



Smart School Councils

DEBATE PACK

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

**ARE FICTIONAL LGBTQ+ CHARACTERS AS IMPORTANT AS
REAL-LIFE REPRESENTATION?**



WWW.SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS.ORG

How to Use this Debate Pack

Whether you have just a few minutes or a full lesson, this Debate Pack has got you covered. Check out the Certificates at the end too.

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 that's not in the video

Introduction and Brain Gym Question

Introduction



Welcome to Big Debate Club!

My name is Becky and today we are debating the question...

Are fictional LGBTQ+ characters as important as real-life representation?

For the second Pride Month debate, we discuss another important issue, representation. From books to movies and TV shows, LGBTQ+ characters have become more common in fiction, and we love to see it.

All LGBTQ+ characters can be important for representation, so young LGBTQ+ people can see themselves and their experiences on the screen or on the page. But are fictional, or made up, LGBTQ+ characters just as important as the real life stories of actual LGBTQ+ people - or it is more important for young people to learn about the real LGBTQ+ experience from people who have lived it? You decide.

Brain Gym Question

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

Which film was the first to feature an LGBT main character and win an Oscar for Best Picture?

- a) Call me by your name
- b) Brokeback Mountain
- c) The Danish Girl
- d) Moonlight

In 2022, **LGBTQ+ characters made up 11.9% of regular characters** on scripted primetime broadcast television in the U.S., the highest percentage ever recorded at that time. (Source: GLAAD, [LINK](#))



FOR: Fictional LGBTQ+ characters are as important

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

The more visible LGBTQ+ identities are, the more normal they are

You might be thinking that it is just as important because the more visible LGBTQ identities are the more normal they are. Seeing LGBTQ+ characters in mainstream media, whether real or made up, helps normalize different identities and makes LGBTQ+ people feel seen and accepted so if we can get as much as possible, that's the most important thing.

It would increase tolerance and reduce discrimination

You could say that fictional characters are easier for anyone to access. Fictional characters can reach people at an early age, helping LGBTQ+ youth feel less alone and encouraging acceptance among their peers showing they are just as important as real-life representation.

Can you think of another reason why fictional LGBTQ+ representation is just as important as real-life representation? 

Fictional Characters can be life changing...

Not everyone grows up in a community where LGBTQ+ people are visible or accepted. For some, a fictional character may be the *first and only* LGBTQ+ "person" they encounter — and that can be life-changing. For example, characters like Simon from *Love, Simon*, or Elle from *Heartstopper* have helped countless viewers feel seen and accepted.

It would help with LGBTQ+ youth wellbeing

A 2023 survey by The Trevor Project found that 89% of LGBTQ+ youth said seeing LGBTQ+ characters in media made them feel good about being LGBTQ+. (Source: The Trevor Project, [LINK](#))



AGAINST: Real-life representation is more important than fictional.

Now let's change positions and consider why you might argue that real life LGBTQ+ representation is more important than fictional representation.




Fiction isn't true representation

You might think that fiction isn't the truth. While some fictional characters are written by LGBTQ writers or based on real situations or experiences, fictional representation can sometimes be inaccurate, stereotypical, or created by people outside of the LGBTQ+ community, leading to misrepresentation.

Real people can make real change

Or you could also say real people can make real change. While fictional characters can influence culture, real LGBTQ+ figures create positive progress and change through activism, policies, and visibility in leadership roles.

Can you think of another reason why real-life representation is more important than fictional LGBTQ+ representation? 

Real life role models can help mental health

LGBTQ+ youth who report having at least one accepting adult in their life — often public figures or mentors — are 40% less likely to attempt suicide.



We need to encourage more real-life representation

We need to encourage real-life representation as it is still not as widespread as we would like it to be. For instance, as of 2022, only 2 openly LGBTQ+ CEOs lead Fortune 500 companies — showing how underrepresented real LGBTQ+ people are in leadership. (Source: CNN, [LINK](#))



FactSheet: Are fictional LGBTQ+ characters as important as real-life representation?



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

Yes

Fictional characters can normalize LGBTQ+ representation

Media representation, such as fictional characters, helps reduce stigma and fosters empathy, especially in viewers with little real-life exposure to LGBTQ+ people. (Source: GLAAD, [LINK](#))

They help with LGBTQ+ youth well-being

A 2023 survey by The Trevor Project found that 89% of LGBTQ+ youth said seeing LGBTQ+ characters in media made them feel good about being LGBTQ+. (Source: The Trevor Project, [LINK](#))

It can be a way for LGBTQ+ youth to learn about themselves

A GLSEN study found that 56% of LGBTQ+ students learned about LGBTQ+ topics through online media, often more than from school or family. (Source: GLSEN, [LINK](#))

NO

Having real life role models can greatly improve mental health

LGBTQ+ youth who report having at least one accepting adult in their life — often public figures or mentors — are 40% less likely to attempt suicide. (Source: The Trevor Project, [LINK](#))

Should restricted funds be spent on only a few students?

