



Smart School Councils

DEBATE PACK

Are you passionate about sharpening your critical thinking and speaking skills?

IS IGNORANCE REALLY BLISS?



WWW.SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS.ORG.UK

How to Use this Debate Pack

Whether you have just a few minutes or a full lesson, this Debate Pack has got you covered. It's fully flexible to your time and needs.

How to find the debate video and send to teachers

1. Log in to the Smart School Councils platform using your school details.
2. Click on the blue Class Meeting tool button in the dashboard.
3. Click on 'Next Meeting' at the top of the page.
4. To get started, click on 'click here' to browse existing questions and options.
5. If the debate topic is part of this week's question, it will appear there. Otherwise, click 'Search All' and type in the debate topic you're looking for.

Got five minutes?

Play the debate video straight through and dive right into the debate. No need to pause at the prompts. It's a quick, engaging way to get your students thinking.

Got 10/15 minutes?

Pause at the prompts in the video to explore additional ideas your class might have. Use the additional points or Power Facts if you'd like.

Want to extend to 30 minutes or a full lesson?

Check out the lesson plan and writing tasks below. There is also a full Fact Sheet with amazing further reading if your students want to go deeper on the topic.

What do the icons in the pack mean?



This is what the presenter says on the video



This is a Power Fact to explain or prompt debate that's not in the video



This is an additional debate point you can use that's not in the video

Introduction and Brain Gym Question

Introduction

Welcome to the Big Debate Club! My name is Becky and today we are debating the question... Is ignorance really bliss?



The saying 'Ignorance is bliss' comes from a poem from Thomas Gray in 1742. The phrase means that sometimes not knowing can mean an easier life. It could be not watching the news and therefore not knowing of the problems going on in the world can mean you can live happily without thinking about them. But being ignorant can also mean not learning about the people around you and the problems ahead. So it is really bliss? You decide!

So in this debate, you can either argue that ignorance is bliss or that it isn't.

Brain Gym Question

Before we get started, I have a question for you...

According to the American Psychological Association, what percentage of people given the choice to learn how their actions affect others would rather not know?

- a. 20%
- b. 40%
- c. 60%
- d. 80%

Which of the 4 potential answers will you choose? Pause the video, turn to your partner and tell them your answer.

A study found that **80% of people feel overwhelmed by the amount of information** they need to process daily, leading many to avoid the news or further details on the world's issues to reduce stress deliberately.



With the growth of 24/7 news and easily accessible information on social media, it makes sense people are overwhelmed - but is it better not to know? [Article.](#)



FOR: Ignorance is bliss


We're going to share reasons for both sides of the debate, then it's up to you to think of the rest!

Your mental health will be calmer not knowing



You might be thinking that your mental health is calmer when it doesn't know. The internet and 24-hour news have made us far more aware of everything that is happening at all times - the stress of this would not affect your mental health if you didn't know.

Better not to know about things out of our control

You could say that ignorance is bliss as some things are out of our control. If we cannot change or impact something negative, it would be better to not know about it. Can you think of another reason why ignorance is bliss? 

Comfort in the simple pleasures



Many individuals take comfort in ignorance when it comes to difficult truths, such as health problems or financial difficulties. By avoiding these, people can focus on the simple things that bring them joy like spending time with family.

Avoid 'Information Overload'

There is strong evidence that too much information, or "information overload," can increase stress and reduce overall well-being. This can make people anxious, less productive, and more prone to making mistakes.

People can be stressed by decision fatigue



Decision fatigue happens when people become overwhelmed by too many choices or too much information, making it harder for them to make good decisions. By staying ignorant individuals can avoid the mental exhaustion that comes with overthinking or constant decision-making. [Article](#).



AGAINST: Ignorance isn't bliss



Now let's change positions and consider why you might argue that ignorance isn't bliss.

Fixing a problem brings a more contented bliss

You might be thinking that knowing and fixing a problem will be more contented bliss. Knowing the problems affecting you and your community and working to correct them can bring more contentment rather than avoiding them.

Ignorance promotes vulnerability

Or you could argue that ignorance might promote vulnerability to exploitation. Ignorance can make individuals more able to being manipulated to believe wrong information or harm - being informed empowers people to protect their rights and interests.

Can you think of another reason why ignorance isn't bliss? 

Dangerous Consequences



Ignorance about issues like climate change can lead to harmful decisions that affect everyone, including future generations. Who you vote for and who eventually leads the country can have negative impacts if you have policies that will create a future you would want for the future, this is why you should thoroughly research their ideas.

Being informed means making better choices



Studies have shown that individuals who actively seek information about their health are more likely to engage in preventive behaviours.

