

Lesson 6: Counter the Comments: Engaging with Alternate Perspectives

Overview: (50 minute lesson)

In this activity, students will explore strategies for engaging with alternate perspectives. They'll practice using the "comments section" as a method of thinking about different perspectives, and they'll practice engaging with these ideas beyond a simple "counterclaim".

Student Learning Goals:

We will...

- Practice analyzing alternative perspectives about a moral issue
- Define and utilize counterargument strategies such as: concession, rebuttal, refutation, qualification, and synthesis

Materials

- [Lesson Slides - Counter the Comments](#)
- [Counter the Comments - Student Handout](#)
- [Fido as Feed - NHSEB Case](#) (optional)

Preparation before lesson:

- Print enough handouts for students

How will this help in Ethics Bowl?

This will help your team...

- Support positions with moral reasoning
- Thoroughly discuss moral positions
- Thoughtfully consider opposing perspectives
- Create constructive and insightful commentary

Lesson Facilitation:

1. Open the "Lesson Slides" and display it for students.
2. Pass out the "Counter the Comments" student handout (This document is a summary of the slides with key resources needed for the group practice later on)
3. Review slides 1-3 with students.
 - a. New teams: focus heavily on the rubric language presented in slides 2-3 so students can become familiar with how they are graded by judges
 - b. Returning teams: ask team members where they've fallen short with counterarguments before? What strategies have worked? Which haven't?
4. Review slides 5-7 with students
 - a. This hypothetical "school walkout post" is also on their handout.
 - b. Focus on guiding students to identify the "moral values / frameworks" that the commenters on this post might care about on slide 7. There aren't necessarily "right" answers here—but we can make inferences. Example: *"Stephen P seems to care about the moral value of honesty above all else because he isn't interested in hiding the consequences of civil disobedience from students. Just like adults might have consequences for leaving work, students might have to face that too. He seems to focus on this value in his comment."*
5. Review slides 8-10 with students
 - a. Slides 8-9 list engagement strategies, which are also printed in the student handouts.

- b. Slide 10 focuses on a quick, informal practice for students to try and use some of the engagement strategies with the student protest case.
6. Review page 3 of the student handout marked “Group Practice”. Make sure students read through the original post and the comments.
 - a. (Optional: You may wish to print copies of the “Fido as Feed” case study for students, which focuses on this very same issue)
7. Provide time for students to draft their response to this post using at least 1 of the engagement strategies from this lesson. Here’s an example:
 - a. *“While there are many who will disagree, this type of donation for deceased pets should be possible. A lot of people seem to think pets are like family, but aren’t there some important differences? For example, a family member might care for us when we are unable to care for ourselves. We can’t say the same about our pets. If we are sick, they cannot physically care for us. On the other hand, human family members would have an obligation to care for us.”* (Qualifying a claim)
 - b. *“These donations aren’t truly helping zoo animals. One commenter on this post mentioned ‘saving an animal’s life’ with the pets that are donated. Looking at this closer, this seems to have some flaws. Are animals in zoos currently starving? It seems like that is not the case for most zoos. They may be fed with a diet that isn’t quite what they would eat in the wild, but it certainly isn’t starving them. The idea that pet donations would save a life seems inaccurate here.”* (Refuting a claim)
8. Have students share their positions and clarify any questions they have about these engagement strategies.
9. If you want to dive deeper into the original post, it appeared on Good Morning Britain’s Facebook. Here is a link to the post: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/189Paa7le7/>

Optional Extension Activity:

1. Have students pull out their phones and open their social media apps. Have them scroll for around 3-5 minutes until they find an ethical concern or issue.
2. Once each student has found a post that may contain an ethical issue, have them read through the comments section to identify different positions about the issue.
3. Have each student summarize the post they found and the different positions they saw in the comments. Then, open the discussion up to the group about how to *engage* those different positions.