

# Great Debates in American History

Overview ..... GD1

## Unit

1 How Should Society Balance the Need for Tolerance with the Need to Protect Itself? .....	GD3
2 How Powerful Should the National Government Be? .....	GD7
3 Who Should Be Allowed to Vote? .....	GD11
4 Should Women Have Equal Treatment Under the Law? .....	GD15
5 How Should Americans Treat the Land? .....	GD19
6 Has Industrialization Produced More Benefits or More Problems for the Nation? .....	GD23
7 Should the United States Pursue a Foreign Policy of Isolationism or Interventionism? .....	GD27
8 What Should the Nation's Immigration Policy Be? .....	GD31
9 To What Extent Is the Federal Government Responsible for the Welfare and Security of the Individual? .....	GD35
10 Is Civil Disobedience Ever Justified as a Method of Political Change? .....	GD39
11 What Are the Limits of a Free Press? .....	GD43
12 How Much Should the Nation Invest in Defense? .....	GD47
Answer Key .....	GD51

# Great Debates Overview

## Introduction

Democracy cannot survive without debate. The right to disagree and to express one's opinions freely is guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution. In addition to being fundamental to the legislative decision-making process, debate is formalized in the American judicial system. The freedom to consider competing alternatives forms the foundation of an enlightened society, and the greatest protection against tyranny is the competition of ideas in the marketplace.

Academic debate can help prepare students for responsible citizenship, as well as assist in the development of research, writing, public speaking, and critical thinking skills. Debate encourages students to consider important issues, examine their own values, and become more tolerant of the ideas and perspectives of other people. When used as a model for discussion, debate also provides an open forum to air differences and work towards cooperative solutions.

## Format

The Great Debates feature consists of 12 debates, one for every unit of the text. Each of these debates contains:

- an introduction that states the topic of the debate, examines the background of this issue, provides information about both the readings and the debaters, and discusses the debate topic from a contemporary perspective.
- the conflicting viewpoints of two or more historical figures and/or organizations.
- a worksheet that helps students analyze the debate through a series of comprehension and critical thinking questions.

## How to Conduct a Debate

Apart from having students read and analyze the debates included here, teachers may wish to use the feature as the basis for formal class debates. Formal debate is based on the consideration of a resolution. A resolution recommends a change in the status quo, using the word "should" in a simple declarative sentence. For example, the debate for Unit 3 could be stated in the following manner: "Resolved: The property

qualification for suffrage should be eliminated."

The Great Debates feature can be used as the foundation for student debates using a variety of resolutions. For example, the debate for Unit 9 could be framed with a New Deal-era resolution: "Resolved: The federal government should enact a system of social security." But the resolution for this debate could just as easily be given a contemporary framework: "Resolved: The federal government should guarantee comprehensive medical care for all citizens."

In conducting a debate the *affirmative* team supports the resolution and argues for the change that it advocates. The "burden of proof" lies with the affirmative, for they are required to prove that the status quo needs to be changed and that the resolution is a clear improvement. The *negative* team argues against the proposed resolution. It is assumed that the status quo is acceptable and need not be changed unless the affirmative team proves it otherwise. This assumption is similar to the judicial principle that a defendant is innocent until proven guilty.

A formal debate consists of alternating timed statements with opportunities for questioning by each team. The affirmative team must prove that there is a problem with the status quo, explain their proposed solution, and prove that their resolution will best solve the problem. The negative team defends the status quo, asserts that the affirmative resolution does not solve the problem, or presents an alternative solution.

Each of the debates in this feature can be completed in one class period. Team size can vary, and students might elect to debate in historical character. Debates can be evaluated by either a designated group of student observers or by the entire class. The criteria for evaluation should include: preparation, presentation, organization, use of supporting evidence, and defense of the case. Teachers may wish to assign all students a written evaluation of the debate or just have those students not assigned a role in the debate complete such an evaluation.

