



# Chapter Two: The Teacher's Role In Structuring Academic Controversies

## Introduction

Throughout history, people have come together to accomplish feats that any one of them could not achieve alone and to share their joys and sorrows. Having children, hunting, building pyramids and cathedrals, and sending rockets to the moon are examples. Social interdependence is as old as the human species. Interdependence carries the seeds of conflict. As diverse individuals and groups work together their interdependence creates conflicts. Conflict also threatens interdependence, for if conflict is managed destructively, relationships and coalitions can be destroyed, eliminating all possibility of cooperative efforts. When two people are in conflict, they always face the possibility that the relationship will be so damaged that all potential for future cooperation will be ended. If they plan to continue the relationship, conflict will be managed in constructive and caring ways. If they plan never to interact in the future, conflict may be managed in destructive and hurtful ways.

**The first step in managing conflict effectively is to establish a constructive context.**

The context within which conflicts occur largely determines whether the conflict is managed constructively or destructively (Deutsch, 1973; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Tjosvold & Johnson, 1983; Watson & Johnson, 1972). There are two possible contexts for conflict: cooperative and competitive (in individualistic situations individuals do not interact and, therefore, no conflict occurs).

## Competitive Context

Conflicts usually do not go well in a competitive context. For competition to exist, there must be scarcity. I must defeat you to get what I want. Rewards are restricted to the few who perform the best. In a competitive situation, individuals work against each other to achieve a goal that only one or a few can attain. You can attain your goal if and only if the other people involved cannot attain their goals. Thus, competitors seek outcomes that are personally beneficial but detrimental to all others in the situation. Within competitive situations (Deutsch, 1973; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Tjosvold & Johnson, 1983; Watson & Johnson, 1972):

## Figure 4.1 Teacher's Role In Structuring Controversies

### Context For Conflict

- Competitive Context
- Cooperative Context

### Cooperative Learning

- Positive Interdependence
- Individual Accountability
- Face-To-Face Promotive Interaction
- Social Skills
- Group Processing

### Teacher's Role In Structuring Academic Controversies

#### ➤ Step 1: *Preinstructional Decisions And Preparations*

- Setting Objectives And Selecting Topic
- Deciding On Size Of Group
- Assigning Students To Groups
- Arranging The Room
- Planning Instructional Materials
- Assigning Roles

#### ➤ Step 2: *Orchestrating Academic Task, Cooperative Structure, Controversy Procedure*

- Explaining Academic Task
- Structuring Positive Interdependence
- Structuring The Controversy
- Structuring Individual Accountability
- Explaining Criteria For Success
- Specifying Desired Behaviors

#### ➤ Step 3: *Monitoring And Intervening*

- Observing Interaction Among Group Members
- Ensuring Adherence To Controversy Procedure
- Providing Academic Assistance
- Teaching Controversy Skills

#### ➤ Step 4: *Evaluating And Processing*

- Providing Closure
- Assessing And Evaluating Students' Learning
- Group Processing
- Group Celebration

- Individuals focus on differential benefit (i.e., doing better than anyone else in the situation). In competitive situations, how well a person is doing depends on how his or her performance compares with the performances of the others in the situation. There is a constant social comparison in which the value of one's outcomes depends on how they compare with the outcomes of others.
- Individuals focus on their own well-being and the deprivation of the other participants. In striving to "win," individuals focus not only on what is good for them but also what will deny others what they need to win. There is a vested interest in others doing less well than oneself.
- Individuals adopt a short-term time orientation where all energies are focused on winning. Little or no attention is paid to maintaining a good relationship. In most competitions, there is an immediate finishing line on which all attention is focused with little or no concern with the future relationship with the other competitors.
- Communication tends to be avoided and when it does take place it tends to contain misleading information and threats. Threats, lies, and silence do not help students resolve conflicts with each other. Competition gives rise to espionage or other techniques to obtain information about the other that the other is unwilling to communicate, and "diversionary tactics" to delude or mislead the opponent about oneself.
- There are frequent and common misperceptions and distortions of the other person's position and motivations that are difficult to correct. Students engage in self-fulfilling prophecies by perceiving another person as being immoral and hostile and behaving accordingly, thus evoking hostility and deceit from the other person. Students see small misbehaviors of opponents while ignoring one's own large misbehaviors (mote-beam mechanism). Double standards exist. Because preconceptions and expectations influence what is perceived, and because there is a bias towards seeing events in a way that justifies one's own beliefs and actions, and because conflict and threat impair perceptual and cognitive processes, the misperceptions are difficult to correct.
- Individuals have a suspicious, hostile attitude toward each other that increases their readiness to exploit each other's wants and needs and refuse each other's requests.
- Individuals tend to deny the legitimacy of others' wants, needs, and feelings and consider only their own interests.

## **Cooperative Context**

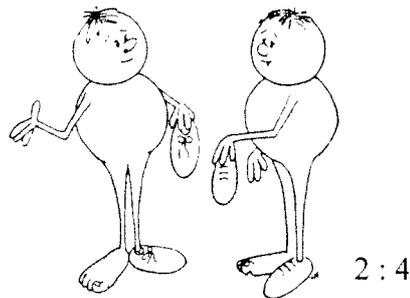
Conflicts usually go well in a cooperative context. For cooperation to exist there must be mutual goals that all parties are committed to achieving. I am not successful unless you are

successful. The more successful you are, the more I benefit and the more successful I am. In a cooperative situation students work together to accomplish shared goals. Students seek outcomes that are beneficial to everyone involved. They are committed to each other's, as well as their own, well-being and success. Within cooperative situations (Deutsch, 1973; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Watson & Johnson, 1972):

- Individuals focus on mutual goals and shared interests.
- Individuals are concerned with both self and others' well being.
- Individuals adopt a long-term time orientation where energies are focused both on achieving goals and on building good working relationships with others.
- Effective and continued communication is of vital importance in resolving a conflict. Within a cooperative situation, the communication of relevant information tends to be open and honest, with each person interested in informing the other as well as being informed. Communication tends to be more frequent, complete, and accurate.
- Perceptions of the other person and the other person's actions are far more accurate and constructive. Misperceptions and distortions such as self-fulfilling prophecies and double standards occur less frequently and are far easier to correct and clarify.
- Individuals trust and like each other and, therefore, are willing to respond helpfully to each other's wants, needs, and requests.
- Individuals recognize the legitimacy of each other's interests and search for a solution accommodating the needs of both sides. Conflicts tend to be defined as mutual problems to be solved in ways that benefit everyone involved.

## Conclusions

Conflicts cannot be managed constructively within a competitive context. When competitive and individualistic learning dominates a classroom and school, conflicts will inevitably be destructive. Instead of trying to solve interpersonal problems, students will think short-term and go for the "win." In order to resolve conflicts constructively, an instructor first has to establish a cooperative context, primarily through the use of cooperative learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998a, 1998b, 2002).



## The Cooperative Nature Of Controversy

Constructive controversy is first and foremost a cooperative endeavor. To understand how to structure constructive controversies in the classroom, it is first necessary to understand how to conduct cooperative learning lessons.

**Cooperation** is working together to accomplish shared goals. Within cooperative activities individuals seek outcomes that are beneficial to themselves and beneficial to all other group members. **Cooperative learning** is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. In cooperative learning situations there is a positive interdependence among students' goal attainments; students perceive that they can reach their learning goals if and only if the other students in the learning group also reach their goals (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Cooperation is commonly contrasted with **competition**, which exists when individuals work against each other to achieve a goal that only one or a few may attain. In competitive learning situations there is a negative interdependence among students' goal attainments; students perceive that they can reach their learning goals if and only if the other students fail to reach their goals (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson & Johnson, 1989). In addition, students may work **individualistically**, where the outcomes of each person are unaffected by others' actions. In individualistic situations there is no interdependence among students' goal attainments; students perceive that reaching their goals does not affect the likelihood of other students achieving their goals.

Teachers can structure lessons cooperatively so that students work together to achieve shared learning goals (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998a). There are three types of cooperative learning: formal cooperative learning used to teach specific content, informal cooperative learning used to ensure active cognitive processing of information during a lecture, and cooperative base groups used to provide long-term support and assistance for academic progress. In formal cooperative learning students work together, for one class period to several weeks, to achieve shared learning goals and complete specific tasks and assignments (such as decision making or problem solving, completing a curriculum unit, writing a report, conducting a survey or experiment, or reading a chapter or reference book, learning vocabulary, or answering questions at the end of the chapter). Any course requirement or assignment may be reformulated to be cooperative. In formal cooperative learning groups teachers (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998a):

- **Specify the objectives for the lesson.** In every lesson there should be an academic objective specifying the concepts and strategies to be learned and a social skills objective specifying the interpersonal or small group skill to be used and mastered during the lesson.



- **Make a number of preinstructional decisions.** A teacher has to decide on the size of groups, the method of assigning students to groups, the roles students will be assigned, the materials needed to conduct the lesson, and the way the room will be arranged.
- **Explain the task and the positive interdependence.** A teacher clearly defines the assignment, teaches the required concepts and strategies, specifies the positive interdependence and individual accountability, gives the criteria for success, and explains the expected social skills to be engaged in.
- **Monitor students' learning and intervene within the groups to provide task assistance or to increase students' interpersonal and group skills.** A teacher systematically observes and collects data on each group as it works. When it is needed, the teacher intervenes to assist students in completing the task accurately and in working together effectively.
- **Evaluate students' learning and help students process how well their groups functioned.** Students' learning is carefully assessed and their performances are evaluated. Members of the learning groups then process how effectively they have been working together.

