases them. That is, according to Euthyphro's belief, five gods might be pleased by something pious, but two other gods would not be pleased by it. If we were to put Euthyphro's beliefs into categorical form, they would look something like this: "All pious things are god-pleasing," and "Some pious things are not god-pleasing." This may not seem evident at first, but realize that if Euthyphro believes that pious actions are actions that please the gods, but that the gods war over what pleases them, this means he simultaneously believes that all pious things are things that please the gods *and* that some pious actions are things that do not please the gods (or at least some of the gods) because they don't agree on what pleases them.

2. How does Socrates show Euthyphro that the belief he holds is contradictory?

Through a series of questions and answers, it becomes clear that Euthyphro agrees with Socrates that the only reason the gods could war against each other and have hatred against one another is because of disagreements regarding right and wrong. Because Euthyphro agrees with this, Socrates shows him that he is being contradictory in his belief concerning what piety is. In essence, Euthyphro is saying the following:

All holy things are things pleasing to the gods.

Some holy things are not pleasing to the gods.

Euthyphro tries to argue his point, but every way he attempts to get around the contradiction eventually leads back to this contradictory idea.

Chapter 2

Why Debate?

Everyday Debate

Develop

There is a lot of debate in our culture right now about the importance of saving energy. Consider this debate resolution: “Resolved: People should ride their bikes more than they drive cars.” Take a few minutes to develop at least one argument for and against this resolution. Later, you will receive specific instruction to learn how to develop an argument. Right now, just do the best you can. To help yourself develop an argument, think about the answers to the following questions:

- **What** do you believe about this resolution?
- **Why** do you believe that? (This is your evidence for your belief.)
- **How** does your evidence support your belief?

Answers will vary. Here are some general arguments for and against this resolution:

For:

- a. It will save oil, which is becoming a scarce commodity.
- b. People will get more exercise, which they desperately need, and it will improve their health.
- c. It will decrease pollution.

Against:

- a. It is not practical.
- b. It is not safe.
- c. Oil is not as scarce as some people say.

Notes

Chapter 3

Debate: The Janus-Faced Discipline

“FOR WHAT SHOULD A MAN LIVE, IF NOT FOR
THE PLEASURES OF DISCOURSE?”

—PLATO¹

Debate: Logic or Rhetoric?

What skill or skills are crucial for someone who wants to be an effective debater? Is it logic? Is it fine speech? Is it the ability to make people laugh? Is it the ability to rattle off a litany of facts at the drop of a hat? No doubt, the ability to connect with and catch the attention of your audience is crucial. However, it is also crucial that people are logical and sensible when they speak; otherwise, they will have serious trouble convincing their audience. In other words, in order to be a good debater, you must speak well, but you must also certainly think before you speak. Those of you who have already studied logic or rhetoric may wonder how debate fits into these subjects. It is safe to say that debate is a very interesting hybrid of logic and rhetoric, and it takes both skills to be an effective debater. To make sure we are all on the same page about what we mean when we use the terms “logic” and “rhetoric,” let’s take a look at a brief definition of these words (a more detailed definition and explanation will be presented later).

“**Logic**” can be defined as the art and science of reasoning.² Logic helps us analyze our thoughts. In a sense, developing your logical skills allows you to dissect and operate on your thoughts; that is, it lets you identify both the good and bad and then get rid of what is unhelpful and illogical in your thinking.

Additionally, debate is more than logic. That is, it requires more than an ability to identify good arguments and bad arguments. It also requires skills in rhetoric. **Rhetoric** is the art and science of public speaking. In other words, there are rules and formulas you can follow to craft effective speeches and debates—this is the science of rhetoric. However, there is an artistic side to public speaking as well. This artistic side requires a speaker to read his audience, connect with the people, and word his speech in such a manner that it meets them where they are. Good **rhetoricians** often possess a collection of jokes, sayings, stories (these are called **copia**), and speaking devices (or rhetorical devices). Later you will learn more about these rhetorical devices, which allow you to add personality, humor, and beauty to a speech in just the right way that resonates with the audience. In fact, in this chapter, you will start a new activity in the “Review Exercises” section called “Building Copiousness,” which will teach you to do just this: It will help you cultivate a collection of sayings, jokes, and stories that you can use to connect with your audience and enliven your speech while expressing your unique personality.