## Different Types of Debates

### A. Cross-Examination Debate

This debate consists of seven phases. Both the affirmative and the negative teams should have one or more team members prepared for each phase.

1. **First Affirmative Statement** (6 minutes): an introduction to the affirmative case
2. **Negative Cross-Examination** (3 minutes)
3. **Negative Statement** (7 minutes): an introduction to the negative case
4. **Affirmative Cross-Examination** (3 minutes)
5. **Second Affirmative Statement** (4 minutes): an elaboration of the affirmative statement
6. **Negative Rebuttal** (6 minutes): a rebuilding of the arguments the opponent has attacked
7. **Affirmative Rebuttal** (3 minutes): a rebuilding of the arguments the opponent has attacked

### B. Simplified Cross-Examination Debate

This debate consists of three phases. Both the affirmative and the negative teams should have one or more team members prepared for each phase.

1. **Introduction** (5 minutes): The affirmative team begins with a statement of the problem and the proposed resolution. The negative team states the case for the status quo.
2. **Evidence** (20 minutes): Each team presents evidence in support of its position.
3. **Questions and Response** (20 minutes): Each team prepares questions for the opposing team. Each team also designates responders to anticipate questions and be ready with answers.

### C. Full Class Debate

The entire class may debate a resolution, with the teacher or a student acting as moderator. After the resolution has been introduced, alternative affirmative and negative responses are offered by class members.

## Other Activities Using This Feature

1. Students can use the readings to identify examples of irrelevant information, bias, stereotypes, unstated assumptions, logical fallacies, unwarranted claims, ambiguous arguments, and propaganda techniques.
2. Students can analyze and evaluate a reading in a brief report using an outline format. The outline should include: debate number, speaker and affiliation, position on issue, main points of argument, use of facts, use of opinions, and major points of agreement and disagreement between speakers.

3. Students can consider the constitutional or public policy implications of an issue. They can locate constitutional references or references to relevant legislation in the readings. Students can then propose and evaluate possible constitutional amendments or legislation that would solve the issue.
4. Students can develop a press conference, news report, or public service announcement based on the readings. Students can also conduct opinion polls to test public sentiment on the issues.
5. Students can locate additional primary sources or historical readings that either support or offer alternative perspectives on the issues. The interpretations of historians and textbooks can be critically evaluated or compared and contrasted with the current primary sources.
6. Students can use the readings to examine such ethical issues as human rights, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, government conduct, and attitudes regarding race, gender, social class, ethnicity, and poverty.
7. Students can study continuity and change in American history by comparing readings from different time periods in a thematic approach. Possible themes include:

#### a. Constitutional and Civil Development

Unit 1: Due process  
 Unit 2: Federalism  
 Unit 3: Voting rights  
 Unit 4: Voting rights  
 Unit 9: The general welfare of citizens  
 Unit 10: The rights/responsibilities of citizens  
 Unit 11: Press freedom and executive power  
 Unit 12: Defense policy

#### b. Social History

Unit 1: Religion  
 Unit 3: Social class and politics  
 Unit 4: Gender  
 Unit 5: Native Americans  
 Unit 6: Social class and economics  
 Unit 7: Nativism and assimilation  
 Unit 9: Poverty and social welfare  
 Unit 10: Civil rights movement  
 Unit 11: Dissent

#### c. Foreign Affairs and Territorial Expansion

Unit 5: Anglo-Native American Relations  
 Unit 7: Imperialism  
 Unit 12: Defense policy

#### d. Economic History

Unit 6: Imperialism  
 Unit 9: Distribution of wealth  
 Unit 12: The costs of national defense