**Informal cooperative learning** consists of having students work together to achieve a joint learning goal in temporary, ad-hoc groups that last from a few minutes to one class period (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2006). Informal cooperative learning groups are often organized so that students engage in three-to-five minute focused discussions before and after a lecture and two-to-three minute turn-to-your-partner discussions interspersed throughout a lecture. During a lecture, demonstration, or film they can be used to focus student attention on the material to be learned, set a mood conducive to learning, help set expectations as to what will be covered in a class session, ensure that students cognitively process the material being taught, and provide closure to an instructional session.

**Cooperative base groups** are long-term, heterogeneous cooperative learning groups with stable membership (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec 1998b; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991). The purposes of the base group are to give the support, help, encouragement, and assistance each member needs to make academic progress (attend class, complete all assignments, learn) and develop cognitively and socially in healthy ways. Base groups meet daily in elementary school and twice a week in secondary school (or whenever the class meets). They are permanent (lasting from one to several years) and provide the long-term caring peer relationships necessary to influence members consistently to work hard in school.



## What Makes Cooperation Work?

The essential elements of cooperation that underlie its successful use are (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

1. **Positive Interdependence:** Positive interdependence is the perception that you are linked with others in a way so that you cannot succeed unless they do (and vice versa), that is, their work benefits you and your work benefits them. It promotes a situation in which students work together in small groups to maximize the learning of all members, sharing their resources, providing mutual support, and celebrating their joint success. Positive interdependence is the heart of cooperative learning. Students must believe that they sink or swim together. Within every cooperative lesson positive goal interdependence must be established through **mutual learning goals** (learn the assigned material and make sure that all members of your group learn the assigned material). In order to strengthen positive interdependence, **joint rewards** (if all members of your group score 90 percent correct or better on the test, each will receive 5 bonus points), **divided resources** (giving each group member a part of the total information required to complete an assignment), and complementary roles (reader, checker, encourager, elaborator) may also be used. For a learning situation to be cooperative, students must perceive that they are positively interdependent with other members of their learning group.

2. **Individual Accountability:** Individual accountability exists when the performance of each individual student is assessed and the results given back to the group and the individual. It is important that the group knows who needs more assistance, support, and encouragement in completing the assignment. It is also important that group members know that they cannot “hitch-hike” on the work of others. The purpose of cooperative learning groups is to make each member a stronger individual in his or her right. Students learn together so that they can subsequently perform higher as individuals. To ensure that each member is strengthened, students are held individually accountable to do their share of the work. Common ways to structure individual accountability include (a) giving an individual test to each student, (b) randomly selecting one student’s product to represent the entire group, or (c) having each student explain what they have learned to a classmate.

3. **Face-To-Face Promotive Interaction:** Once teachers establish positive interdependence, they need to maximize the opportunity for students to promote each other’s success by helping, assisting, supporting, encouraging, and praising each other’s efforts to learn. There are cognitive activities and interpersonal dynamics that only occur when students get involved in promoting each other’s learning. This includes orally explaining how to solve problems, discussing the nature of the concepts being learned, teaching one’s knowledge to classmates, and connecting present with past learning. Accountability to peers, ability to influence each other’s reasoning and conclusions, social modeling, social support, and interpersonal rewards all increase as the face-to-face interaction among group

members increase. In addition, the verbal and nonverbal response of other group members provide important information concerning a student's performance. Silent students are uninvolved students who are not contributing to the learning of others as well as themselves. Promoting each other's success results in both higher achievement and in getting to know each other on a personal as well as a professional level. To obtain meaningful face-to-face interaction the size of groups needs to be small (2 to 4 members).

**4. Social Skills:** Contributing to the success of a cooperative effort requires interpersonal and small group skills. Placing socially unskilled individuals in a group and telling them to cooperate does not guarantee that they will be able to do so effectively. Persons must be taught the social skills for high quality cooperation and be motivated to use them. Leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict-management skills have to be taught just as purposefully and precisely as academic skills. Procedures and strategies for teaching students social skills may be found in Johnson (1991, 2006) and Johnson and F. Johnson (2006).

**5. Group Processing:** Group processing exists when group members discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships. Groups need to describe what member actions are helpful and unhelpful and make decisions about what behaviors to continue or change. Students must also be given the time and procedures for analyzing how well their learning groups are functioning and the extent to which students are employing their social skills to help all group members to achieve and to maintain effective working relationships within the group. Such processing (a) enables learning groups to focus on group maintenance, (b) facilitates the learning of social skills, (c) ensures that members receive feedback on their participation, and (d) reminds students to practice collaborative skills consistently. Some of the keys to successful processing are allowing sufficient time for it to take place, making it specific rather than vague, maintaining student involvement in processing, reminding students to use their social skills while they process, and ensuring that clear expectations as to the purpose of processing have been communicated.

Well-structured cooperative learning lessons are differentiated from poorly structured ones on the basis of these elements. With a thorough mastery of the essential elements of cooperation, teachers can (a) tailor cooperative learning to their unique instructional needs, circumstances, curricula, subject areas, and students and (b) diagnose the problems some students may have in working together and intervene to increase the effectiveness of the student learning groups.



## Teacher's Role In Academic Controversies

*Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates invention. It shocks us out of sheep-like passivity, and sets us at noting and contriving. Not that it always effects this result, but conflict is a "sine qua non" of reflection and ingenuity.*

John Dewey, **Human Nature and Conduct: Morals Are Human. Dewey Middle Works**, Vol. 14, p. 207

Are wolves a national treasure that should be allowed to roam freely while being protected from hunting and trapping? Or are wolves a renewable resource that should be managed for sport and revenue? Ecologists say that wolves should be a protected species. But many farmers, ranchers, and sportsmen believe that wolves should be managed. What do you think? Can you prove you are right?

Peggy Tiffany, a 4th-grade teacher in Wilmington, Vermont, asked her class to take a stand on the wolf. "You," she says to her class, "must write a report in which you explain what should happen to the wolf in the continental United States and why! To ensure that the reports represent your best thinking, you will write it cooperatively with several of your classmates!" She then randomly assigns students to groups of four, ensuring that both male and female and high-, medium-, and low-achieving students are all in the same group. She then divides each group into two pairs. One pair is assigned the position that wolves should be a protected species. The other pair is assigned the position that wolves should be a managed species. Each pair is given a packet of materials relevant to their position.

Ms. Tiffany has prepared the way for structuring an academic controversy by: (a) choosing a topic that has content manageable by the students and on which at least two well-documented positions (pro and con) can be prepared and (b) structuring cooperative learning by assigning students to learning groups of four, creating resource interdependence by giving each pair half of the materials, and highlighting the cooperative goals of reaching a consensus on the issue, writing a group report on which all members will be evaluated, and preparing each member to take a test on the information studied. She is now ready to conduct the controversy, which involves a structured, but complex, process. The teacher's role in conducting a controversy is an extension of the teacher's role in structuring cooperative learning. To conduct a controversy, teachers:

1. Specify the objectives for the lesson.
2. Make a number of preinstructional decisions.
3. Clearly explain the task, the positive interdependence, and the controversy procedure to the students.

4. Monitor the effectiveness of cooperative learning groups and intervene to provide assistance in (a) completing the task, (b) following the controversy procedure, or (c) using the required interpersonal and group skills.
5. Evaluate students' achievement and help students process how well they functioned as a group.

## Preinstructional Decisions And Preparations

### Objectives And Topic

There are two types of objectives that a teacher needs to specify before the lesson begins. The **academic objective** needs to be specified at the correct level for the students and matched to the right level of instruction according to a conceptual or task analysis. The **social skills objective** details what interpersonal and small group skills are going to be emphasized during the lesson. A common error many teachers make is to specify only academic objectives and ignore the social skills needed to train students to cooperate and disagree constructively with each other.

In specifying the objectives you, the teacher, must choose a topic for the controversy. Criteria for the selection include that at least two well-documented positions can be prepared and that the content be manageable by the students. Almost any issue being studied can be turned into a controversy. Most environmental, energy, public policy, social studies, literature, and scientific issues are appropriate. It should also be noted that whenever students work together in cooperative learning groups, natural controversies will arise in their decision-making and problem-solving activities. By participating in structured academic controversies, students will learn the procedures and skills to use when unplanned, natural controversies suddenly arise.

### Deciding On the Size Of Group

Unless you plan to use an observer, cooperative learning groups of four should be used for structured controversies. Each position usually has two students assigned to work as a team in preparing to advocate it. While some issues may lend themselves to three positions (and thus to groups of six), the complexity of synthesizing three positions and managing the interaction among six students is such that groups are typically limited to four. The more inexperienced students are in working cooperatively and engaging in controversy, the shorter the class period, and the more limited the materials, the more the size of the group should definitely be limited to four.

## Assigning Students To Groups

In order to increase the potential for controversy, the heterogeneity of students within each learning group should be maximized so that students of different achievement levels in math, ethnic backgrounds, sexes, and social classes work together. The heterogeneity among group members increases the likelihood that different perspectives and viewpoints will naturally occur. In addition, heterogeneity among students typically increases performance in problem-solving and conceptual-learning tasks. When a student is isolated from his or her classmates, either because of shyness or because of being stigmatized as having a special learning problem or being from a minority group, teachers will want to plan carefully to ensure that the student is placed with outgoing, friendly, and accepting peers. When in doubt as to how to maximize heterogeneity, however, randomly assign students to groups.

