

Million Pound Top Trumps

This resource can be used for the development of oracy skills in their own right, or as part of any lesson to help students to consolidate their learning. The generic themes and ideas used in this activity plan can easily be replaced with topical lists or sets of prompts that suit your lesson content.

Overview

In debating between two sides it's not enough to argue that something is 'good' or 'bad'. Speakers must always remember to be comparative, and so to ask 'Is this better than the other side? Is this more important?' This exercise will help students to practise this and explore its importance.

In a small class or club this game can be played with each student getting their own suggestion. For larger clubs students should work in small groups.



- To understand the need for comparative analysis in debating
- To practise making comparative arguments and justifying relative weighting

Task

The government has announced that there is a million pounds of extra money available to be spent in the local region. Students are representing advocacy groups supporting different proposals for how to spend this money. Give each student/group a proposal like the ones on the list below, or let them choose their own (you should approve these to make sure they are suitable and that there is a variety of different positions).

More teachers

Build a new park with a football pitch/athletics track Put on local events e.g. music festivals or fairs Free entry to local leisure centre/swimming pool More nurses Increased city centre parking Reduce income tax Every school age student gets a musical instrument More bike lanes

More money for libraries so they can stay open/have more staff or facilities More support for homeless people







Round 1 - In this round each advocacy group will write and deliver a short speech about why their proposed spending is best within a certain category of their choice. So, for example, 'spending on more nurses' might want to argue that their proposal would 'save most lives'; 'provide increased city centre parking' might claim that their proposal would 'boost the economy most'.

Give students some time to write these speeches of up to about 1 minute. They don't necessarily need to compare with every other proposal, but should be comparative with at least some.

For some groups, you may wish to begin by making a mind-map of possible 'trump' categories on the board.

Round 2 - Each proposal may be best at something, but this doesn't yet allow us to choose which is best overall.

In this round the advocacy groups will argue that their policy should be selected by the government. In order to do this they will have to argue not only that they are better than the others at something, but also explain why that means that overall they are best choice for spending. So now it is not enough to explain why you are best at 'x' but also why this is more important than the benefits of other proposals. For example, someone defending 'more nurses' might suggest that 'saving more lives' is more important than 'boosting the economy most'. Again, give students some time to write these speeches.

You can immediately decide a winner by a vote after Round 2. If you prefer, you can select the top 2 proposals and have a final round where they must argue directly against each other in a final pair of speeches.

Variation - make the game more light-hearted by using less serious proposals. Have students argue about 'the best pet to buy' or 'the most fun we could have with £1000'.