# Answer Key

## Great Debates in American History

### Answers to Worksheet 1

- A.
1. Mather's warning is that the devil is making an attempt upon the Puritan community of New England and that the devil already has a hold on members of the community.
  2. The other "Devils" that Calef refers to are the true reasons members of the community have branded "one another with the odious Name of Witch." Calef's "Devils" are envy, hatred, pride, cruelty, and malice.
  3. The evidence brought against Bridget Bishop according to Mather were witness reports by those she had tortured, the effect she had on people at the court trial, news of the discovery of dolls in her home by John and William Bly, her "gross lying in the court," and unusual marks found on her body.
  4. superstition and sorcery
- B.
1. Student answers will vary. Mather views the witch trials as a necessary and expedient way of purging the Puritan community of the devil's influence. Brattle questions all the means that the "Salem Gentlemen" have used to determine whether an individual is a witch. Brattle does not deny the possibility of witches in the New England community. Calef feels that the trials are nothing more than an arena for personal attacks.
  2. Mather's religious beliefs are reflected in his writings through constant references to God and religion as well as his portrayal of the Puritan community as "Credible Christians" and New Englanders as "a People of God."
  3. Answers will vary, but should demonstrate an understanding of the non-witchcraft issues of the trials presented by Calef and Brattle.
  4. Answers will vary, but should demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the debate.

### Answers to Worksheet 2

- A.
1. The issue at the heart of the debate is the question of the distribution of power between the states and the federal government.
  2. Henry's objections to the Constitution include his belief that it would cause dramatic changes, that the country was too big for it, and that the states would lose some of their power.
  3. Pendleton favors the ratification of the Constitution because it would guarantee the uniform enforcement of the laws, increase the security of the nation, and because he feels that state government has proven itself to be ineffectual.
  4. The major point of Henry's argument is that the states lose power. The central point of Pendleton's argument is that the federal government requires more power to guarantee the happiness of the country's citizens.

- B.
1. Student answers will vary. Pendleton would view the phrase as referring directly to the people. Henry would view the phrase as a confirmation that the state governments are the proper channels through which to seek approval for new initiatives.
  2. In the sense in which the phrase is used in the Constitution, Henry sees it as an improper and presumptuous phrase, stealing power from the states.
  3. Henry, with his belief in power locally retained, would be apt to resist a national standard of this sort; Pendleton would likely support it.
  4. Yes. In both cases Henry could be seen as opposing domination by a powerful government imposed from above.
  5. Answers will vary, but should demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the debate.

### Answers to Worksheet 3

- A.
1. Kent's objections to universal suffrage include his beliefs that it threatens those who hold property, invites revolution, and demeans democracy.
  2. Kent predicts that New York will steadily grow in size and importance to become the London of America.
  3. Buel feels that European society and American society cannot be compared, that they are vastly different societies.
  4. Buel points out that citizens of the New England States have long enjoyed universal suffrage without detrimental effects.
- B.
1. Answers will vary. Kent's description reflects extreme class bias; it is a fearful overreaction to the threat of change in the social order.
  2. Blacks and women were both ignored in the electoral reform movement, indicating the society's narrow vision of those qualified to participate in shaping the government.
  3. Kent would be horrified to see women, blacks, and minorities participating at the ballot box. Buel would applaud these gains.
  4. Answers will vary, but should demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the debate.

### Answers to Worksheet 4

- A.
1. The first three concern the right to vote.
  2. The "Declaration of Sentiments" is modeled after the Declaration of Independence (in 1776).
  3. Answers will vary. Senator Williams is stating that women exercise power through their children.
  4. According to this source, the duties of a housewife include hiring qualified servants, managing the

household budget, and entertaining stylishly at home.

- B. 1. Violations of economic freedoms that are cited include women's lack of property rights and women's lack of access to college and to better paying jobs. Political rights in violation include the denial of the right to vote and taxation without representation.
2. Answers will vary. Likely grievances would include the disparity in men's and women's incomes, the lack of proportional representation in political office, and the scarcity of social support services such as day care for working women with children.
3. The assumption is that women's roles are fixed and beneficial to both sexes as they stand.
4. Answers will vary. Stanton argues that women's "Creator" has endowed them with inalienable rights. Williams maintains that male and female roles were established in the Garden of Eden.
5. Answers will vary, but should demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the debate.