## Arranging The Room

Members of a learning group should sit close enough to each other that they can share materials, talk to each other quietly, and maintain eye contact with all group members. Circles are usually best. The teacher should have clear access lanes to every group. Students will have to move into pairs and then back into groups of four.

## Planning Instructional Materials To Promote Interdependence And Controversy

Within controversies, materials are divided into pro and con so that each pair of students has part of the materials needed to complete the task. The following materials are typically prepared for each position:

1. A clear description of the group's task.
2. A description of the phases of the controversy procedure and the collaborative skills to be utilized during each phase.
3. A definition of the position to be advocated with a summary of the key arguments supporting the position.
4. A set of resource materials (including a bibliography) to provide evidence for and elaboration of the arguments supporting the position to be advocated.



A balanced presentation should be given for all sides of the controversy and the materials should be separated into packets containing articles, reports, or summaries supporting each position on the issue.

## **Assigning Roles**

Inherent in the controversy procedure is assigning students to a pro or con advocacy pair. In effect, this is assigning students complementary roles which signal their positive interdependence within the controversy process. In addition, teachers may wish to assign students other roles related to working together cooperatively and engaging in intellectual arguments.

# **Explaining And Orchestrating The Academic Task, Cooperative Goal Structure, And Controversy Procedure**

## **Explaining The Academic Task**

Teachers explain the academic task so that students are clear about the assignment and understand the objectives of the lesson. Direct teaching of concepts, principles, and strategies may take place at this point. Teachers may wish to answer any questions students have about the concepts or facts they are to learn or apply in the lesson. The task must be structured so that there are at least two well-documented positions (e.g., pro and con). The choice of topic depends on the interests of the instructor and the purposes of the course.

## **Structuring Positive Interdependence**

Teachers communicate to students that they have a group goal and must work cooperatively. There are two group goals in a controversy:

1. The group is told to produce a single report and arrive at consensus concerning what decision should be made. Students are responsible for ensuring that all group members participate in writing a quality group report and making a presentation to the class.
2. Students are informed that they are responsible for ensuring that all group members master all the information relevant to both sides of the issue (measured by a test which each student takes individually).

To supplement the effects of positive goal interdependence, the materials are jigsawed within the group (**resource interdependence**) and bonus points may be given if all group members score above a preset criterion on the test (**reward interdependence**).

## Structuring The Controversy

The principal prerequisites for a successful structured controversy are a cooperative context, skillful group members, and heterogeneity of group membership. The cooperative context is established by:

1. **Assigning students to heterogeneous groups of four and dividing each group into two pairs.** A high reader and a low reader may be assigned to each pair. The responsibility of the pair is to get to know the information supporting its assigned position and prepare a presentation and a series of persuasive arguments to use in the discussion with the opposing pair.
2. **Assigning pro and con positions** to the pairs and giving students supporting materials to read and study. A bibliography of further sources of information may also be given. A section of resource materials may be set up in the library.
3. **Structuring positive interdependence.** This was discussed above.

Students will need to be taught the necessary conflict management skills. The skills may be taught simultaneously with having students participate in structured controversies. Heterogeneity among group members adds to the resources and the perspectives that may be contributed to spirited and constructive argumentation and increases the quality of the structured controversy experience.

More specifically, there are five stages involved in a controversy. The stages and the instructions given to students are as follows:

1. **Learning positions.** Meet with your partner and plan how to advocate your position effectively. Read the materials supporting your position. Find more information in the library and in reference books to support your position. Give the opposing pair any information found supporting the opposing position. Prepare a persuasive presentation to be given to the other pair. Prepare a series of persuasive arguments to be used in the discussion with the opposing pair. Plan with your partner how to advocate your position effectively. Make sure you and your partner master the information supporting your assigned position and present it in a persuasive and complete way so that the other group members will comprehend and learn the information.

2. **Presenting positions.** Present the best case for your position to ensure it gets a fair and complete hearing. Be forceful and persuasive in doing so. Use more than one media. Listen carefully to and learn the opposing position. Take notes and clarify anything you do not understand.
3. **Discussing the issue.** Openly discuss the issue by freely exchanging information and ideas. Argue forcefully and persuasively for your position, presenting as many facts as you can to support your point of view. Listen critically to the opposing pair's evidence and reasoning, probe and push the opposing pair's thinking, ask for data to support assertions, and then present counter arguments. Defend your position. Compare the strengths and weaknesses of the two positions. Refute the claims being made by the opposing pair, and rebut the attacks on your position. Follow the specific rules for constructive controversy. Take careful notes on and thoroughly learn the opposing position. Sometimes a "time-out" period will be provided so you can caucus with your partner and prepare new arguments. Your teacher may encourage more spirited arguing, take sides when a pair is in trouble, play devil's advocate, ask one group to observe another group engaging in a spirited argument, and generally stir up the discussions. Remember, this is a complex issue and you need to know both sides to write a good report. Make sure you understand the facts that support both points of view.
4. **Reversing Perspectives.** Change chairs with the other pair. Present the opposing pair's position as if you were they. Use your notes to do so. Be as sincere and forceful as you can. Add any new facts you know of. Elaborate their position by relating it to other information you have previously learned.
5. **Reaching a decision.** Drop your advocacy of your assigned position. Summarize and synthesize the best arguments for both points of view. Reach consensus on a position that is supported by the facts. Change your mind only when the facts and rationale clearly indicate that you should do so.
  - a. Write a group report with the supporting evidence and rationale for the synthesis your group has agreed on. Often the resulting position is a third perspective or synthesis that is more rational than the two assigned. All group members sign the report when it is as good as they can make it, indicating that they agree with it, can explain its content, and consider it ready to be evaluated. Organize your report to present it to your entire class.
  - b. Take a test on both positions. If all members score above the preset criteria of excellence, each receives five bonus points.
  - c. Process how well the group functioned and how their performance may be improved during the next controversy. Teachers may wish to structure the group processing to highlight the specific conflict management skills students need to master.

In addition to explaining the procedure, you may wish to help the students "get in role" by presenting the issue to be decided in as interesting and dramatic a way as possible.

## **Structuring Individual Accountability**

The purpose of the controversy is to make each member a stronger individual and, therefore, the level of each student's learning needs to be assessed. Individual accountability is structured by individually testing each student on the material studied and/or randomly choosing one member of each group to present their group's decision and its rationale to the class as a whole. Students should also be observed to ensure that each participates in each step of the controversy procedure.

## **Explaining Criteria For Success**

Evaluations within cooperatively structured lessons (and controversies are no exception) need to be criteria-referenced. At the beginning of the lesson teachers need to explain clearly the criteria by which students' work will be evaluated.

## **Specifying Desired Behaviors**

No matter how carefully teachers structure controversies, if students do not have the interpersonal and small group skills to manage conflicts constructively the controversy does not produce its potential effects. The **social skills** emphasized are those involved in systematically advocating an intellectual position and evaluating and criticizing the position advocated by others, as well as the skills involved in synthesis and consensual decision making. Students should be taught the following skills.

1. Emphasize the mutuality of the situation and avoid win-lose dynamics. Focus on coming to the best decision possible, not on winning.
2. Confirm others' competence while disagreeing with their positions and challenging their reasoning. Be critical of ideas, not people. Challenge and refute the ideas of the members of the opposing pair, but do not reject them personally.
3. Separate your personal worth from criticism of your ideas.
4. Listen to everyone's ideas, even if you do not agree with them.
5. First bring out the all the ideas and facts supporting both sides and then try to put them together in a way that makes sense. Be able to differentiate the differences between positions before attempting to integrate ideas.

6. Be able to take the opposing perspective in order to understand the opposing position. Try to understand both sides of the issue.
7. Change your mind when the evidence clearly indicates that you should.
8. Paraphrase what someone has said if it is not clear.
9. Emphasize rationality in seeking the best possible answer, given the available data.
10. Follow the golden rule of conflict. The golden rule is, act towards your opponents as you would have them act toward you. If you want people to listen to you, then listen to them. If you want others to include your ideas in their thinking, then include their ideas in your thinking. If you want others to take your perspective, then take their perspective.

## **Structuring Intergroup Cooperation**

When preparing their positions, students can check with classmates in other groups who are also preparing the same position. Ideas as to how best present and advocate the position can be shared. If one pair of students finds information that supports its position, members can share that information with other pairs who have the same position. The more conferring between pairs of students, the better. The positive outcomes found with a cooperative learning group can be extended throughout a whole class by structuring intergroup cooperation. Bonus points may be given if all members of a class reach a preset criteria of excellence. When a group finishes its work, the teacher should encourage the members to go help other groups complete the assignment.

## **Monitoring And Intervening**

### **Monitoring Students' Behavior**

Teachers observe group members to see what problems they are having completing the assignment and skillfully engaging in the controversy procedure. Whenever possible, teachers should use a formal observation sheet where they count the number of times they observe appropriate behaviors being used by students. The more concrete the data, the more useful it is to the teacher and to students. Teachers should not try to count too many different behaviors at one time, especially when they first start formal observation. At first they may want just to keep track of who talks in each group to get a participation pattern for the groups. We have a chapter describing systematic observation of cooperative groups in **Learning Together and Alone** (1999) and our current list of behaviors (though rather long) includes: contributing ideas, asking questions, expressing feelings, active listening,

expressing support and acceptance (toward ideas), expressing warmth and liking (toward group members and group), encouraging all members to participate, summarizing, checking for understanding, relieving tension by joking, and giving direction to group's work. All the behaviors we look for are positive behaviors which are to be praised when they are appropriately present and are a cause for discussion when they are missing. It is also a good idea for the teacher to collect notes on specific student behaviors so that the frequency data is extended. Especially useful are skillful interchanges that can be shared with students later as objective praise and perhaps with parents in conferences or telephone conversations.

