

How Pop-Up Debate Works¹

Students use assigned text(s), logic, and/or course content to respond to a debatable prompt and their peers' arguments, using the rules below.

- Every student speaks 1+ times, depending on time constraints. These limits are set by the teacher.
- To speak, students simply “pop up” at their desks and talk. First person to speak has the floor. When multiple students pop up, teach them to politely yield the floor. Argument is a collaborative endeavor, and collaboration isn't a pointed finger and, “Sit down, I was up first.”

Why Use Pop-Up Debate?

Pop-up debates are a novice-friendly, replicable teaching strategy. They allow me to

- **get all students talking** about course content;
- **explicitly teach students how to speak** within an authentic context;
- **teach students to argue**, which Jerry Graff explains is critical for the democratization of postsecondary attainment (and this is why argument is one of the five things I recommend working on all year long); and
- **build character**, although I'm still studying exactly how through a national Teacher Innovation Grant.

Management Considerations for Pop-Up Debate

- No cross talk. The person standing has the floor until they sit.
 - Courteous, civil behavior is the norm; don't let them stand up obnoxiously long.
- Teacher = coach. Model, instruct, correct as needed.
 - Step in as needed; not too much, not too little.
- Every kid needs to speak. Be proactive with shy kids.
 - Think Pair Share for a couple weeks before the first debate.
 - Don't mention an option for not speaking. “Mr. Stuart, what if I don't want to speak?” “Guys, we're all going to speak, and I'm going to show you exactly how it's done. You can literally read off your claim from a piece of paper for the first pop-up debate; you got this.”
 - Read this blog article: “Beyond a Fear of Public Speaking: Making the First Pop-Up Debate a Success for All Students.”²
- “Great debaters can debate all sides.”
 - Pick their sides if they get too comfy, too one-sided, etc.
- “We all win with a great debate.”
 - I don't do the “pick a winner” thing. That probably makes me lame.
- Teach and assess 1-2 skills at a time.
 - Explicitly show them how to do these skills. Provide sentence templates as needed.
- Remember to coach not just on argumentative skill, but also **content** and **performance** (Erik's PVLEGS).

¹ Questions? Dave's email address is accessible to newsletter subscribers. Subscribe at DaveStuartJr.com/newsletter. Also, for Dave's Pop-Up Debate Starter Kit, visit gum.co/popup

² www.davestuartjr.com/fear-of-public-speaking-pop-up-debate/

Pop-Up Debates from Last Year

	TOPIC	TARGET SKILL	OBSERVATIONS	LESSONS LEARNED
PUD1 9/25	If you had to choose one of the groups below to time warp into and live in for the rest of your life, which would you choose and why?	State your answer.	Even students with self-identified phobias re: speaking stood up. See davestuartjr.com/fear-of-public-speaking	This question did not create claims. Most students feel nervous.
PUD2 10/2	<i>How did the early Islamic empire expand as rapidly as it did?</i>	State hypothesis + Support with evidence or reasoning	Two classes, two different results: one class constantly referred to others, another didn't at all.	One student started the great speaking trend in the one class.
PUD3 10/8, 10/12	<i>Was 400-1400 CE a period of cultural decline in Europe -- a true "Dark Age"?</i>	Cite evidence + productively agree or disagree with another's argument	Stanford "Reading Like a Historian" lessons ideal for argument-building.	Ergh -- save enough time in class to finish. 10 minutes = not enough for classes of 30. 15 = minimum.
PUD4 10/16, 10/19	<i>Was 400-1400 CE a period of cultural decline in Europe -- a true "Dark Age"?</i>	Work on a self-identified portion of PVLEGS	PVLEGS is powerful.	Same topic for 2 PUDs can be useful when introducing a complex skillset.
PUD5 10/30	<i>How barbaric were the "barbarian" Mongols?</i>	Paraphrase Plus (davestuartjr.com/paraphrase-plus)	This is a debate I had been previewing for weeks as "one of my favorite of the year."	Students feed on the hype; lots of great speeches and eagerness.
PUD6 11/6	<i>Has "pinkification" gone too far? Should the strategy change? (Based on an article of the week.)</i>	Speaking with sensitivity, grace, and care when debating touchy topics	Students handled the sensitive nature of this debate very well.	Best to save sensitive topics for a bit into the school year when norms are set.
PUD7 11/13	<i>Which foodstuff, animal, or pathogen from the Columbian Exchange has had the most significant impact on world history?</i>	Self-identified element of PVLEGS	Periodically, it's useful to revisit key skills that I want students to remember to work on for years to come.	Even the blandest of topics can become interesting when properly framed.