### Answers to Worksheet 5

- A. 1. Chief Seattle is dismayed by cities; he can find no peace in this environment.
2. Roosevelt's interpretation of Indian land claims are vague and unsubstantiated.
3. Chief Seattle feels that the white settlers ruin the land and then move on. He believes the settlers view the land as an enemy to be conquered.
4. Scott believes the population of the West will rapidly increase due, in part, to the growth of railroads and steam-powered boats.
- B. 1. Answers will vary. In each case, white culture would approve the projects and Indian culture would not.
2. Contemporary ecologists would probably agree with Chief Seattle's harsh assessment of white culture's relationship with the land, with his belief that "all things are connected," and with his dire prognosis for the future if sensitivity to the environment does not improve.
3. Scott sees the West as ripe for development and population growth, while Chief Seattle stresses an appreciation for the land as it already is—free, open, and untamed.
4. Answers will vary, but should demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the debate.

### Answers to Worksheet 6

- A. 1. According to Carnegie, the accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of the rich is a natural consequence of the laws of competition.
2. According to George, industrialization has created extremes of poverty and wealth. In addition, vices and crimes increase with the growth of cities and industrial centers.
3. Carnegie feels that the problems of the poor can be solved by having the rich administer their riches for the common good.

4. George feels that industrialization acts like a "wedge" in that it lifts some people up, to wealth, and forces others down, to poverty.

- B. 1. Answers will vary. Carnegie believes that the laws of competition, and the social order that accompanies a competitive society, finally work to benefit all members of the society.
2. Carnegie and George both acknowledge that these extremes exist. Carnegie views these extremes as natural while George insists they are unnatural, brought on by a destructive economic system.
3. George would likely have rejected the idea, choosing instead to leave the poor to secure a better life on their own.
4. Answers will vary, but should demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the debate.

### Answers to Worksheet 7

- A. 1. The advantages, according to Beveridge, include new markets abroad, new investment opportunities, and new jobs created.
2. Answers will vary, but should reflect the position of the Anti-Imperialist League regarding the country's actions in the Philippines as a "needless horror" representing a betrayal of American ideals.
3. Beveridge's response is that the separation does not matter because the navy can, and will, connect the two.
4. The League plans to campaign against any candidates committed to the tactics of imperialism.
- B. 1. Beveridge's arguments are based on an assumption of American pre-eminence in the world. The League's arguments are based on a more modest view of the country's role in the world as outlined in the stated principles of national self-determination found in the Declaration of Independence.
2. Answers will vary. Examples include his description of the sound of American guns as the "voice of liberty" and his view that the American mission is to save foreign soil "for liberty and civilization."
3. The first two—a and b—would probably have agreed. Only the third—the citizen from Great Britain—would be likely to disagree, since Britain itself was a great imperial power in 1899.
4. Answers will vary, but should demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the debate.

### Answers to Worksheet 8

- A. 1. Grant is referring to immigrants from northern and western Europe.
2. The four groups include the Slovak, the Italian, the Syrian, and the Jewish.
3. Japan
4. The new immigrants have contributed through their hard work and law-abiding manners.
- B. 1. Answers will vary. Grant: non-Nordic immigrants are "the sweepings of . . . jails and asylums"; native Americans are too proud to mix with them. Marshall: Japan will never recover from the Immigration Bill; the bill, if passed, will encourage hatred.

2. Answers will vary. Grant refers to the new immigrants as "hordes," "the weak, the broken, and the mentally crippled," "aliens," and "swarms." Marshall calls these same people "industrious and law-abiding."
3. Answers will vary. Grant's statement that "the new immigration . . . contained a large and increasing number drawn from the lowest stratum of the Mediterranean basin" contradicts the ideal. Marshall's belief that "the effort has been made to justify this . . . legislation by charging that those who are sought to be excluded are inferior types" supports the ideal.
4. Answers will vary, but should demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the debate.