## Providing Academic Assistance

In monitoring the learning groups as they work, teachers will wish to clarify instructions, review important concepts and strategies, answer questions, and teach academic skills as necessary. Students may need assistance at any stage of the controversy procedure, whether it is researching their position, advocating it, refuting the opposing position, defending their position from attack, reversing perspectives, or creatively synthesizing.

## Intervening To Teach Cooperative Skills

While monitoring the learning groups, teachers will often find (a) students who do not have the necessary conflict skills and (b) groups where members are having problems in disagreeing effectively. In these cases, teachers intervene to suggest more effective procedures for working together and more effective behaviors. Basic interpersonal and small group skills may be directly taught (Johnson, 1990, 1991; Johnson & F. Johnson, 2006). Teachers may also wish to intervene and reinforce particularly effective and skillful behaviors that they notice. At times the teacher becomes a consultant to a group in order to help it function more effectively.

**The best time to teach conflict skills is when the students need them.** Intervening should leave a cooperative learning group with new skills that will be useful in the future. At a minimum:

1. Students need to recognize the need for the skill.
2. The skill must be defined clearly and specifically including what students should say when engaging in the skill.
3. The practice of the skill must be encouraged. Sometimes just the teacher standing there with a clipboard and pencil will be enough to promote student enactment of the skill.

4. Students should have the time and procedures for discussing how well they are using the skills. Students should persevere in the practice until the skill is appropriately internalized. We never drop a skill, we only add on.

## Evaluating And Processing

### Providing Closure To Lesson

At the end of each instructional unit, students should be able to summarize what they have learned. You may wish to summarize the major points in the lesson, ask students to recall ideas or give examples, and answer any final questions students have.

### Assessing And Evaluating Students' Learning

Students' work is evaluated, their learning assessed, and feedback is given as to how their work compares with the criteria of excellence. Qualitative as well as quantitative aspects of performance should be addressed. Students receive a group grade on the quality of their final report and receive an individual grade on their performance on the test covering both sides of the issue.

### Processing How Well The Group Functioned

Some time should be spent talking about how well the groups functioned today, what things were done well, and what things could be improved. Discussing group functioning is essential. Students do not learn from experiences that they do not reflect on. If the learning groups are to function better tomorrow than they did today, members must receive feedback, reflect on how their actions may be more effective, and plan how to be even more skillful during the next group session.

**Every small group has two primary goals: (1) to accomplish the task successfully, and (2) to build and maintain constructive relationships in good working order for the next task.** Learning groups are often exclusively task oriented and ignore the importance of maintaining effective working relationships among members. Group sessions should be enjoyable, lively, and pleasant experiences. If no one is having fun, something is wrong. Problems in cooperating and engaging in controversy should be brought up and solved and there should be a continuing emphasis on improving the effectiveness of the group members in collaborating with each other.

Often during the "working" part of the class period, students will be very task-oriented and the "maintenance" of the relationships among group members may suffer. During the processing time, however, the emphasis is on maintenance of the group. When groups

"process," they discuss any member actions that need to be improved in order for everyone's learning to be maximized. Teachers often have students turn in a "process sheet" along with the paper from the task assignment.

## Summary

The teacher's role in implementing structured academic controversies is an extension of the teacher's role in using cooperative learning. It consists of specifying the learning and social skills objectives, making a number of preinstructional decisions, explaining and orchestrating the academic task and the controversy procedure, monitoring and intervening, and evaluating and processing. Academic controversies may be used in any subject area with any age student. Yet implementing structured academic controversies is not easy. It can take years to become an expert. Teachers may wish to start small by taking one subject area or one class and using controversy procedures until they feel comfortable, and then expand into other subject areas or other classes. Teachers are well-advised to pick out topics for which they are pretty sure a controversy will work, plan carefully, and do not rush the process. In order to implement academic controversies successfully, teachers will need to teach students the interpersonal and small group skills required to cooperate, engage in intellectual inquiry, intellectually challenge each other, see a situation from several perspective simultaneously, and synthesize a variety of positions into a new and creative decision. Implementing academic controversies in your classroom is not easy, but it is worth the effort.

The use of controversy is as productive for adults as it is for students. Whenever a complex decision is to be made by faculty members and/or administrators, all alternative courses of action need to be advocated and the controversy procedure followed.

In addition to understanding the overall teacher's role in conducting academic controversies, teachers must be able to manage each step of the controversy procedure. The first step is to have students research their assigned position and prepare to advocate it. This topic is addressed in the next chapter.



 **CONTROVERSY CONTRACT** 

<b>Major Learnings</b>	<b>Implementation Plans</b>

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Progress Report Meeting** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signatures of Other Group Members** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER VOCABULARY

Working with a partner, learn the definitions of the following words.

1. Define each word in two ways.

**First**, write down what you think the word means.

**Second**, look it up in the book and write down its definition.

Note the page on which the definition appears.

2. For each word write a sentence in which the word is used.
3. Make up a story in which all of the words are used.
4. Learn how to spell each word. They will be on your spelling test.



### Word List

- cooperation
  - competition
  - individualistic learning
  - individual accountability
  - group processing
  - positive interdependence
  - promotive interaction
  - goal structure
- academic objective
  - social skills objective
  - pre-instructional decision
  - pro and con positions
  - reversing perspectives
  - reaching a decision
  - monitoring
  - intervening
  - evaluating

## CONTEST OF THE CODES: Who'll Be the Best?

Your **task** is to solve the following codes. You have a set of coded messages and the same messages decoded. Your task is to identify the pattern so that you are able to write a message with the code.

This is a **competitive** activity. Work by yourself. Try to break the codes faster and more accurately than the other students. At the end of this activity you will be ranked from best to worst in breaking codes.

---

NEHWEHTGNITTESSIEVITITEPMOCIMIWS  
WHENTHESSETTINGISCOMPETITIVEISWIM  
DNAUOYKNISROIKNISDNAUOYMIWS.  
ANDYOU SINKORISINKANDYOU SWIM.



The pattern for this code is \_\_\_\_\_.

---

VA N PBBCRENGVIR TEBHC, GUR ZBER FHPPRFFSHY LBH NER  
IN A COOPERATIVE GROUP, THE MORE SUCCESSFUL YOU ARE  
GUR `ZBER V ORARSVG NAQ GUR ZBER FHPPRFFSHY V NZ.  
THE MORE I BENEFIT AND THE MORE SUCCESSFUL I AM.

The pattern for this code is \_\_\_\_\_.

---

GM D H A 6 J A 9 C K 7 9 C 6 A 10 C 2 10 H M H K 9 J  
MY GOALS ARE UNRELATED TO YOURS  
L 4 C 7 LC LH 9 F E 7 2 E 11 E 2 KA 6 E J 10 E B A 6 6 M  
WHEN WE WORK INDIVIDUALISTICALLY.

The pattern for this code is \_\_\_\_\_.

## Conquering the Codes Together

Your **task** is to solve the following codes. You have a set of coded messages and the same messages decoded. Your task is to identify the pattern so that you are able to write a message with the code.

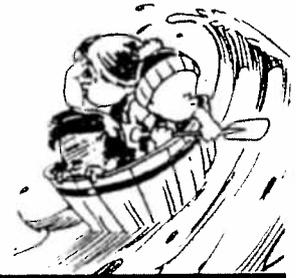
This is a **cooperative** activity. Work together. Encourage and assist each other's learning. Agree on one answer to each question. Every member must be able to explain what the code is and be able to write a message with the code.

---

18 5 13 5 13 2 5 18    20 8 1 20    9 14    1    3 15 15 16 5 18 1 20 9 22 5    7 18 15 21 16  
R E M E M B E R    T H A T    I N    A    C O O P E R A T I V E    G R O U P

23 5    1 12 12    19 9 14 11    15 18    19 23 9 13    20 15 7 5 20 8 5 18  
W E   A L L   S I N K   O R   S W I M   T O G E T H E R .

The pattern for this code is \_\_\_\_\_.



---

HDFK LQGLYLGXDU PXVQ EH DFFRXQWDEUH IRU KLV/KHU  
EACH INDIVIDUAL MUST BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR HIS/HER  
RZQ SHUIRUPDQFH ZKHQ ZRUNLQJ FRRSHUDWLYHOB.  
OWN PERFORMANCE WHEN WORKING COOPERATIVELY.

The pattern for this code is \_\_\_\_\_.

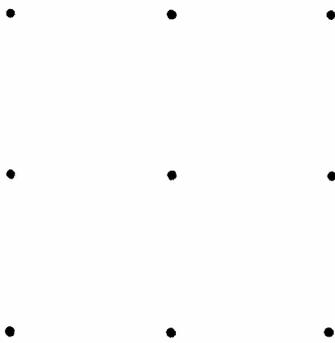
---

WHN W WRK CPRTVLY, W HLP, SHR,  
WHEN WE WORK COOPERATIVELY, WE HELP, SHARE,  
ND NCRG CH THR T LRN.  
AND ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO LEARN.

The pattern for this code is \_\_\_\_\_.