For instance, people who are well-informed about the risks of smoking or poor diet tend to adopt healthier habits and seek early treatment for medical issues, preventing more severe outcomes later on. [Article.](#)

FactSheet: Is Ignorance Really Bliss?



Here's six key facts - three on each side - if you'd like to go a little deeper.

Ignorance is bliss

Stress-Free Life:

Living without constantly worrying about bad news can make people feel happier, at least temporarily. A 2020 study showed that individuals who limited their exposure to stressful information reported a more positive mood throughout the day. [Source](#).

Living in the Present:

Without worrying about hypothetical risks or the pressures of decision-making, they can engage with the here and now. This aligns with mindfulness techniques, which emphasise focusing on the present to reduce stress. By not being burdened by "what ifs," people may feel freer and more content. [Source](#).

Reduced Anxiety from Negative Information:

Studies have shown that people who regularly consume negative news are more likely to experience heightened levels of stress and anxiety, leading some to intentionally limit their media intake. This behaviour, known as "news fatigue," helps reduce emotional overload. [Source](#).

Ignorance isn't bliss

Consequences of Unawareness:

Being unaware of important information can have serious consequences, such as missing early signs of illness or making uninformed financial decisions. For example, studies have shown that individuals who do not stay informed about their health are more likely to ignore symptoms that could indicate serious conditions, leading to poorer outcomes. Ignorance may offer short-term comfort but can lead to long-term risks. [Source](#).

Limits on Personal Development:

Choosing ignorance can limit personal growth by preventing individuals from learning new things and improving their decision-making skills. Knowledge fuels curiosity and innovation, while ignorance can trap people in outdated or incorrect beliefs. Those who actively seek information are more likely to make better decisions, develop critical thinking skills, and have a deeper understanding of the world. [Source](#).

Impact on Society:

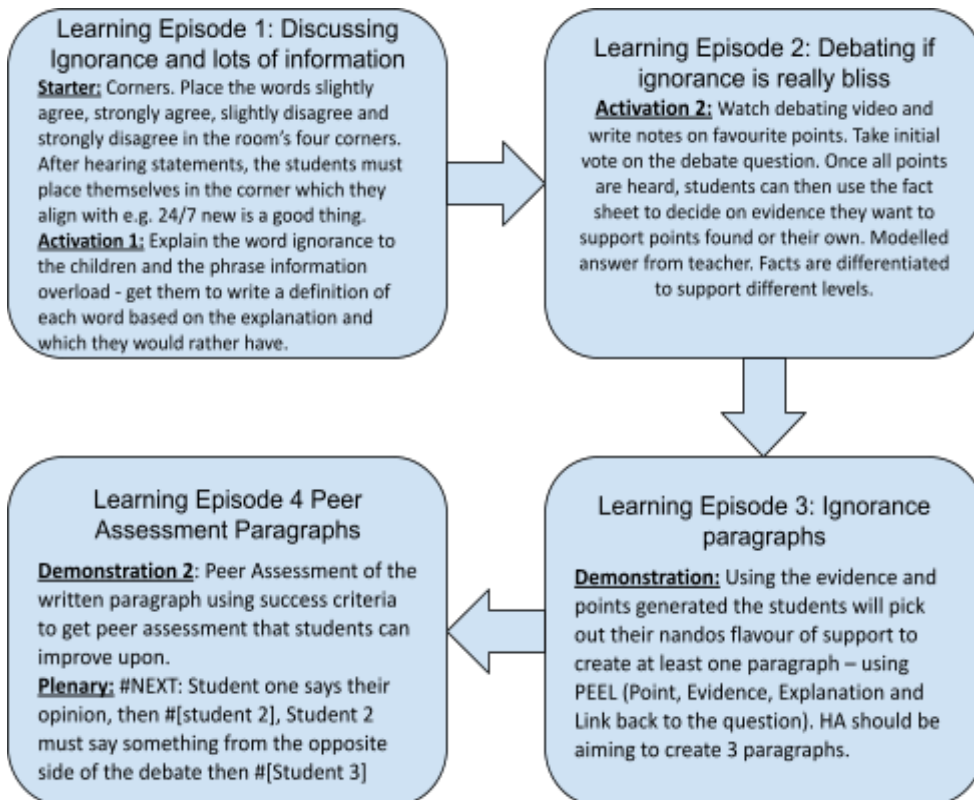
When people are uninformed about world challenges, such as climate change or social justice, are less likely to engage in actions that benefit the collective good. A lack of knowledge can contribute to poor decision-making at both individual and policy levels, negatively impacting future generations. [Source](#).