1. Susan Ratcliffe, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations by Subject*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 98.

2. Aaron Larsen, Joelle Hodge, and Christopher Perrin, *The Art of Argument* (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2003–2007), 227.

An Illustration from Presidential Debates

The 2008–2009 presidential debates of John McCain and Barack Obama, and vice-presidential candidates Sarah Palin and Joe Biden, aptly illustrate the dual logical and rhetorical nature of debate. Both presidential and vice-presidential candidates had to know key facts and statistics. For instance, because the state of the economy was such a significant concern during this presidential election, news reporters, debate moderators, and even debate audience members (e.g., in the “town hall” debate between Obama and McCain) asked very specific questions and expected precise answers. The press generally panned Palin after several interviews she had with journalist Katie Couric because she could not give strong, definitive answers to questions Couric asked about important legal decisions, economic concerns, or recent books she had read.³ And, in fact, on several occasions, Palin’s thinking appeared very muddled on the issues. On the other hand, presidential candidate Obama was generally highly praised for his academic, knowledgeable presentation, and this seemed to demonstrate that although Americans certainly like to be entertained, they also place a high value on good logic and knowledge, especially when demonstrated by presidential candidates.⁴

Nevertheless, although logic and argument content was very important in this debate, it was not enough. For example, Obama was sometimes criticized for appearing too aloof with his audience and not showing his emotions.⁵ In addition, he repeatedly smiled and

shook his head, some thought with condescension, when McCain said something he found objectionable. These small actions offended and alienated some viewers. In addition, after the first debate, Senator McCain was heavily criticized for his facial expressions looking mean or angry.⁶ Interestingly, he noticeably smiled more frequently in the ensuing debates, and both candidates went out of their way to show that they could relate to the common person. Obama talked about his humble upbringing as the son of a poor, single woman who had, at least at one time, subsisted on food stamps. McCain used the phrase “my friends” to connect with the audience and frequently evoked folksy images of “Joe the Plumber,” a common working man who became a symbol of the American people.⁷

These actions demonstrated that both candidates were aware that facts, statistics, and logic were not enough. Though these emotional elements of both candidates’ speeches were effective at times, at other times they appeared to be contrived, and sometimes they actually backfired. For instance, after a while, many people felt that the “Joe the Plumber” card had been played too heavily, and some comedians, for example those on the television show *Saturday Night Live*, satirized “Joe the Plumber” as being McCain’s imaginary friend who lived under his bed with Simon the unicorn.⁸ This shows that while emotional connection can be very important, it can also fail if viewers perceive it as being overdone or insincere.

Putting Your Best Face Forward

A look at another historical presidential debate will demonstrate that appearance and connecting with the audience can be just as important as logic in debates.

3. See, for example, Katharine Q. Seelye, “McCain and Palin’s Interview with Couric” (blog), *New York Times*, September 28, 2008, http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/09/29/mccain-and-palins-interview-with-couric/comment-page-28/?_r=2.

4. See, for example, “Obama-McCain Presidential Debate Reaction: HuffPost Bloggers Weigh In” (blog), *Huffington Post*, originally posted October 27, 2008, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/huffingtonpost/presidential-debate-react_b_129793.html; Madeleine Albright, “A Breakthrough Night for Obama” (blog) *Huffington Post*, originally posted October 27, 2008, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/madeleine-albright/a-breakthrough-night-for_b_129786.html.

5. See, for example, Paul Reiser, “Obama Underwhelms, McCain Patronizes” (blog), *Huffington Post*, originally posted October

27, 2008, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-reiser/obama-underwhelms-mccain_b_129818.html.