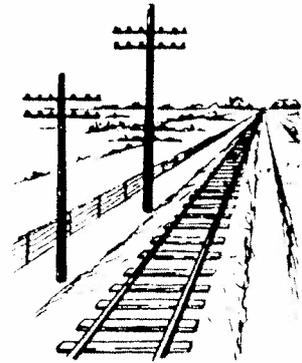


# NATURAL CONTROVERSIES

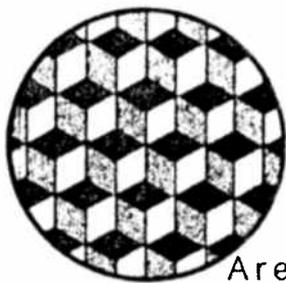
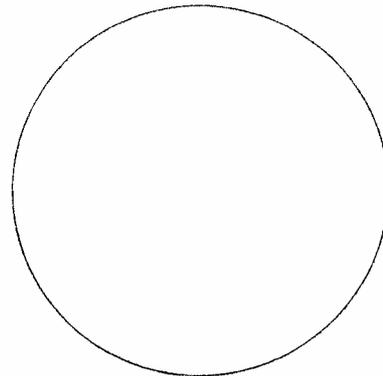


Connect all nine dots with four straight lines. Do not lift your pen. Do not retrace any line.

Which pole is taller?



Divide the circle into 10 parts with 3 lines.



Are the black areas the tops or bottoms of the cubes?

There are 2 U.S. coins which total 55 cents in value. One is not a nickel. Please bear this in mind.

What are the two coins?

---

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# The Teacher's Role in Controversy

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## Make Decisions

**Specifying Academic and Controversy Skills Objectives.** What academic and/or controversy skills do you want students to learn or practice in their groups? Start with something easy.

**Decide on Group Size.** Unless there are three or four sides to the issue (avoid more than two sides to an issue unless your students are highly experienced and skilled), use groups of four.

**Assign Students To Groups.** Heterogeneous groups are the most powerful, so mix abilities, sexes, cultural backgrounds, and task orientations. Assign students to groups randomly or select groups yourself.

**Plan Materials.** Divide materials into pro and con so that each pair of students has the materials needed to complete the task. This includes the position to be advocated, supporting information to be organized, and a guide to further resources.

**Assign Roles.** In addition to assigning pro and con roles, there are roles that will help students work together, such as perspective-taker, checker, accuracy coacher, and elaborator.

## Set The Lesson

**Explain The Academic Task.** Explain lesson objectives, define concepts, explain procedures, give examples, and ask questions to ensure that students understand what they are supposed to accomplish.

**Structure Positive Interdependence.** Students must believe that they need each other to complete the group's task, that they "sink or swim together." Use mutual goals, joint rewards, shared materials and information, and assigned roles to create a perception of mutuality.

2:25

**Structure The Controversy.** Students must understand the procedure and the time limits for preparing their position, presenting it, advocating it, reversing perspectives, and reaching a conclusion.

**Structure Individual Accountability.** Each student must believe he or she is responsible for learning the material and helping his or her groupmates. Frequent oral quizzing of group members picked at random and individual tests are two ways to ensure this.

**Explain Criteria For Success.** Student work should be evaluated on a criteria-referenced rather than on a norm-referenced basis. Make clear your criteria for evaluating the work of individual students and the entire group.

**Specify Desired Behaviors.** Clearly explain the constructive controversy rules.

**Teach Controversy Skills.** After students are familiar with the controversy procedures, pick one controversy skill, point out the need for it, define it by giving students specific phrases they can say to engage in the skill, observe for it, and give students feedback about their use of the skill. Encourage the use of the skill until students are performing it automatically.

**Structure Intergroup Cooperation.** Having students check with and help other groups and giving rewards or praise when all class members do well can extend the benefits of cooperation to the whole class.

## Monitor And Intervene

**Ensure All Students Present, Advocate, Criticize, And Synthesize.** The beneficial educational outcomes of controversy are due to the oral interaction among students.

**Monitor Students' Behavior.** This is the fun part! While students are working, circulate to see whether they understand the assignment, the procedure, the material. Give immediate feedback and praise the appropriate use of controversy skills.

**Provide Task Assistance.** If students are having trouble with the academic material, you can clarify, reteach, or elaborate on what they need to know.

**Intervene To Teach Controversy Skills.** If students are having trouble with the controversy process, you can suggest more effective procedures for working together on more effective behaviors for them to engage in.

**Provide Closure.** To reinforce student learning, you may wish to have groups share answers or paper, summarize major points in the lesson, or review important facts.

## Evaluate And Process

**Evaluate Student Learning.** Assess the quality of the group report and give students the individual test on the material being studied.

**Process Group Functioning.** In order to improve, students need time and procedures for reflecting on how well their group is functioning and how well they are using controversy skills. Processing can be done by individuals, small groups, or the whole class.



CONTROVERSY LESSON PLAN

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

School and District \_\_\_\_\_

Subject Area \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_

Lesson Topic and Summary \_\_\_\_\_

Instructional Objectives \_\_\_\_\_

Materials Needed

Pro \_\_\_\_\_

Con \_\_\_\_\_

Time Required \_\_\_\_\_ Group Size \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment to Groups \_\_\_\_\_

Roles

(Name and Explain) \_\_\_\_\_

The Lesson

Task \_\_\_\_\_

Positive Goal/Reward Interdependence \_\_\_\_\_

**Controversy Procedures**

**Preparing Positions** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Presenting Positions** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussing the Issue** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Reversing Perspectives** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Reaching a Decision** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Individual Accountability** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Criteria for Success** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Expected Behaviors** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Monitoring and Processing**

**Monitor for** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Intervene if** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Process by** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**End by** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Attach any materials needed to run the lesson)

## Bonus Point System

While you are engaging in the open discussion of the issue the teacher will be systematically observing your actions. Given below are the skills you need to demonstrate in order for the discussion to go well. Your group will receive two points if the teacher sees you engage in a difficult skill and one point for each needed skill. Your group will lose one point for everytime the teacher observes you engaging in a negative action.

### Difficult / Important Skills: Plus Two Points

Reversing Perspectives  
Criticizing Ideas, Not People  
Creating A Synthesis Of Both Positions

### Needed Skills: Plus One Point

Stating One's Position  
Giving A Supporting Fact  
Paraphrasing Other's Remarks  
Summarizing Own Or Other's Position  
Stating We "Sink Or Swim Together"  
Changing Your Mind When You Are Logically Persuaded  
Explaining Your Evidence And Reasoning

### Negative Actions: Minus One Point

Insults  
Unparliamentary Behavior  
Discounting  
Quietness



# Ideas for Controversies

Primary

Is it better to have a dog or a cat as a pet?

Is TV a want or a need? Why?

Should Bugs Bunny or Masters of the Universe be shown on Saturday morning TV? Why?

Take any fairy tale and decide whether the ending was good or bad. Why?



Is it better to receive money or a present on your birthday? Why?

Which is a better pet: a cat or a dog?



Would you rather live in the city or in the country?

Which city would you rather live in: (list cities you are studying)?

Which is better: school today or school 100 years ago? Why?

Would you rather have recess outside or in the gym?

Should you spend or save your allowance? Why?

Should the Anne Frank family have stayed together or split up? Why?

Would you rather lose your sight or your hearing?

Is spelling important for a first draft?

Should students belong to Cub Scouts (or other groups)?

Should we have shorter school days?

Should children have to go to school?

Intermediate

Should students wear uniforms to school?

Should we have recesses in elementary school?

Should students who misbehave in gym, music and other classes be allowed to go to these classes?

Primary

Which is better: Japanese or American education?

Why were the pyramids built? Were they a good idea?

Do you need math for daily living? Why/why not?

Is it better to live in a hot or a cold climate?

Would you rather be in school on a rainy or a sunny day?

Who was right: American Tories or American Revolutionaries?



(See My Brother Sam)

Were the ancient Greeks democratic or not?

Should students do mental math or use a calculator?



Should students memorize the basic math facts or carry a paper around with them?

Should any student who is participating in extra-curricular activities be required to take a drug test?



Which will better prepare you for real life: cooperative or competitive skills? Why?

Do your parents have the right to make you babysit your younger brothers and sisters after school?

Is hunting justified in today's society?

# WHO SHOULD GET THE PENICILLIN?



**Subject Area:** Social Studies

**Grade Level:** Intermediate to Adult

**Lesson Summary:** Pairs of students prepare positions on the distribution of penicillin during the North African campaign in World War II. In groups of four the pairs argue their positions, discuss and question each other, then change sides and argue for the opposition. The group of four reaches a consensus, then organizes the rationale into a written report.

**Instructional Objectives:** The purpose of this lesson is to promote learning about World War II through the use of a structured academic controversy.

**Materials:**

ITEM	NUMBER NEEDED
Situation Sheet	One per group
Controversy Schedule	One per group
Rules Sheet	One per group
Military Viewpoint Sheet	One per group
Medical Viewpoint Sheet	One per group
Post-Decision Questionnaire	One per group
Constructive Controversy Checklist	One per group

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**Time Required:** Three one-hour class periods

## ≈ Decisions ≈

**Group Size:** Four

**Assignment to Groups:** Form random, heterogeneous groups

**Roles:** None

## ≈ The Lesson ≈

### **Instructional Task:**

Review (a) the overall cooperative goal of the lesson and (b) the sequence of controversy and the basic rules to be followed.

