

Buffalo Wars (or Water Wars or Wolf Wars)

Prior preparation: Invite 3-4 class visitors to moderate the forum.

1. Select a controversy that the students can relate to. This activity uses the controversy surrounding Yellowstone Park's buffalo herds.
2. The student's are divided into teams and assigned a viewpoint.
 - a. Team 1 – Ranchers
 - b. Team 2 – Native Americans
 - c. Team 3 – Ecologists
 - d. Team 4 – Government
3. Students are given ½ hour (or homework assignment) to gather all of the pertinent information they can find through the internet and sources available in the classroom to defend their position.
4. Each team will choose a speaker for the public forum.
5. Students are then gathered together and given the rules of the forum. You want students to understand that a public forum is much more than a verbal argument; it is a public way that opposing sides can learn more about how and why the other side thinks. Forum rules include:
 1. Speakers at a public forum should only participate when it is their specific time to do so (as instructed by the moderator).
 2. Only one person should speak at a time.
 3. Participants must adhere to time limits for speeches and responses.
 4. In order to maintain the highest standard of order, all speeches and responses should be made to the moderator rather than to the opposing side of the debate.
6. Set up the room for the forum.
 - a. A table for the moderator panel at the front of the room
 - b. A podium or table facing the moderators for presentations
 - c. Chairs for audience
7. Place a signup sheet at the back of the room to determine speaker order.
8. A moderator (head of the panel members) directs the discussion and makes sure all viewpoints are represented and order prevails.
9. Speakers will be called in order from the sign-up sheet. Only those team members chosen as speakers may address the forum.
10. At the end of the forum, the Moderator's Council may ask questions of the speakers.

11. The Council will then make a recommendation based on the presentations given. If this were a true public forum, the Moderator's Council would probably make their decision in private, but for our classroom purposes, it is interesting to listen to the Moderators' discussion in the classroom.
12. All students are given the opportunity to talk about their own opinions. Even when they come into the activity with an opinion, at the end of the discussion, they are usually able to consider the other viewpoints presented and have a better concept of the big picture.