6. See, for example, Chris Durang, “Barak Did Great, McCain Okay But Angry” (blog), *Huffington Post*, originally posted October 27, 2008, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/chris-durang/barack-did-great-mccain-o_b_129802.html.

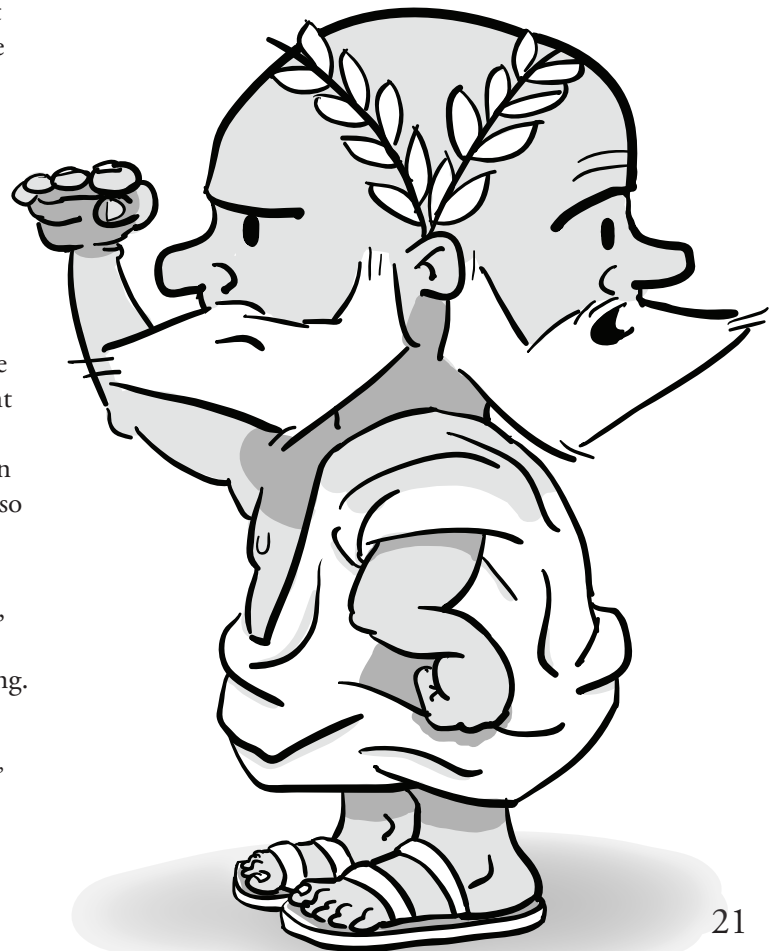
7. See, for example, Jackson Williams, “Joe the Plumber Meets Sarah the Energy Expert” (blog), *Huffington Post*, originally posted February 28, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jackson-williams/joe-the-plumber-meets-sar_b_135312.html.

8. Lynn Sweet, “‘Saturday Night Live’ Third Debate Special” (blog) *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 17, 2008, http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2008/10/saturday_night_live_third_deba.html.