*Divide into two pairs. One pair takes a copy of Position 1 and the other pair takes a copy of Position 2. Prepare your position in the following manner:*

- 1. Learn the information supporting your assigned position and make sure your partner also learns the supporting information.*
- 2. Add any information you and your partner know about World War II that will support your assigned position.*
- 3. Plan how to teach your position and its supporting rationale to the other pair and summarize the major points.*

*Each member of your pair must present half of the time. Your position should be presented using more than one media (i.e., visual aids, music). Plan how to present your assigned position strongly and sincerely, whether you believe it or not. Save a few points for the discussion.*

*Then meet with another pair from another group representing the same position as you. Your task is to ensure that both pairs are ready to advocate their assigned position sincerely and forcefully. Share your plans for advocating your assigned position and any new information or visual aids you have developed to help you do so. Combine the best of your ideas with the best of theirs.*

*The next step is to meet with the other members of your group so that each pair may advocate its position. The overall goal of the lesson is for the group to come to a decision about the issue that all four members can agree to. The decision should represent the best reasoning of the entire group.*

- 1. Each pair presents its assigned position as forcefully and persuasively as it can (each member of the pair must do half of the presenting). Help your partner to "get in role."*
- 2. The opposing pair takes notes and clarifies anything the two members do not fully understand.*



**Discuss the issue:**

- 1. Argue forcefully and persuasively for your assigned position, presenting as many facts as you can to support it.*
- 2. Listen critically to the opposing position, asking the other pair for supporting facts and rationale, presenting rebuttals and counter-arguments, while ensuring that you learn and understand the opposing position. Be ready to use the phrases: "I disagree." "Do you have facts to back up that statement?" and "Your reasoning is flawed in this way . . ."*

*This is a complex issue and members need to know both sides in order to come to a thoughtful decision.*

*At this point reverse perspectives. Present the opposing position as if you were they. Be as forceful and persuasive as you can. Add as many new facts and arguments to support their position as you can think of. Help your partner to "get in role." Correct errors in the other pair's presentation of your position.*

*It is now time to arrive at a group decision:*

- 1. Drop advocacy of assigned position.*
- 2. Summarize and synthesize the best arguments for both positions.*
- 3. Add as much information about the situation as you can.*
- 4. Develop a number of optional positions and syntheses.*

5. *Reach a consensus about the option that is most supported by facts and logic.*
6. *Organize the rationale supporting your groups position into a written report that will be orally presented to the rest of the class. Be ready to defend the validity of your decision to groups who may have come to a different decision.*

### **Positive Interdependence**

In addition to the written report, which will be a cooperative group effort, you will complete the post-decision questionnaire. Determine the group mean for each question. I will ask each group to summarize its decision and rationale and the results of the post-decision questionnaire.

### **Individual Accountability**

*Each member of the group will be responsible for helping your pair develop its position and present its case and for helping the entire group reach consensus and write the position paper. One member of each group will be selected at random to summarize orally.*

## *≈* **Monitoring and Processing** *≈*

**Processing:** Process how well the group worked together, using the checklist as a tool for this evaluation.



## WHO SHOULD GET THE PENICILLIN? Exercise

### Situation

In 1943 penicillin, which is used for the prevention and cure of infection, was in short supply among the U.S. armed forces in North Africa. Decisions had to be made whether to use this meager supply for the thousands of hospitalized victims of venereal disease or for the thousands of victims of battle wounds at the front. If you were a member of a team of medical and military personnel, whom would you use the penicillin for and why?

\_\_\_\_\_ Victims of venereal disease

\_\_\_\_\_ Victims of battle wounds

Share your position and rationale with your group. Stick to your guns unless you are logically persuaded otherwise. At the same time, help your group achieve consensus on this issue.



## Controversy Exercise: Schedule

1. **Preparing Positions:** Meet with your partner and plan how to argue effectively for your position. Make sure you and your partner have mastered as much of the position as possible.



2. **Presenting Positions:** Be forceful and persuasive in presenting your position. Take notes and clarify anything you do not understand when the opposing pair presents their position.



3. **Discussing the Issue:** Argue forcefully and persuasively for your position, presenting as many facts as you can to support your point of view. Critically listen to the opposing pair's position, asking them for the facts that support their point of view. Remember, this is a complex issue and you need to know both sides to write a good report. Work together as a total group to get all the facts out. Make sure you understand the facts that support both points of view.



4. **Reversing Perspectives:** Reverse the roles by arguing your opposing pair's position. In arguing for this position, be as forceful and persuasive as you can. See if you can think of any new facts that the opposing pair did not think to present. Elaborate their position.



5. **Reaching A Decision:** Come to a decision that all four of you can agree with. Summarize the best arguments for both points of view. Detail what you know (facts) about each side. When you have consensus in your group, organize your arguments to present to the entire room. Other groups may make the opposite decision and you need to defend the validity of your decision to everyone.

## Rules for Constructive Controversy

- ➊ I am critical of ideas, not people. I challenge and refute the ideas of the opposing pair, but I do not indicate that I personally reject them.
- ➋ Remember, we are all in this together, sink or swim. I focus on coming to the best decision possible, not on **winning**.
- ➌ I encourage everyone to participate and to master all the relevant information.
- ➍ I listen to everyone's ideas, even if I don't agree.
- ➎ I restate what someone has said if it is not clear.
- ➏ I first bring out **all** ideas and facts supporting both sides, and then I try to put them together in a way that makes sense.
- ➐ I try to understand both sides of the issue.
- ➑ I change my mind when the evidence clearly indicates that I should do so.

## Post-Decision Questionnaire

1. To what extent did other members of the group listen to, and understand your ideas?

(Not at all) 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : 8 : 9 (Completely)

2. How much influence do you feel you had on the group's decision?

(None at all) 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : 8 : 9 (Complete)

3. To what extent do you feel committed to, and responsible for, the group's decision?

(Not at all) 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : 8 : 9 (Completely)

4. To what extent are you satisfied with your group's performance?

(Very dissatisfied) 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : 8 : 9 (Very satisfied)

5. How much did you learn about the issue under discussion?

(Nothing at all) 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : 8 : 9 (A great deal)

6. Write two adjectives describing the way you now feel.

\_\_\_\_\_

## ➤ **Constructive Controversy Checklist** ➤

- 1. There was no winner or loser, only a successful, creative, and productive solution. The cooperativeness of group members should outweigh by far their competitiveness.
- 2. Disagreements among members' positions were initiated.
- 3. All members actively participated in the group discussions, sharing their information, conclusions, and perspectives.
- 4. Every member's contributions were listened to, respected, and taken seriously.
- 5. Effective communication skills were used, including paraphrasing and other listening skills and "I" messages and other sending skills.
- 6. Issues and problems were viewed from all available perspectives.
- 7. Group members criticized ideas and positions, not individuals. Members disagreed with each other while confirming each other's competence.
- 8. Group members viewed disagreement as an interesting situation from which something could be learned, not as personal rejection or a sign that they were being perceived as incompetent or ignorant.
- 9. There was appropriate pacing of differentiation and integration of member's positions. Differentiation took place first, followed by integration.
- 10. Emotions were allowed and members were encouraged to express them.
- 11. The rules of rational argument were followed. Members presented organized information to support their positions, reasoned logically, and changed their minds when others presented persuasive and convincing arguments and proof.
- 12. The arguments of all members were given equal consideration, regardless of how much formal power a member had.



## World War II: Military Viewpoint

**Your position is to give the penicillin to the V.D. patients.** *Whether or not you agree with this position, argue for it as strongly as you can. Take the military viewpoint honestly, using arguments that make sense and are rational. Be creative and invent new supporting arguments. Seek out information that supports your position. If you do not know needed information, ask members of other groups who may know.*

1. Our responsibility is to win the war for our country at all costs. If we lose Africa, we will lose Europe to Hitler, and eventually we will be fighting in the United States.
2. Our strategies to win must be based on the premise of "**the greatest good for the greatest number.**" We may have to sacrifice soldiers in order to win the war and save our democracy and "free" Europe.
3. Troop morale is vital. Our soldiers must be able to fight harder than the German soldiers. Nothing raises troop morale like seeing fresh troops arrive at the front.
4. Morale at home is vital. People must make sacrifices to produce the goods and materials we need to fight the war. Nothing raises morale at home like hearing of battles won and progress being made in winning the war. Victories give our people hope and dedication.
5. At this point, the war is going badly in North Africa. Rommel and the German Army are cutting through our lines like butter. We are on the verge of being pushed out of Africa, which means we will lose the war. Rommel must be stopped at all costs!
6. Penicillin is a wonder drug that will send the V.D. into remission and within 24 hours the V.D. patients will be free from pain and able to function effectively on the battlefield.



## World War II: Medical Viewpoint

**Your position is to give the penicillin to the battle-wounded.** *Whether or not you agree with this position, argue for it as strongly as you can. Take the medical viewpoint honestly, using arguments that make sense and are rational. Be creative and invent new supporting arguments. Seek out information, ask members of other groups who may know.*

1. Our responsibility is to treat the wounded and save as many lives as possible. Without the penicillin many of the wounded will needlessly die. Minor wounds will get infected and become major, life-threatening wounds.
2. Our strategies must be based on the premise that human life is sacred. If one person dies needlessly, we have failed in our responsibility. The soldiers who have sacrificed so much to help us win the war must be treated with all the care, concern, and resources we can muster. Our soldiers must be able to fight harder than the German soldiers.
3. Troop morale is vital. Nothing raises troop morale as knowing that if they are wounded, they will receive top-notch medical treatment.