'Perfect Paragraphs' Lesson Plan

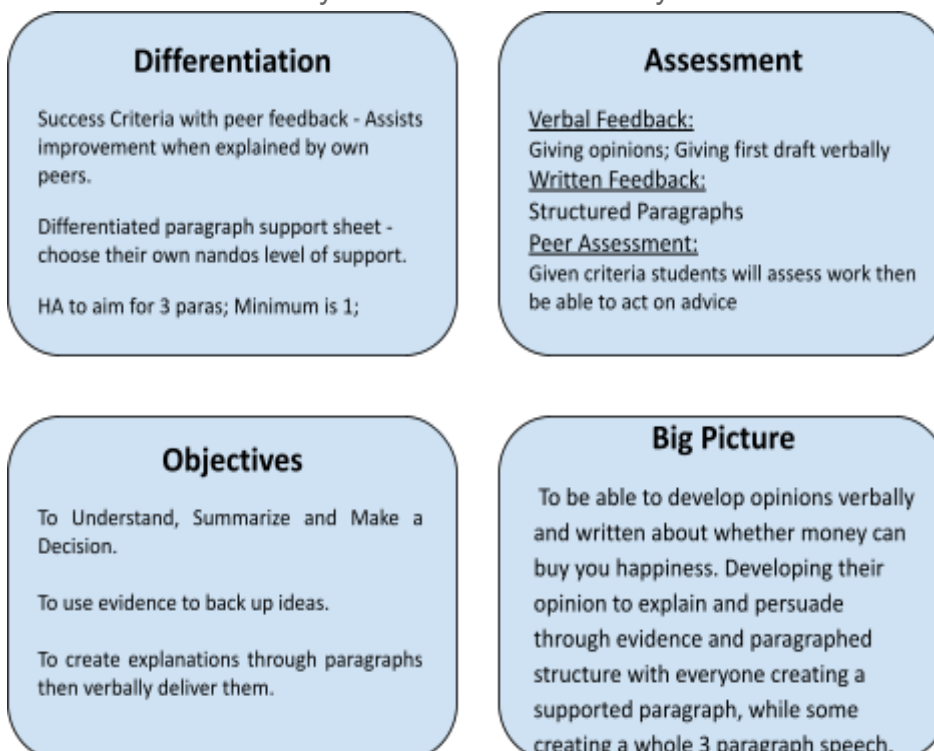
Structure of the Lesson

Here's a lesson plan for you, including four learning episodes. It gives you ways to differentiate to make sure everyone's needs are met in your class, and a way to assess learning.



What are we trying to achieve?

And how can we check every student can do this in your class?



Success Criteria: Paragraph/Speech Writing

Level 3

Make a single sentence point. Mention a fact and say what you think of it. Use full sentences. 1 paragraph written.

Level 4

Make a simple and short sentence for your point. Make a simple descriptive comment about the fact chosen and the impact that it has. Some link to the question is established. 1-2 paragraphs written.

Level 5

A simple sentence point. An effective piece of evidence that supports the point. Explanation of how the evidence supports the point and proves it. Link made back to the original debate question and how it answers it. 2-3 Paragraphs written.

Level 6

Clear, short point. Evidence is written in their own words. Explanation of how the evidence is relevant and proves the point. Explanation of why this evidence is important. Link back to the original debate question and whether this is the strongest point out of all points written. 3 Paragraphs written.

Writing Paragraph Support

POINT

Set out the point you are making in one sentence and which side of the debate it comes from.. Make sure to use the question words to phrase your viewpoint as it shows your understanding of the question.

EVIDENCE

Demonstrate the view you are making with a specific piece of evidence – an example, fact or idea.

EXPLANATION

Explain how the evidence you just used proves the point you made at the start of the paragraph.

LINK

Relate how your point answers the question and the debate. Prove it? Disprove it?

Sentence Starters

POINT

LEMON & HERB: One reason why I (agree/disagree) with this debate is because...

MEDIUM: One point I have for this debate is...

HOT: You could say that...

EVIDENCE

LEMON & HERB: One way I can prove my point is through this example...

MEDIUM: I can show this works through the fact that...

HOT: I know this because...

EXPLANATION

LEMON & HERB: The evidence I have discussed above proves my point as...

MEDIUM: This example proves my point because...

HOT: Therefore, this proves my point as...

LINK

LEMON & HERB: All together, this answers the debate question asked by...

MEDIUM: This point answers the overall question because...

HOT: These ideas answer the debate as...



**Post your debate on
social media!**

SHARE YOUR VOICE

We shout out the best opinions each week

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TWITTER @SSCCTY

INSTAGRAM @SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS

