

Great Debaters: Selected Listening Exercises

Most of these exercises come from the worksheets that go with the movie *The Great Debaters*.

Example 1

3. At the tryouts, Professor Tolson explains the following debating terms. Write definitions.

- Proposition
- Affirmative
- Negative
- Rebuttal

4. Professor Tolson asks the students to do some tasks. Complete the quotes or answer the questions:

- Quote from James Joyce 'History is a nightmare from which _____
- Quote from D.H. Lawrence 'I never saw a wild thing _____
- The irony in the company name Bethlehem Steel is that _____

Example 2.

I also teach the terms *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* since the Wiley College debate team uses all of them to persuade their audience. CELOP students can easily recognize examples of logos, ethos, and pathos in the movie, and they later apply these terms to other arguments that they read, hear, and make.

Example #3: Previewing and Note Taking

Usually, I draw a grid on the board so that students will see who will be speaking and when. We also preview vocabulary such as Elizabethan Poor Laws, Puritans, etc.

Debate #1

Resolved: _____

- Take notes on the affirmative argument.
- Take notes on the negative argument.
- Take notes on the affirmative rebuttal.
- Take notes on the negative rebuttal.

Which speaker mentions the following:

- Elizabethan Poor Laws
- A Roman General who killed people who rebelled.
- Puritan Concept---He who does not work, shall not eat.
- Numbers of people on unemployment relief currently
- A mother and her starving children
- Voluntary and involuntary contributions to help poor people

12. What is unusual about the plan to debate Oklahoma City University?

Debate #2

Here are some of the arguments given by Oklahoma City students against integrating public universities.

How do the Wiley students rebut these arguments?

- WEB Debois (a noted black scholar) said that it is foolish to try to get the majority to do something that they do not want to do. REBUTTAL:
- Now is not the time for integration. REBUTTAL:
- White Racism will make it impossible for Negroes to be comfortable in White schools, and so they won't be able to get a good education. Negroes can get a better education in their own schools. REBUTTAL:

Example #4

The Harvard Debate comes at the end of the film. Even though students have some experience with note taking on the debates by that time, the final debate is hard for them to understand. We usually listen to everything once (By that time, they're into the story so they want to know what happens. Then I do the argument/rebuttal in pairs, stopping after each segment so that students can compare notes. I want them to hear the line of argument and the response to that line in the counter argument. When students take the time to notice how this is done, they learn how to do it later in their own debates and papers. The final exercise is a short dictation.

1:43:33 The Harvard Debate – Take Notes

The first affirmative argument (James)

First rebuttal (Harvard)

What

What

Who

Who

When

Why

Key Phrases

Key Phrases

Type of argument

Type of argument

How do the arguments connect?

The second affirmative argument (Samantha)

What

Who

When

Key Phrases

Type of argument

How do the arguments connect?

Second rebuttal (Harvard)

What

Who

Why

Key Phrases

Type of argument

The third affirmative (Samantha)

What

Who

When

Key Phrases

Type of argument

How do the arguments connect?

Third rebuttal (Harvard)

What

Who

Why

Key Phrases

Type of argument

-

Close Exercise

_____ Texas, they _____ Negroes. My teammates and I _____ man strung
_____ by his

_____ and set _____. We _____ a lynch mob, pressed
our _____

_____ the floorboard. I looked _____ my teammates. I saw _____ in their
_____, and

_____ shame. What _____ this _____ that he
_____ hung

without _____ in a dark _____ with _____.