4. Morale at home is vital. People must make sacrifices to produce the goods and materials we need to win the war. Nothing raises morale at home more than knowing that their sons and brothers are receiving as effective medical care as is humanly possible. It would be devastating for word to reach the United States that we were needlessly letting soldiers die for lack of medical care.
5. Even though we are at war, we must not lose our humanity. It will do no good to defeat Germany if we become Nazis in the process.
6. At this point, the war is going badly in North Africa. Rommel and the German Army are cutting through our lines like butter. We are on the verge of being pushed out of Africa, which means we will lose the war. Rommel must be stopped.
7. Fresh troops and supplies are unavailable. The German submarines control the Atlantic and we cannot get troop ships or supply ships into African ports. We have to make due with what we have.
8. Penicillin is a wonder drug that will save countless lives if it is used to treat the wounded.

**CONTROVERSY OBSERVATION FORM**

<b>Behaviors</b>	<b>Participants</b>				<b>Total</b>
<b>Contributes ideas and opinions</b>					
<b>Asks others for their ideas and opinions</b>					
<b>Emphasizes mutual goals</b>					
<b>Emphasizes win-lose competition</b>					
<b>Asks others for proof, facts, and rationale</b>					
<b>Paraphrases, summarizes</b>					
<b>Criticizes and disagrees with others' ideas</b>					
<b>Criticizes other members as persons</b>					
<b>Differentiates positions</b>					
<b>Integrates positions</b>					
<b>Total</b>					

Insert the name of each group member above the columns. Then record the frequency with which each member engages in each behavior.

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 Taken from: Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills by D. W. Johnson and F. P. Johnson (4th Ed.).  
 Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991.



## ADD-ON OBSERVATION SHEET



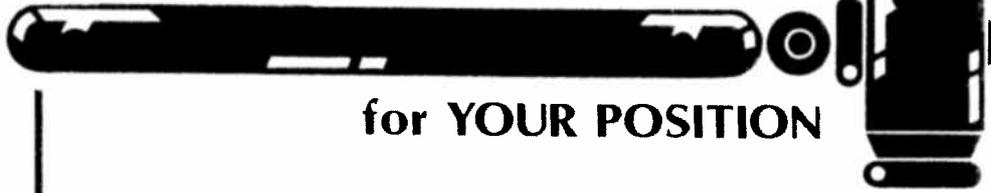
Start by teaching one skill and observing for it. Show students how well they do in practicing that skill; praise and otherwise reward their efforts. When they have mastered one skill, add and teach a second skill, etc.

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ PERIOD \_\_\_\_\_ OBSERVER \_\_\_\_\_

Controversy Skills	Group Members			

Other Observation Notes:

## PREPARING the BEST CASE



### for YOUR POSITION

1. **Research (Look):** Gather evidence to support your assigned position. **Research** your position by gathering and collecting of all relevant facts, information, and experiences.
2. **Conceptualize (Think):** Organize what you know into a reasoned position and persuasive argument by (a) arranging the information into a **thesis statement or claim** that asserts something is "true," (b) arranging the supporting facts, information, experiences, and other evidence into a coherent, reasoned, valid, and logical **rationale**, and (c) making the conclusion that the claim is "true" (the conclusion is the same as the original thesis statement). Your aim is to lead listeners **step-by-step** from lack of knowledge to an informed conclusion that agrees with your thesis statement.
3. **Leap To Conclusion:** Reach a tentative conclusion based on your current understanding of the issue. Your **conclusion** has to be the same as your original thesis statement.
4. **Present (Tell):** Plan how to advocate your position forcefully and persuasively.

**Thesis Statement / Claim:**

**Rationale (Given That):**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Conclusion (Then):**

# **PRESENTING the BEST CASE for YOUR POSITION**

There are a number of ways you can increase your persuasiveness in presenting and advocating the best case possible for your position. You want to persuade the other group members to agree with your thesis statement and accept its validity. The following guidelines will help you do so.

1. I will begin and end with a strong, sincere, and enthusiastic appeal for the listeners to agree with my position.
2. I will present several points of evidence organized in a logical way.
3. During my initial presentation, I will select a few major points, four or five at the most, and expand on them by using examples, stories, and anecdotes. In order to ensure that the important facts supporting my position are not missed by the audience, I will a point, say it again in different words, illustrate the point with an example or anecdote, and then state it once more.
4. I will make eye contact with all members of the audience.
5. I will keep my presentation within the time limits.
6. I will use more than one media in my presentation. I have developed visual aides to help make my case.
7. I have practiced my presentation. I am comfortable delivering it.



# LISTENING to OPPOSING PRESENTATION



You need to learn the opposing position as well as your own for at least two reasons:

1. To write a dynamic group report that synthesizes both positions and pass an individual test covering all sides of the issue.
2. To be able to better and more incisively refute it. If you do not know the other position, you cannot challenge it effectively.

Listen carefully to the opposing position. Write down (a) the points strongly supporting it and (b) its weaknesses. Then rate each point on a one-to-ten scale from very important (10) to very unimportant (1).

Strong Points	Rating	Weaknesses	Rating
	. . .		
	. . .		
	. . .		
	. . .		
	. . .		
	. . .		



## ENGAGING IN A FREE-FOR-ALL OPEN DISCUSSION

1. **Continue To Advocate Your Position.** Present your arguments forcefully and persuasively. Emphasize facts, evidence, and rationale. Try out the "tricks of the trade" to see if you can (a) win with fallacious arguments and (b) add humor and interest to the discussion. Occasionally try **ignoratio elenchi** (missing the point), arguing from analogy, sneaky ways of using questions, **reduction ad absurdum**, and **argumetum ad hominem**.
2. **Learn The Evidence And Information Contained In The Opposing Position.** Keep in mind that the overall goal is to make a reasoned judgment about the issue. You need to know both sides thoroughly.
3. **Refute The Evidence Presented By The Opposition:**
  - a. Differentiate between facts and opinions.
  - b. Determine if the evidence supports the claim. If the claims are vague, ambiguous, or meaningless, or if euphemisms are used, then the claim is not supportable.
  - c. Determine if the evidence is of sufficient quantity and quality to validate the claim.
  - d. Determine if the evidence is reliable enough to support the claim. If the opponent overgeneralizes, oversimplifies, does not cite credible sources, slants information, or appeals to emotion, then the evidence is not reliable.
4. **Refute The Reasoning Used By The Opposition.** Look for erroneous reasoning based on:
  - a. Errors of perception (faulty ways of seeing reality).
  - b. Errors of judgment (flaws in reasoning such as overgeneralizing, hasty conclusions, unwarranted assumptions, and failure to make distinctions).
  - c. Errors of reaction (defensively explaining away, shifting the burden of proof, or attacking the other person).
  - d. Errors of interrelating evidence (check the **and**, **but**, and **therefore** relationships).



- e. Errors in the use of inductive and deductive reasoning. Especially look for denying the antecedent and affirming the consequence.
- 5. **Defend Your Evidence And Reasoning By Rebutting The Attacks Of The Opposition.** Present counter-arguments, clarifications, and extensions. Rebuild your case. Clarify your evidence and reasoning and present further evidence.
- 6. **Reduce Your Uncertainty By Seeking Further Evidence And Reconceptualizing The Issue.** The fire of the refutation not only tempers and strengthens the evidence being considered, it creates uncertainty, conceptual conflict, and disequilibrium. Uncertainty tends to motivate an active search for more information (often called **epistemic curiosity**) in hopes of resolving the conceptual conflict.
- 7. **Use The Appropriate Social And Cognitive Skills.** Refutation and rebuttal require the use of a number of social and cognitive skills, including criticizing ideas (not people) and clarifying differences between the two positions.





# Reversing Perspectives

Reverse perspectives and present the best case for the opposing position. The opposing pair will do the same. Strive to see the issue from both perspectives simultaneously. **Perspective reversal** is taking the opposing pair's position and sincerely and completely presenting their position as if it were one's own.



## Overall

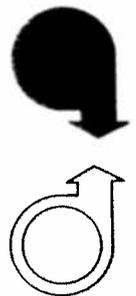
1. Change chairs, buttons, hats, and so forth.
2. Caucus briefly with your partner and plan your presentation.

