

GREAT DEBATES

TOUGH QUESTIONS / SMART HISTORY

OUR MILITARY

By Geoffrey C. Harrison and Thomas F. Scott

SERIES OBJECTIVES

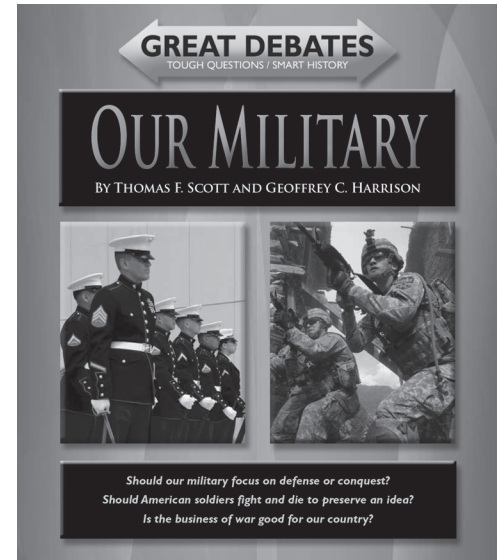
The **GREAT DEBATES** series was conceived, written and designed to offer educators a versatile, thought-provoking classroom tool. Each book focuses on a theme in contemporary American culture and follows it from the country's earliest days to the present.

This provides history and context to the issues they hear and read about today—at home, at school, and in the media. The authors have stopped at crucial moments along the cultural timeline to examine the discussions surrounding this topic. Many have a ring of familiarity to them—they echo the debates on these issues today!

Each title in the **GREAT DEBATES** series is structured along similar lines. The introductory chapter (**WE HAVE ISSUES**) supplies young readers with a jumping-off point for the issue addressed by the book. It also clarifies the meaning and ground rules of “debate” within an academic environment, and explains the purpose of the Make Your Case sidebars in **CHAPTERS 1** through **5**.

As much as possible, **CHAPTERS 1** through **5** are organized along chronological lines. Each chapter title is actually a “big question” that was being debated at that point in history. At the bottom of the opening spread for each chapter are the “big answers” to those questions—one assuming the **AFFIRMATIVE SIDE** and the other the **NEGATIVE SIDE**, as would be the case in an academic debate. These answers not only serve as examples of how a classroom debate (or discussion) might proceed. They send a critical message to students—that the heated arguments they hear on this issue today have actually been going on for centuries.

Each of the first five chapters features two **MAKE YOUR CASE** sidebars. Each of these sidebars presents a quote on the subject matter by an opinion-maker of the day. The quote is followed by a brief analysis, which concludes with a question. This question is meant to stimulate class discussion or—if your class engages in some type of debate or forensics activity—serve as a possible topic. In most cases, students will be able to formulate good answers to these questions. If, as an educator, you feel they require additional context or



need guidance to stay on point, this Teacher's Guide provides you with short responses that you can tailor to your own style or classroom environment.

Likewise, this Guide provides you with responses to the other questions posed in the book. At the end of **CHAPTERS 1 through 5**, a **NOW CONSIDER THIS** paragraph acts as a brief summation. It also presents a new aspect to the issue, and poses a question similar to those in the **MAKE YOUR CASE** sidebars. In **CHAPTER 7 (POINT – COUNTERPOINT)**, readers examine historic quotes on both sides of a theme covered earlier in the book. These quotes are accompanied by a brief analysis and historical context, and then followed by a question. As with the **MAKE YOUR CASE** sidebars, you will find helpful answers in this Guide for the **NOW CONSIDER THIS** and **POINT – COUNTERPOINT** features.

CHAPTER 6 (FIND YOUR VOICE) provides students with questions and answers. The questions address 3 current-day debates, while the answers provide information and viewpoints designed to help readers form their own opinions. This Guide does not provide any further information or suggestions on these subjects; the authors feel that this is where you can encourage students to cut loose and take control of the conversation. As a moderator, however, you may want to read the conclusion of **CHAPTER 6**. If your students need a spark of encouragement, you will find it here!



CHAPTER 1

MAKE YOUR CASE

Was Manifest Destiny a valid reason for the U.S. to expand its territory?