### Answers to Worksheet 9

- A.
  1. According to Roosevelt the social duty of government is to protect and provide for its citizens.
  2. Taft's criticisms of the New Deal include his beliefs that it has failed to solve existing problems while adding burdens to the working man and it has lessened the nation's incentive to work.
  3. Roosevelt's justification is that the poor and needy especially require help in times of crisis.
  4. Taft proposes to attack unemployment through additional jobs created by private industry.
- B.
  1. Answers will vary. Roosevelt probably would claim that poverty is a natural consequence of the "survival-of-the-fittest" structure of the nation's economy. Taft probably would claim that those who lack ambition and initiative are poor.
  2. Taft would probably agree with the first—that of wealth trickling down from above. Roosevelt's second theory, wherein the common man improves his lot and society as a whole benefits, would probably be repugnant to Taft.
  3. Answers will vary, but should reflect an understanding of the issues that stand between the two men.
  4. Answers will vary, but should demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the debate.

### Answers to Worksheet 10

- A.
  1. The Birmingham clergy felt that King was an outsider meddling in the city's affairs and that King's call for demonstrations was unwise and untimely.
  2. King believed that he belonged in Birmingham because injustice was prevalent there and that demonstrations of the sort he was proposing are always "untimely" because they are always unwelcome.
  3. The clergy's solutions include maintaining lawful behavior, pressing for the resolution of racial issues in the courts, and negotiating with local leaders.
  4. Answers will vary, but should reflect King's belief that a law can be broken out of respect for a higher moral law.

- B.
  1. Answers will vary, but should reflect King's impatience with gradual solutions and his hope to accelerate the process of change.
  2. Answers will vary. Examples include antiwar tax resisters of the late 1960s, antinuclear sit-ins and occupations of nuclear plants under construction of the 1980s, and abolitionists' support of slave escapes during the early 1800s.
  3. Answers will vary. Possible laws include draft laws that apply to men and not to women, the enactment of the death penalty for certain crimes, and laws prohibiting public employees from striking for better pay.
  4. Answers will vary, but should demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the debate.

### Answers to Worksheet 11

- A.
  1. Nixon's options were either to do nothing or to fight the publication of the papers through legal means. It would be politically safer to do nothing, but this option would threaten national security. Fighting the publication was in the best interests of national security, but not in his own best interests, according to Nixon.
  2. The two issues, according to Rosenthal, were the question of the access to the papers and their detailed contents in terms of their historic value and the freedom of the press.
  3. Answers will vary. Nixon objected to the publishing of the papers on the grounds that the action would imperil the security of the nation's foreign affairs and jeopardize delicate ongoing negotiations with China and the Soviet Union.
  4. Answers will vary. No military damage did occur and foreign relations were unaffected by the release of the documents.
- B.
  1. The Pentagon Papers revealed a widespread and longterm deception of the public by the United States government.
  2. Answers will vary. "Prior restraint" forces editors to choose their stories more conservatively. The effect of this policy would be far more widespread than post-publication legal actions.
  3. Answers will vary.
  4. Answers will vary, but should demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the debate.

### Answers to Worksheet 12

- A.
  1. Reagan's reasons include his belief in a need to maintain effective deterrence, to repair a neglected military force, and to send a signal of strength to potential aggressors.
  2. more than 60%
  3. Reagan requests the American people to urge their Senators and Congressmen to support the military buildup.
  4. The objections include the fact that the military budget figures are unsubstantiated in terms of needs and that the budget should be leveling off rather than expanding.

- B.**
1. Reagan's presentation of the threat is as something imminent and pressing. The Center for Defense Information presents the matter in a cooler, more objective manner.
  2. Answers will vary. Examples include Russia's invasion of Afghanistan, the installation of a Marxist government in Nicaragua, and the suppression of the labor movement in Poland by the Soviet Union.
  3. Answers will vary. a: would tend to increase the amount allotted to defense spending. b: would tend to reduce pressure for high levels of defense spending. c: would tend to boost spending levels.
  4. Answers will vary, but should demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each side of the debate.