The problem of an emphasis on content over appearance or style is aptly illustrated by the 1960 debate between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy, which was the first televised debate ever in the history of America. Historians generally agree that Nixon had the stronger arguments, and that, had the debate been broadcast by radio, Nixon would have won the debate.⁹ However, several aspects of Nixon's presentation, appearance, and style (or lack thereof) did not sit favorably with his audience. Nixon had been ill and was exhausted on the night of the debate. As a result, his face had a haggard, gray pallor. In addition, he refused any makeup for the camera, believing it was unnecessary and showy. Kennedy, on the other hand, had a fresh, tan appearance, and—possibly because he was more aware of the importance of TV aesthetics—he accepted the makeup, which, on TV, increased his healthful, vigorous appearance. Needless to say, after watching the televised debates, people who had formerly been strong supporters of Nixon wondered if he was physically capable of handling the job, while Kennedy, who previously had been considered too young and inexperienced for the job, rose significantly in people's estimation.¹⁰ While it is true that most of us will never run for political office or participate in a televised debate, we should realize that everyone who hopes to persuade someone else (and we all do at one time or another)—whether in an informal discussion or a formal debate—must learn the art of tailoring speeches, words, and ideas to an audience. You may be among those who feel that this is disingenuous (not completely honest or sincere), and perhaps even pride yourself on “telling it like it is.” Although honesty, accuracy, and sincerity are of the utmost importance in any debate, it is important to realize that there are many different ways of saying the same truth. The wise debater considers how she can best arrange and communicate the facts and the truth so that her opponent and audience will best comprehend and be most receptive to them. After all, debate and discussion are not about winning, proving intelligence, or crushing the opponent. The true purpose of debate and discussion is the pursuit of truth and understanding.

If you keep this core function of debate in mind, it will help you realize that while strong logic and a good grasp of the facts are essential to effective debate, you must also consider how to build bridges to your audience and, yes, even your opponent so that you can best understand and communicate to one another.

It is important to note that while logic, rhetoric, and debate can all be done with sincerity, integrity, skill, and concern for audience members, they also can be done in a deceitful or manipulative manner, or with a complete disregard for audience members or opponents. Unfortunately, people engaging in logic, rhetoric, and debate with this approach have given debate a bad name. For instance, in the 2008 election, both McCain and Obama promised to run a different kind of presidential election—one in which they refused to stoop to name-calling and backstabbing. Unfortunately, the camps of both of these candidates eventually used dirty tactics and, at times, it appeared both candidates were dragged into these dirty battles. In addition, one has to watch only a few political commercials during any senatorial



9. Erika Tyner Allen, “The Kennedy-Nixon Presidential Debates, 1960,” *Museum of Broadcast Communication*, <http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=kennedy-nixon>.

10. Ibid.

or legislative campaign to see that, sadly, much political public rhetoric and debate consists of name-calling and mudslinging.

Another less than ideal approach is when people engage in debates that, while free from mudslinging, are filled with academic minutia and language that is incomprehensible to the common person. Sometimes academic debates can seem to be a contest in out-footnoting the opponent or using the biggest, most incomprehensible and obscure vocabulary words. Neither of these approaches to debate is helpful. The former makes cynics out of its audience; the latter bores, frustrates, and belittles the audience. It is important to note that debate (and, therefore, logic and rhetoric) can and should be an honest, intelligible, and interesting activity. In conclusion, let's refer to the title of this chapter—it is called “Debate: The Janus-Faced Discipline.” Janus was the Roman god of doors and gates. He is typically represented as having two faces¹¹ looking in opposite directions. Debate has been referred to as “the Janus-faced discipline” here because it is an activity that requires you to look both inward and outward simultaneously. You must first look inward

to make sure your thoughts and reasoning are correct. However, you must also look outward—that is, to your opponent and your audience. Certainly, both of these activities should be done with honesty, integrity, and care for your opponent and audience. As you read this book, you will learn skills that will help you debate effectively with yourself, with another person, or with a group of people. First, you'll learn how to think like a debater, which is a skill that is beneficial to everyone. Next, you'll learn how to research and develop arguments so you can support your views and critique your opponent's views. Lastly, you will learn the format of a formal debate—this way, if you choose to participate in such an activity, you will understand and be prepared for each step of the process. As you learn these steps, you will become well prepared to engage in everyday debate!

11. Micha F. Lindemans, “Janus,” in *Encyclopedia Mythica*, modified August 28, 1999, www.pantheon.org/articles/j/janus.html.

Review Exercises

Define

Give an appropriate definition for each of the following words:

Logic: The art and science of reasoning

Rhetoric: The art and science of public speaking

Explain

Explain why debate could be called the Janus-faced discipline.