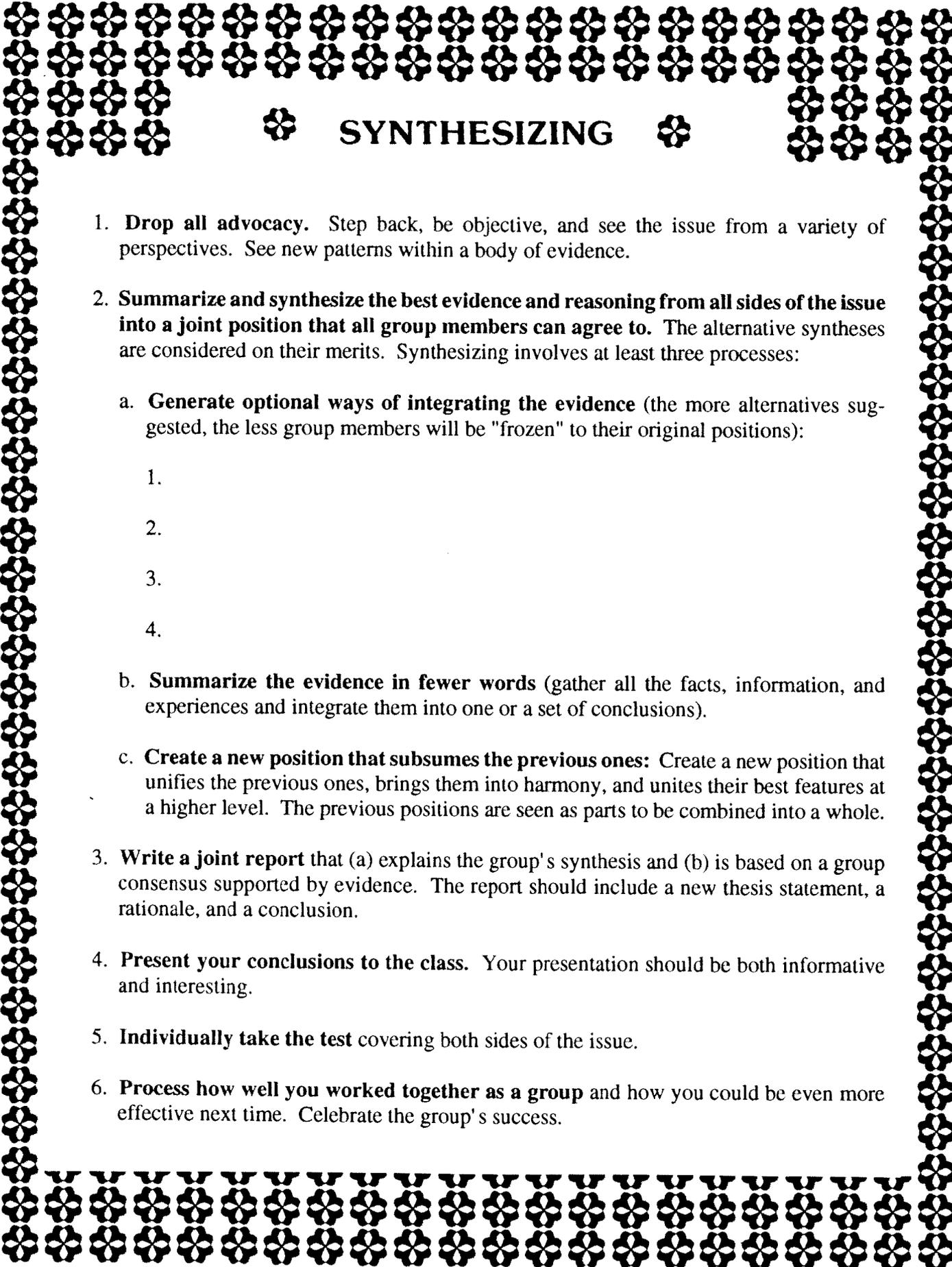
## Presenting Opposing Position (Reversing Perspectives)

1. Take the opposing perspective and present opposing arguments as if they were yours. Present the best case for the opposing position.
2. Be forceful and persuasive.
3. Add new facts and evidence if you can.

## Listening To Opposition Present Your Position

1. Correct errors in the other pair's presentation of your position.
2. Note omissions in the other pair's presentation of your position.





SYNTHESIZING

1. **Drop all advocacy.** Step back, be objective, and see the issue from a variety of perspectives. See new patterns within a body of evidence.
2. **Summarize and synthesize the best evidence and reasoning from all sides of the issue into a joint position that all group members can agree to.** The alternative syntheses are considered on their merits. Synthesizing involves at least three processes:
  - a. **Generate optional ways of integrating the evidence** (the more alternatives suggested, the less group members will be "frozen" to their original positions):
    - 1.
    - 2.
    - 3.
    - 4.
  - b. **Summarize the evidence in fewer words** (gather all the facts, information, and experiences and integrate them into one or a set of conclusions).
  - c. **Create a new position that subsumes the previous ones:** Create a new position that unifies the previous ones, brings them into harmony, and unites their best features at a higher level. The previous positions are seen as parts to be combined into a whole.
3. **Write a joint report** that (a) explains the group's synthesis and (b) is based on a group consensus supported by evidence. The report should include a new thesis statement, a rationale, and a conclusion.
4. **Present your conclusions to the class.** Your presentation should be both informative and interesting.
5. **Individually take the test** covering both sides of the issue.
6. **Process how well you worked together as a group** and how you could be even more effective next time. Celebrate the group's success.



# CONTROVERSY ASSIGNMENT

**Tasks:**

1. Prepare, present, and defend two opposing positions.
2. Write a report synthesizing the best ideas from both positions.

**Cooperative:** One report from the group, everyone has to agree, everyone has to be able to explain the rationale and facts supporting the group's position.

**Evaluation:**

1. All group members receive the grade for their report.
2. All group members individually take a test covering both positions. If all members score 80 percent correct or above, each receives 10 bonus points.

**Individual Accountability:**

1. One group member will be selected randomly to present group's position to the class.
2. Test covering both positions.

**Expectations:**

1. Everyone participates.
2. Rules of constructive controversy will be followed.



## English Romantic Poets

**Tasks:** Analyze what makes a poet great, using the English romantic poets as examples. Build a set of criteria as to what makes a poet great. Read several poems by Wadsworth, Shelley, Byron, Browning, and other assigned poets. Apply the criteria to choose the greatest romantic poet.

**Cooperation:** Work in a triad. All members must agree, be able to explain the criteria, and be able to explain why the poet picked best fits the criteria.

### Procedure:

1. You are assigned to triads. Each triad works cooperatively to develop their criteria and makes a decision as to who is the greatest romantic poet.
2. You are now assigned to a group of four. Each member represents a different poet. Your group is to follow this procedure:
  - a. Each member presents his or her position.
  - b. An open discussion is held in which each member presents a refutation of the opposing positions and defends his or her choice as the most correct one. The strong and weak points of each poet should be identified.
  - c. Each member reverses perspectives by presenting the best case for the poet advocated by the person on the member's right.
  - d. The group comes to a decision as to who is the greatest romantic poet and why. It does not matter which poet is chosen. What matters is the quality of analysis and understanding of what makes a poet great. Tell each member, "Good job."
  - e. Members return to their original triads and report on what happened in their groups of four. Then they write a group report on the strengths and weaknesses of each poet studied.



3. Identify at least one thing each member of your triad did to contribute to the quality of the group's work. Identify one thing members could do to improve group effectiveness. Then celebrate the group's success.

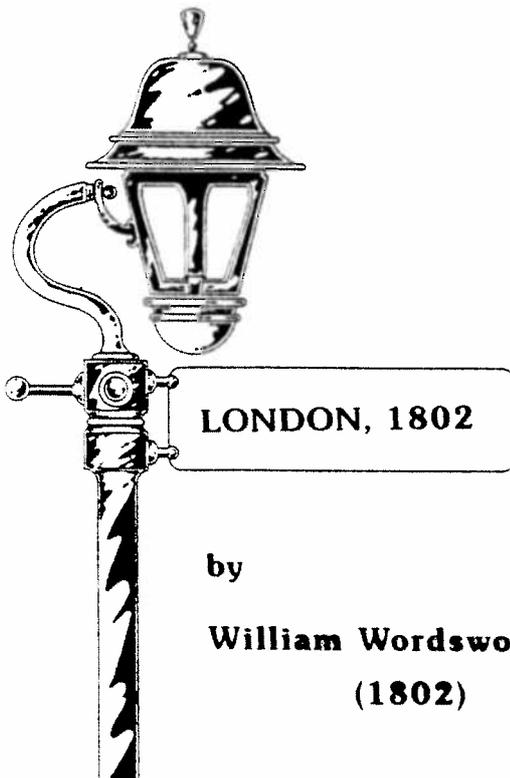
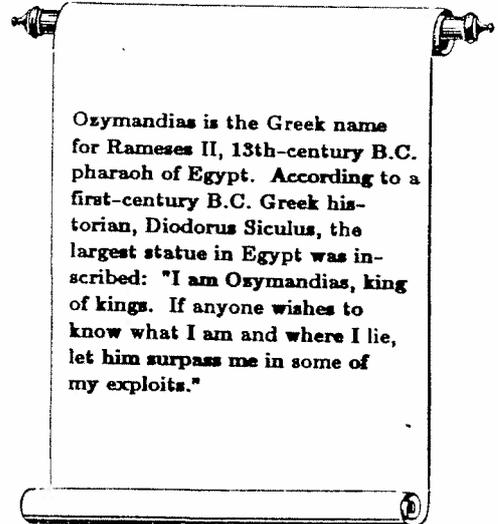




## ZYMANDIAS

by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1818)

I met a traveler from an antique land  
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert.... Near them, on the sand  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
"My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.



Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:  
England hath need of thee: she is a fen  
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,  
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,  
Have forfeited their ancient English dower  
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men  
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;  
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.  
Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart...  
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:  
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,  
So didst thou travel on life's common way  
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart  
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

fen means marsh and dower means inheritance



## How Do I Love Thee?

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;  
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise;  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints--I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears of all my life!--and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1850)

She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:  
Thus mellowed to that tender light  
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,  
Had half impaired the nameless grace  
Which waves in every raven tress,  
Or softly lightens o'er her face;  
Where thoughts serenely sweet express  
How pure, how dear their dwelling place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
The smiles that win, the tints that glow  
But tell of days in goodness spent  
A mind at peace will all below  
A heart whose love is innocent!

## She Walks in Beauty

by George Gordon, Lord Byron



(June 12, 1814)