

You Be the Judge

Activity Information

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| Grade Level: | Intermediate/High |
| Subject Area: | Environmental Science, Social Studies, Language Arts, Theatre Arts |
| Duration: | 100 – 135 mins |
| Group Size: | Small Groups |
| Purpose: | To experience the process of debate, while debating through role play, the issues surrounding the use of All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) in sensitive ecosystems. |

Teacher's Notes: A debate is a discussion that begins with a statement or viewpoint. It explains the issue at hand from various points of view. The format of a debate can range from being quite formal to a more casual discussion.

Review the ATV Debate Sheet for more information about this issue. Students choose (or are assigned) one side of the debate or the other. Note that there is an environmentalist and an ATV dealer in groups on both sides of the debate. It is reasonable to assume that there are ATV users who are also environmentalists. By working through even this seeming contradiction, students will really come to appreciate how many varied ideas can be realized in such a debate.

RESOURCES:

Setting up Debates:
www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson304.shtml

ATV legislation and brochures:
www.gs.gov.nl.ca/gm/mr/atvsafety/

“Our Smiling Land: Government’s Vision for the Protection and Use of Newfoundland and Labrador’s Outdoor Resources”:
www.gov.nf.ca/releases/1999/drr/smiling.htm

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Writing materials
- ATV Debate Sheet (BLM – 1 per Student)
- Protect our Wetlands Information (BLM – Overhead)
- Tickle trunk (old clothes and accessories) or costume items from home
- A few notes on ATV legislation or the ATV brochure from the government website (optional)

Learning Outcomes:

- At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
- Participate in the debate process
 - Explore different points of view
 - Respond critically to an environmental issue
 - Work cooperatively
 - Describe the effect of ATV use on sensitive terrain

PROCEDURE:

Part I (Discuss) 15 – 20 minutes

To begin, discuss with students the government regulations and background information pertaining to the ATV issue. Review the “Why Should We Protect Our Wetlands” on overhead and make sure that everyone understands the issues. In this activity the students will question if the government should place greater restrictions on ATV use.

Part II (Groups) 30 – 50 minutes

Provide each student with an ATV Debate Sheet which includes the following **Cast of Characters:**

Environmentalist, Hunter, Photographer / Artist, Hiker, Senior Citizen, Fisherman, Canoeist / Kayaker, Berry Picker, Hunting Lodge Outfitter, Concerned Citizen, ATV Dealership Owner, Wildlife Biologist, Government Representative
Plus a 3 or 4 person Advisory Council

Choose at least three students to act as the advisory council for the debate. This council will call characters, individually, to present their case and ultimately decide who won the debate. The teacher will want to consider which students will be most effective in this leadership role since it is crucial to the success of the debate.

Divide the rest of the students into two groups representing each side of the debate. The ATV Debate Sheet identifies the basic premise of both sides of the argument and will provide a good starting point for their presentations. Within the group, each member is responsible for one role in the cast of characters. Students must give their character a name and write a one paragraph character sketch of his / her chosen character with consideration as to the side of the debate they have been assigned.

To bring the issue to life, ask students to bring along some old clothes and appropriate accessories for the presentation. Allow students sufficient time to prepare to debate. The teacher may wish to have students further research the issue or interview family and friends for opinions. The advisory council can use the preparation time to research the rules for such

proceedings and debates and be prepared to explain those rules.

Part III (Present) 40 - 50 minutes

Each student (you may allow characters with similar interests to make a joint presentation) will make a two to three minute presentation ‘in character’ about their opinion on the issue of the government placing greater restrictions on ATV use. The presentation can use information such as facts and figures, personal experiences and past precedents.

After the initial presentations, the advisory council should facilitate a question and answer session, and finally make a ruling either based on how well students presented their case or by lead in a class vote on the issue. Remind students that they must stay in character during the debate and that they must argue for their assigned character, whether they personally agree with the points or not. During the process students’ opinions may be swayed, but only if they feel that the arguments laid forth would have changed their character’s position.

This debate could take many different paths, so allow students to use this process to investigate the issue thoroughly. While staying in character, some students may change their opinions, or they may come to a resolution that can be mutually agreed on. Wrap up the debate in time to allow reflection on the process.

Part II (Evaluate) 15 minutes

Finish the activity with a group discussion about how they felt arguing for a position that they did not necessarily agree with. Do you think that there is a compromise to be found? What would have convinced the characters to change their minds? What biases exist on either side that would have made it difficult to change someone’s mind? What part do biases play in real world debates?

Discuss some of the reasons why wetlands such as bogs and marshes are important and need protection.

Extension Activities:

1. Watch the video “Challenge 2000: Protecting Our Endangered Spaces.” Complete one of the corresponding activities.
2. Have students repeat the activity reversing their roles.
3. Does irresponsible ATV use damage natural areas near your community? Have someone come into your class to talk about responsible ATV use.