Janus was the Roman god of doors and gates. He is often pictured as having two heads or faces looking in

opposite directions. This is a good analogy for debate. In order to be an effective debater, you must look inward

and examine your arguments to make sure they are logical and complete. However, good argumentation is not enough. You must also look outward and understand the nature of your audience and what they need to feel connected to you. In this way, debate is Janus-faced because it requires looking both inward and outward.

Building Copiousness^A

Consider

From now on, you will see this new section in the review exercises of each chapter: “Building Copiousness.” The technique of building copiousness dates back to ancient rhetoric. The word *copious* means “many.” Ancient rhetoricians memorized *many* quotes and stories on general themes such as love and hate, justice and injustice, bravery and cowardice, freedom and slavery. This was called copiousness because it helped them build mental storehouses of many quotes and stories they could use on the spot to elaborate, enrich, and beautify any speech they gave. You might actually remember an example of this from the movie *The Great Debaters* (see chapter 1). In one of the beginning scenes of the movie, the debate coach Melvin Tolson holds debate tryouts. In this scene, he calls Henry Lowe to step into what he calls “the hot spot.” Then, Professor Tolson gives Henry a topic, and Henry has to come up with a quote from literature on this topic. When he does this, Henry calls on the copiousness he had built up from reading and absorbing so much great literature.

Now, you may be a person who just readily absorbs everything you read and can often call a quote or story to memory on the spot. You might even have a photographic memory. However, it is not necessary to remember everything you read to build copiousness. Instead, one method of accomplishing this is to memorize fifteen to twenty quotes or stories on common topics such as those the ancient rhetoricians memorized—love, hate, freedom, slavery, goodness, or evil. It is wise to memorize these quotes or stories on general topics, rather than narrow ones such as baseball or monarchs of England. You can probably see why. The more general your quote is, the more likely you will be able to easily apply it to a variety of speeches in a variety of settings.

In each chapter’s “Building Copiousness” section, you will be provided with a quote or story on a general topic. In order to help yourself memorize the quote, read it several times. Make sure you understand what it is saying, and make sure you ask someone for clarification if you don’t understand it. Think about the logical parts of the quote or story. When you believe you have the basic quote or story memorized, practice reciting it out loud with a friend or family member. Don’t worry if you don’t get it completely right the first time. Try to quote it as accurately as you can. Then study it a bit more. Practice writing it a few times and saying it to someone again. Remember the author’s name (if there is one). Eventually, you will be able to say the quote almost perfectly, especially if you keep reviewing it each chapter, which you will be asked to do. Here is your first quote for building copiousness:

“Love is free; it is not practiced as a way of achieving other ends.” —Pope Benedict XVI¹²

12. Ratcliffe, *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 292.

Everyday Debate^B

Consider

Consider the quote that you are memorizing in the “Building Copiousness” section of this chapter:

“Love is free; it is not practiced as a way of achieving other ends.” —Pope Benedict XVI

On the one hand, this seems true. Love is a beautiful thing and one of the most prized possessions in our world. Think of the stories, movies, and songs written in the name of love. On the other hand, people have done some pretty horrible things in the name of love. You can probably think of some examples. In some terrible cases, it seems that people use love just to achieve their goals. Some people argue, in fact, that this is all love ever is—just cleverly disguised selfishness. Therefore, this quote certainly seems debatable.

Take a few minutes to develop at least one argument for this quote and at least one argument against it. To develop an argument, first decide what *you* believe about this quote. Do you believe it is true? Do you believe it is false? Now ask yourself, *Why do I believe what I do?* You must have some reason for believing what you do—based on your personal experiences, others’ experiences, information you have read, movies you’ve watched, and so forth. Figure out the reason why you believe what you do. Once you figure that out, ask yourself how this experience proves your point. For example, if your experiences have taught you that this quote is indeed true, then explain what those experiences were and how they prove this quote.

Once you have figured out why you believe what you believe, your next job is to figure out why the opposition believes what it believes. Go through the same process. Ask yourself, *Why might somebody believe the opposite position to what I believe?* Once you figure out what in the world (literally) might make them think that, ask yourself what it is about those experiences that could make people with an opposing view believe as they do.

Listen

Now that you have developed your arguments, share them with three other people in your class and then listen to their arguments. When you are finished, choose which of your classmates’ arguments was the strongest, in your opinion, and summarize it on a piece of paper. In addition, explain why you believe it was the strongest.^C



Learning from the Masters

Observe

Watch a clip of the 1960 debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon (Link 3-1). On a piece of paper, list what you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of each speaker. Which speaker do you believe is more effective overall? Why?^D



Chapter 3

Debate: The Janus-Faced Discipline

Building Copiousness

^AThe quotes provided in the “Building Copiousness” section are merely a suggestion. It is not necessary for students to memorize these specific quotes. Although some exercises draw on particular quotes, it is still possible to do those exercises without memorizing the provided quotes. Therefore, feel free to substitute quotes of your own that you believe would be helpful for your students to debate.

To help your students get the most out of this “Building Copiousness” section, here are a few suggestions. Consider the following:

1. Say quotes out loud together every day (or several times per week). It’s usually good to repeat them several times. As students are presented with new quotes, say them together and then review the old ones out loud. Consider doing this at the beginning or end of every class. You will find that, over time, the students really begin to build up a supply of quotes. They will even start to use them in their writing.
2. Give students extra points when they use quotes from the “Building Copiousness” section in their debates in ways that make sense. This will give students incentive to apply the quotes in their assignments.
3. Play review games with the quotes as the class builds a repertoire. Look for game suggestions in upcoming chapters.

Everyday Debate

^BOne of the goals of the exercise section “Everyday Debate” is to help students look at an argument from both sides of the issue and to develop both sides of the argument. In upcoming chapters, students will be shown very specific ways to do this. Right now, your main goal is to get students to start asking themselves *why*.

Here are some reasons why someone might affirm the statement:

- a. Love is sacrificial and generous. God is this way to us.
- b. Love gives life to others. God is considered the giver of life.
- c. Love is often considered to be the greatest force in the world. God is considered by many to be omnipotent.

Here are some reasons why someone might disagree with the statement:

- a. Love can be selfish and jealous. God is not this way, or at least not in the same way humans are selfish and jealous.
- b. People have done violent, horrible deeds in the name of love (e.g., a man kills a woman he loves because she has rejected him and he doesn’t want her to be with anyone else). This does not reflect God. Human love is imperfect; God’s love is perfect.

CAfter the class has gone through this activity, consider discussing the arguments on both sides of the topic with the class. It would be good to write the arguments for both sides on the board. Then, after you have heard all of the strongest arguments, vote as a class on what you believe is the strongest argument for each side. Then, discuss as a class why they believe the arguments that won are the strongest arguments. In this way, you are helping your students develop an idea of the characteristics of strong arguments. Here are some features that they are likely to point out in their chosen arguments:

The argument had specific reasoning.

The argument was based on a vivid example or story.

The argument was based on several pieces of reasoning that combined effectively to create a strong impression.

If students are unable to explain why they think the arguments are strong, refer them to the list above and ask them which characteristics the winning arguments reflect.

Learning from the Masters

Observe

DShow the video (Link 3-1) to students before they read this chapter. Discuss it briefly ahead of time, and then, as they read this chapter, they will discover what people at that time generally thought about the debate.

Answers will vary. People generally thought that Nixon was very knowledgeable in this debate. However, in general, they thought that he looked sick and lethargic. Some said he seemed to scowl most of the time. Kennedy, though he was certainly much younger than Nixon and did not have as much experience, came across as being young, healthy, and enthusiastic. In fact, the general opinion of Kennedy rose considerably after this debate. It would be interesting to let students watch this whole debate or clips of it before they read this chapter and then see, later, if they agree with the general consensus.