

Interest Group Debate



Trustee: Barbara Brown

Subject: Civic Education, Government, Writing

Topic: Civic Responsibility, Interest Groups

Grade Level: 9-12

Time: 90 minutes

[View how this lesson plan fits state standards](#)

[View the video](#) or [read the transcript](#)

Materials:

- Computer with Internet access, external speakers, and a LCD projector OR access to a computer lab with Internet access and headphones for each student
- Updated Media Player recommended. [Download QuickTime](#). Problems playing? [Check our Media Help page](#).
- Poster board
- Flipchart
- Notebooks
- Colored markers
- Student Worksheets ([Word](#), [PDF](#))
- Download Lesson Plan ([Word](#), [PDF](#))

Learning Objectives:

Students will:

1. recognize different recycling patterns and recycling behavior by reflecting on their own practices and comparing them with those of their peers;
2. compare the influence of various interest groups on a course of action by conducting a force-field analysis;
3. develop negotiation skills by participating in a meeting.

PREVIEWING (10-15 minutes)

1. At the start of class, ask students to discuss the following questions in pairs or small groups of 3-4 (additional questions welcomed):

- What is recycling?
- What do we recycle?
- Why do we recycle?
- Do you personally recycle? Why or why not?

3. After 5-7 minutes, bring students back for a large group discussion and share their findings.

4. If no one has brought up the subject of cars, ask students to think about cars, waste, and possible ways to reduce it. Ask students if they know whether or not motor oil can be recycled or if they know anything about recycling it.

5. Tell the students that they are going to view a short documentary about a woman, who started a motor oil recycling organization in her community. Brainstorm a list of expectations about the film. Ask your students who would found such an organization; how many people might be on her team, number of clients the organization might serve, volume of recycled oil, etc. Document all expectations on the blackboard.

VIEWING & DISCUSSION (25 minutes)

1. As a class, watch the brief Barbara Brown video, which can be accessed online at www.americantrusteesproject.org. If you have difficulties accessing the video, please visit our [Media Help page](#).

2. As they watch, ask students to note any surprises as they view the episode.

3. Ask students to share their impressions and surprises with the rest of the class. See where their predictions were correct and expectations were met.

4. Ask students what they think the key was to Barbara's success, who/what was the biggest help, and who/what was the biggest obstacle.

5. Introduce *Force Field Analysis* from the **WORKSHEET**, ask students to fill it out based on Barbara Brown's recycling project and compare with their neighbors or in small groups of 3-5. The small group then reports on their discussion. Advise the group to think about the need to counterbalance the negative forces with positive efforts.

APPLICATION (45 minutes)

1. Ask students if they think it is possible to set up an organization similar to Barbara's in their community. If not, elicit a problem that they see as possible to tackle or an organization that they think they can set up. Agree on one problem or organization.

2. Brainstorm the interested/involved/affected parties. Possible responses might include: parents, school administration, businesses, local politicians, city administration, local agencies, churches, etc. and record them on the board. These are the interest groups.

3. Divide the class into small groups based on the number of interest groups that have been identified (with no more than seven groups). Let the students adopt one of the interest groups they have just mentioned.

4. Ask each group to work out its chosen position on the issue.
5. After they have decided on their position, tell the class that a representative from each interest group will be presenting their issue. Announce that the purpose is to decide, as a class, what to do about the problem (or if that has been the choice, on whether or not to start the organization.)
6. You may want to organize an agenda for the presentations. Suggested agenda:
 - I. Introduction
Students will introduce themselves and their organization
 - II. Description of the Problem
Teacher may be interested in doing this
 - III. Description of Interest Group
 - IV. Position of Interest Groups
Teacher/Facilitator: identify the two most disparate positions
 - V. Solutions
Ask students, what solutions are possible give the current positions.
 - VI. Reach Consensus
7. As the presentations rounds up, bring students back into a whole class discussion and reflect about the meeting, its proceedings and final decisions. Ask the class which interest group was most influential based on presentation and argumentation skills. Pay special attention to any conflict of interest that is reported and the way(s) it was or was not resolved.

HOMEWORK or EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Ask students to write a persuasive speech addressing an interest group of their choice to support their course of action.

or

Ask students to write about how the groups might work together to solve the problem, which group(s) might partner for increased leverage or support, and how they would work together.

ASSESSMENT

Students may be assessed on:

1. participation in the classroom discussion;
2. writing skills;
3. presentation skills; and
4. completion of the **WORKSHEET**.