<p>PUD8 12/3</p>	<p><i>Is there hope for our planet's environmental future? Use the AoW and any prior knowledge to explain and justify your response.</i></p>	<p>Voice -- note that voice doesn't mean enthusiasm because not all topics call for enthusiasm.</p>	<p>Students were very passionate about this topic. With minimal textual evidence to draw from, they relied on analogies and prior knowledge.</p>	<p>Make more pop-up debates flow from articles of the week, especially AoWs on immediately relevant topics.</p>
<p>PUD9 12/18</p>	<p><i>Is Christmas in the USA a mostly religious or mostly secular holiday?</i></p>	<p>Anecdotal evidence: what is it and what is it good for?</p>	<p>This was the day before winter break, and my goal was for students to speak amicably around topics they may not be comfortable with (religion and society).</p>	<p>Topics that tread into religious territory aren't inherently dangerous territory for school. All students did a good job being respectful with this one.</p>
<p>PUD10 1/27</p>	<p><i>Which concept from our world history textbook best connects to Things Fall Apart?</i></p>	<p>Poise: Have a partner keep track of your distracting behaviors or tics.</p>	<p>Students used academic vocabulary to refer to themes or passages in the novel.</p>	<p>Novel study in world history class is worth the hassle of streamlining the curriculum to make time.</p>
<p>PUD11 2/10</p>	<p><i>[I DIDN'T WRITE THIS ONE DOWN AND CANNOT REMEMBER IT FOR THE LIFE OF ME. IT IS COLD IN MICHIGAN, OKAY? THE BRAIN SHUTS DOWN.]</i></p>			
<p>PUD12 3/10</p>	<p><i>Why did Picasso choose to depict the bombing of Guernica this way?</i></p>	<p>Use "textual" evidence to support your hypothesis.</p>	<p>Students this year were particularly insightful in both their comments about the painting and their connections to the course material.</p>	<p>Keep this debate! I added a 10 minute clip of an art historian's analysis of <i>Guernica</i> after we were done debating. It is the most enthralled I've seen kids be about art theory. Ever.</p>

<p>PUD13 3/15</p>	<p><i>Was appeasement the right policy for England in 1938?</i> (Stanford History Education Group lesson)</p>	<p>Fillers (poise) + eye contact (don't look at me) + use of evidence</p>		
<p>PUD14 4/18, 19</p>	<p><i>Who started the Cold War, the USA or USSR?</i></p>	<p>Refutation Two-Chance (see DaveStuartJr.com/refutation-two-chance)</p>	<p>The jump in challenge presented by Ref Two-Chance proved frustrating or frightening to most students. Also, this format was more time-consuming b/c of the teacher's role as judge.</p>	<p>It's hard judging arguments but gets easier with time; it's highly insightful for students <i>and</i> teacher to have the teacher walk through the process of determining whether a refutation was successful.</p>
<p>PUD15 4/25</p>	<p><i>Do nuclear weapons make the world less secure?</i></p>	<p>Refutation Two-Chance + Note-taking (flowing)</p>	<p>Much more successful. Every student participated at least through flowing, but not every student spoken (again, time-consumption greater b/c of teacher talk).</p>	<p>When using jump in skill, scaffold with more engaging prompt (nukes) and on-screen modeling of note-taking.</p>