Studies show countries with visible LGBTQ+ politicians and media figures experience faster progress on equal rights legislation. (Source: European Parliament, [LINK](#))

We need to encourage real-life representation as it is still lacking

We need to encourage real-life representation as it is still not as widespread as we would like it to be. For instance, as of 2022, only 2 openly LGBTQ+ CEOs lead Fortune 500 companies — showing how underrepresented real LGBTQ+ people are in leadership. (Source: CNN, [LINK](#))



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

#BIGDEBATECUB

TWITTER @SSCCTV

INSTAGRAM @SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS



WWW.SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS.ORG.UK

DEBATER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

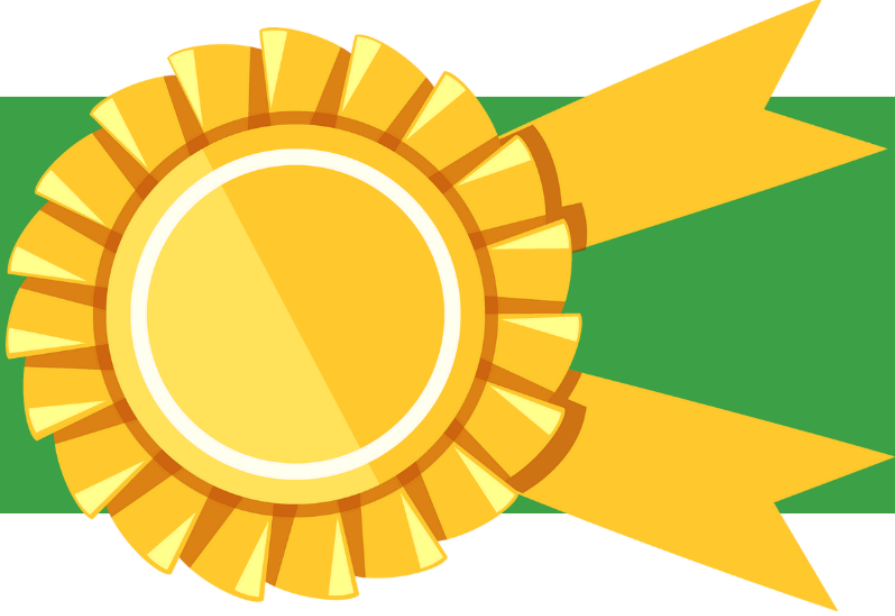
For debating fairly, respectfully and persuasively. Well done!

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils



Smart
School
Councils
Community



CLASS MEETING LEADER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

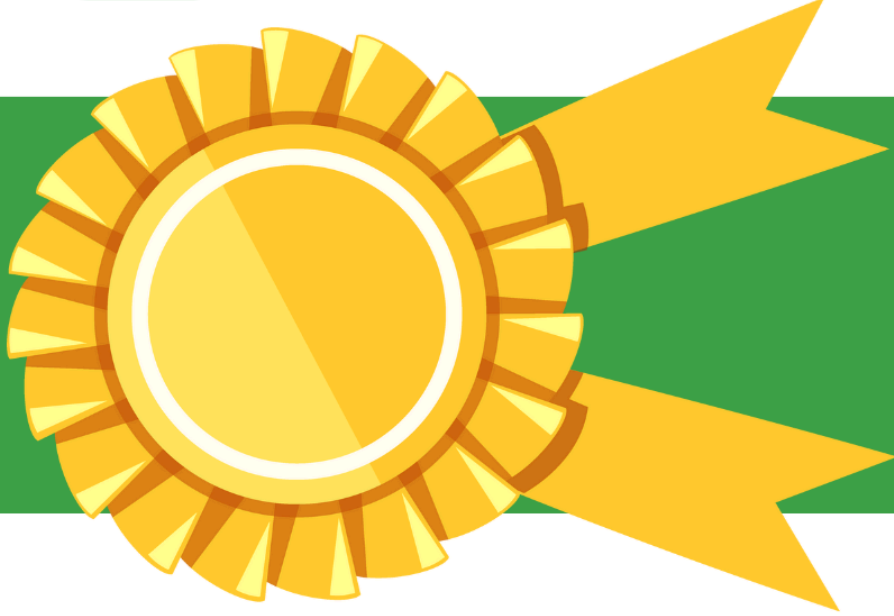
For showing skill and confidence in leading today's Class Meeting.

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils



Smart
School
Councils
Community



BEST IDEA OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

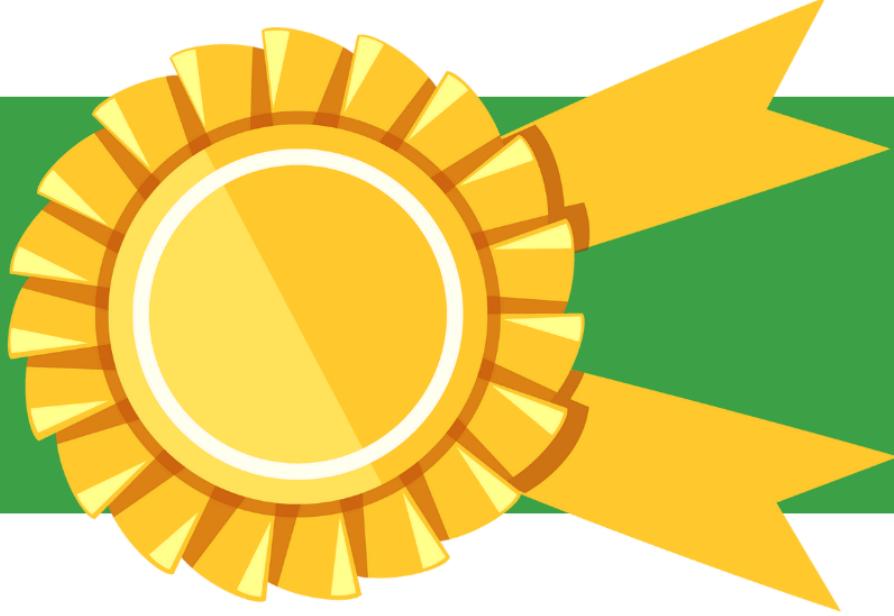
For speaking up with a great new idea on today's topic. Amazing.

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils



Smart
School
Councils
Community