- In the 1840s, America was desperate to control California, which it considered the gateway to trade with Asia. The U.S. tried to buy California from Mexico before another country did. When the offer was rejected, the U.S. government pursued a military option. The U.S. was a stronger regional power than Mexico, and therefore believed that Mexico's northern territory should rightfully become part of the U.S. However, the belief that "might makes right" is one that goes against the ideals of democracy.

MAKE YOUR CASE

Should the decision to go to war be a political one or a military one?

- When war with Mexico came up for a vote in Congress, President Polk's Democratic Party supported this idea. The opposing party, the Whigs, did not support the war. Instead of taking a stand against Polk, most of the Whigs voted for war, too. They were afraid of what would happen in the next election if they were painted as being unpatriotic.

NOW CONSIDER THIS ...

What forms of anti-war protest are most effective for non-celebrities?

- Everyday Americans have been opposing wars for personal, political, or religious reasons for two centuries. Some are against particular wars for particular reasons. Others oppose the use of military force altogether. The goal of anti-war protesters is to put public pressure on political leaders through words and deeds. In America, church organizations formed “peace societies” in the early 1800s. They used public speeches, pamphlets and books to deliver their message. By the 21st century, the strategies of antiwar groups had evolved to take advantage of new ways to spread their ideas—most notably electronic media. What used to take a mass of protesters to accomplish can now be accomplished by a single person. However, mass protest (whether in person, by petition, or online) has remained an effective way to deliver an antiwar message to the public and to politicians.

CHAPTER 2

MAKE YOUR CASE

Should Brown’s attempts to spark a violent revolt over slavery have been punished by death?

- Some people considered John Brown to be a hero who sacrificed his life to force America to settle the question of slavery. Others thought Brown was a murdering psychopath. The truth is likely somewhere in between. After Brown’s capture at Harper’s Ferry, the governor of Virginia ordered that he be tried in a state court. He was charged with murder and treason against Virginia. A guilty verdict would carry with it the death penalty. Had Brown been tried in a federal court (for his attack on a federal armory) he might have avoided hanging through a presidential pardon.

MAKE YOUR CASE

Is opposition to armed conflict healthy—and/or necessary—in a democracy?

- The position and plight of the Copperheads brought up some tough questions for America in the mid-1800s. Many of the politicians who opposed using Union troops against the South saw their careers and lives ruined. Their position may have been radical and unpopular, but in a country that protects free speech, they felt that their views would be protected. Everyday Americans may have supported penalizing the Copperheads, but it almost certainly made people think twice before publicly opposing the war.

NOW CONSIDER THIS ...

What might the reaction be in your town if the military took over to make sure local laws were enforced?

- The use of the military to take charge of a city or town or region is called martial law. However, martial law, by definition, is a temporary measure, with the goal of returning control to local law enforcement. During times of martial law, day-to-day life may look the same, but look a little closer and there are some profound differences. For example, civil rights may no longer apply, curfews may be imposed, and people can be arrested and held without charges or a trial.

CHAPTER 3

MAKE YOUR CASE

What are the advantages of an isolationist policy?

- Old quarrels between foreign countries had drawn America into World War I. The isolationist viewpoint held that America should use its oceans as buffers from Europe and Asia, and focus on its own goals and problems. The advantages of isolationism made some sense in the 1920s and 1930s. However, by the 1940s, technology and the linking of world economies had made isolationism unworkable. The idea of non-involvement did not disappear after World War II; isolationism took the form of non-involvement, or a “hands-off” approach to other governments. People are still debating whether this is a good idea or not as events unfold around the world.

MAKE YOUR CASE

Should we enter a war as soon as innocent lives are at stake, or should we wait until our national interests are threatened?

- Every president since Roosevelt has had to face this difficult question. Entering a war too soon can make a bad situation worse. Waiting too long can needlessly cost lives. Committing troops to a war without a specific goal or exit strategy can prove even more costly. Military and political leaders know that there is never a “good” time to get involved in a war—their decision is more about the “right” time.

NOW CONSIDER THIS ...

Does the military have a duty to protect victims of ethnic cleansing, even if it takes military action against another government?

- The role America assumed in the 20th century—and carried into the 21st century—is that of a champion and protector of human rights. Where military force is needed to protect a people from annihilation, the U.S. has shown it is willing to intervene. However, that puts enormous pressure on the government to decide what constitutes ethnic cleansing and what doesn’t. For example, America took military action against Serbia to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo in 1999. Yet in 1994, America took no action when the Hutu-led African country of Rwanda attempted to wipe out ethnic Tutsis, who made up a majority of the population.

CHAPTER 4

MAKE YOUR CASE

Is having a powerful military more important than having a strong economy?

- Governments have been trying to answer this question for centuries. The answer is that every country must find the right balance between the two, and be able to make adjustments as conditions change. In the case of the United States, a powerful military was less important than a strong economy up until the nuclear age. Prior to that, our oceans protected us from the main military threat, invasion. During the Cold War, America had to project power to its enemies (and allies), even at the expense of its economy. In the 21st century, the staggering cost of our military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan—and our staggering economy at home—made many Americans question whether fighting in those countries was worth the lives lost and financial hardships felt at home.

MAKE YOUR CASE

Is it right to increase the military's budget to help the economy—and what are the risks of doing so?

- Looking back on Reagan's views on the military and the economy, it is difficult to argue that he made the wrong decisions—at least in the short run. The country took steps toward prosperity, and the investments in military technology helped bring an end to the Cold War. However, the cozy relationship between politicians, the military, and arms manufacturers has not always worked out in the best interests of the U.S. economy.

NOW CONSIDER THIS ...

But at what point does a smart weapon become too expensive?

- Protecting the lives of soldiers is worth whatever the military can afford. By the same token, the military can't afford to keep every soldier out of harm's way. When military budgets are made, the basics come first—feeding, housing, training, transporting, and equipping soldiers is the top priority. What remains in the budget can be used for smart weapons and other items. Would the Navy pay \$2 million or \$5 million or \$10 million for a cruise missile? Would it simply order fewer if the price were higher? Or would the Navy ask for more money to buy the same number of advanced weapons? This is when political leaders must make tough judgments about what's best for the military and what's best for the country. Their decisions have an impact on the lives of soldiers, and a ripple effect throughout the economy.

CHAPTER 5

MAKE YOUR CASE

Even though there were no weapons of mass destruction, was the U.S. right to attack Iraq?

- This question is likely to be debated for generations. Our goal was to topple a dictator intent on harming America, and bringing democracy to the Iraqi people. The U.S. military accomplished the first part of the mission, but encountered enormous difficulty and expense in accomplishing the second part. Did America avoid a future attack by removing Saddam Hussein from power? Or did we create an unstable situation in the Middle East that will prove even more troublesome down the road?

MAKE YOUR CASE

Is it wise to keep our troops in foreign countries once our military goals have been achieved?

- Armies are trained to fight. They are not trained to occupy and run a country once they have won. This has been true for countless centuries. In Iraq and Afghanistan, America encountered enormous challenges after its initial military success. Encouraging our system of government in countries that were new to democracy created more problems than it solved. The presence of U.S. soldiers created anger and resentment. When troops were removed from areas, however, it created a vacuum that often resulted in fighting between two groups competing for power.

NOW CONSIDER THIS ...

If we do not have enough soldiers to guarantee national security, is restarting the draft a good option?

- The last time America had a military draft, it was extremely unpopular. Unless the U.S. came under a direct and obvious threat, it is unlikely that the draft would be reinstated. One idea that has been offered as an alternative instead is a program of national service. Young people would be asked to devote a couple of years to the country after high school. Some might work in national parks, others helping with farming or construction projects. Some might choose a career in the military.

CHAPTER 7

What should be the focus of the military: defending the nation or expanding influence?

- Two centuries have passed since a foreign power launched an attack on the continental United States. The role of the American military since then has been to meet threats before they arrive on our shores. In projecting our power overseas, however, the U.S. has exerted tremendous influence in foreign lands—economically, culturally, and militarily. The question Polk and Calhoun might debate today is: Is it even possible to engage in national defense without expanding our influence?

Did the U.S. military make the correct decision in using the atomic bomb during World War II?

- Since the two atomic weapons were used against Japan at the end of World War II, no country has used “nukes” in a conflict since. So in that respect, Oppenheimer was correct. But Hoover was right, too. There is no “clean” way to use nuclear weapons against an enemy without harming innocent civilians.

Should the military weigh the cost in dollars before getting involved in a war?

- Answering that question is not really the military’s job. It is the job of the political leaders who vote to move forward with an attack or invasion. Although the U.S. government can predict if we will win a war, it cannot predict what victory will look like. Our military is given manpower, materials, and a mission—not a calculator.