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The following lesson plan is the result of the joined effort of an international team of trainers. Their focus is to improve quality of debate training. Therefore, an important part of this endeavour is the feedback users provide.

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Lesson plan – Reply Speeches

A. Goal of the lesson

To give the intermediate debaters a nuanced understanding of reply speeches: their potential and role within the debate, examples of how to structure a reply, different styles and strategies, best practices, the distinction between the the 3rd speech and replies.

B. Activities

Lecture (20-30 min)

Review the basics of reply speeches and the specific rules: final two speeches of the match, half the length of a constructive speech (4 minutes), delivered in reverse order (opposition followed by proposition), no POIs and no new constructive material or rebuttal is allowed.

After reviewing the basics, explain why reply speeches are important and what is the aim of a reply speech. It is uncommon for a reply speech to shift the end result of a debate, but it can happen, and the speaker points from the reply can be crucial to a break. The basic goal of a reply speech is to summarize the debate in a critical manner, but favoring one team. A good reply speech should try as much as possible to respond to the following questions:

- What is this debate about?
- What have been the major issues and questions in this debate (i.e. clashes)?
- What did you set out to prove (the team's burden)?
- Outline the main approach and most important arguments
- Why your case is better than the other team's.
- Why your arguments are better than the other team's.
- Why you should win this debate.

An important aspect to reply speeches is how they are distinct from the final constructive speech. A simple way to explain this difference is by viewing replies as a summary of the entire debate, instead of a continuation of the speech that came before, both in structure and matter.



Structure, style and strategy - Recommend reading the “The structure of a reply speech” subchapter from Simon Quinn’s book (page 163) referenced in the Theory section. Though there is no set structure, a few examples mentioned in the book include: comparing the two cases evenly (or the “Their world versus our world” comparison); do a step by step summary of the debate; identifying the core issues and contrasting each team’s contribution. The lectures provided in the Theory section also delve deeper into the structure, style and strategy of replies, that can be incorporated into the lecture.

The goal is to provide the debaters with a set of tools to help them deliver more impactful and clearer reply speeches, while also helping them spot weaknesses in others’ replies.

Q&A session - (3-7 min)

Short session to clear up any questions or issues the debaters might have at this point.

Exercises

Option 1: Example replies and feedback (30 minutes)

Prepare videos of reply speeches (between 3 to 5, based on the number of debaters in the group and time remaining) and show them to the group of the debaters. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each speech and suggest improvements. The goal is to show the breadth of replies and to have debaters think critically about a speech, not just to structure and deliver one.

Option 2: Example debate (60-80 minutes)

Either prepare a filmed debate or hold a debate demo for the group (preferably with shorter speaking times). Only show the first 6 speeches and then the debaters in the classroom must deliver replies for the debate they’ve watched. Give feedback after each reply, pointing out strong and weak points, while also offering suggestions for improvements. Optionally you can watch the replies from the actual filmed match at the end, to compare and contrast with the debaters in your group. This option can be very time consuming.

Option 3: Flowchart debate (30 minutes)

Provide the debaters with a handout of a debate flowchart (without the reply speeches) and have them prepare and deliver reply speeches, with feedback and discussion after each delivered reply.

C. Preparation

Watching the two lectures and reading the “Reply Speeches” chapter from Simon Quinn’s book, provided in the Theory section, is highly recommended.





You can prepare slides for each part of the lecture with the main points. Graphic tools always help to absorb information better.

Have example motions on hand that you can refer to throughout the lecture. A few motion databases you can use: [Hello, motions!](#), [Debate Motions Headquarters](#), [International Debate Education Association](#).

For the first activity, prepare reply speech videos that you can use as examples. For the second activity, prepare a video of a debate (preferably with shorter speaking times) or have a live demo with volunteer debaters. For the third activity, prepare a clear, somewhat detailed flowchart of a debate (without the replies).

D. Hints

There are many ways to approach reply speeches and deliver a compelling one. It is important to have a clear understanding of the rules, but to experiment as much as possible within the rules, because there is no perfect recipe for a reply and each speech should be tailored to the speaker and the context of the match.

Be open to questions throughout the lesson and occasionally ask the room if there are any, as some debaters are shy about interrupting the speaker.

E. Verification

The best way to verify that the debaters have, in some way, assimilated the knowledge provided in the lesson is through application and observation. See if they apply, or try to apply, the advice you've given them in the practical activities. Or if they identify differences between examples replies, with both strong and weak points.

F. Theory

- [lecture at the World Debate Institute 2007 summer session for the World Schools debate format by Peejay Garcia](#);
- [lecture by Serban Pitic at the World Schools Academy 2013 in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia](#);
- ["Debating in the World School's Style: A Guide" by Simon Quinn \(pages 162- 166\)](#)