

Lesson 4.4

TO COMPROMISE OR NOT TO COMPROMISE: THE MISSOURI QUESTION

Objective: Students will debate the fairness of the Missouri Compromise with each other, and will make a personal judgment based on the arguments they hear.

Materials:

- **Sheet 4.4:** Rules for Classroom Debate
- **Doc 4.4:** Column from the *Eastern Argus*, March 7, 1820

Timing: Three to four class periods

Background Reading: Chapter Four, Section Three

Procedure:

1. Review Chapter Four, Section Three--the reading on the Missouri Compromise. Discuss how the Missouri Compromise showed the clear North-South, anti-slavery and pro-slavery split in the country.

*Note: You may want to spend a longer period of time on this topic; it's a good opportunity to connect American history with Maine history and a good illustration of the temperament of the country before the Civil War.

2. Pass out the *Eastern Argus* columns to students. Together as a class, read the column out loud. Go over any difficult words or sentences together. Ask students to summarize the column. Ask questions like the following:

- What is the author saying?
- Does he believe the Missouri Compromise should pass? Why?
- What is his opinion of slavery?
- How would the Compromise affect slavery?
- Do you agree with the author's point of view? Why or why not?

3. Divide the class into two groups, pro and con. The resolution to be debated is as follows: Resolved, the U.S. Congress should pass the Missouri Compromise, allowing Maine to enter the union as a free state and Missouri to enter the union as a slave state. Give the class at least a full class period to prepare for the debate, as well as time outside of class. Sheet 4.4: Rules for Classroom Debate, for detailed information on how to run a debate.

4. On the scheduled day of the debate, run it according to the Rules for Classroom Debate.

5. After the debate, allow students to cast individual votes in a secret ballot for or against the Missouri Compromise. Count the votes and discuss the results with the students, asking questions like the following:

- Did the debate have a clear winner? Who was it? Why was their argument stronger?
- Were there arguments for either side that did not come up in the debate?
- Was there any other solution to the problem of the imbalance in Congress between slave versus free states besides the Missouri Compromise?
- Is it always better to make a compromise when two sides will not agree?
- What does it mean to make a compromise? Have you had to make any compromises in your own life?
- Can a compromise limit your freedom? Are there different shades of freedom?
- Can people be free when others are enslaved?

6. Homework and/or Portfolio option: Have students write an opinion piece on the Missouri Compromise, explaining how they voted in the secret ballot and why they voted that way.

Evaluation: Have students evaluate themselves based on their participation in the debate. Evaluate them yourself, giving both individual and group grades.

Follow up Activity:

- Have students research another world society with a history of slavery (or modern day slavery). Compare the slave classes with the ruling classes. Ask the same question: can people be free when others are enslaved?

Alignment with Learning Results:

Grade Level: **9th-dipl.**

Content Area: Social Studies: **APPLICATIONS**

Standard: **Researching and Developing Positions on Current Social Studies Issues**

Students research, develop, present, and defend positions on current social studies issues by developing and modifying research questions, and locating, selecting, evaluating, and synthesizing information from multiple and varied sources.

Descriptor **A1f:** Create and present a coherent set of findings that integrate paraphrasing, quotations, and citations.

Grade Level: **6th-8th**

Content Area: Social Studies: **HISTORY**

Standard: **Historical Knowledge, Concepts, Themes, and Patterns**

Students understand major eras, major enduring themes, and historic influences in the history of Maine, the United States, and various regions of the world.

Descriptor **E1b:** Analyze and critique major historical eras, major enduring themes, turning points, events, consequences, and people in the history of the United States and world and the implications for the present and the future.

Grade Level: **6th-8th**

Content Area: Social Studies: **APPLICATIONS**

Standard: **Researching and Developing Positions on Current Social Studies Issues**

Students research, select, and present a position on a current social studies issue by proposing and revising research questions, and locating and selecting information from multiple and varied sources.

Descriptor **A1c, e, f**: Locate and access relevant information that includes multiple perspectives from varied sources, distinguish between primary and secondary sources, and evaluate and verify the credibility of the information found in print and non-print sources.

Rules for Classroom Debate

This format is modeled for classroom use from traditional Lincoln-Douglas Debate.

DEBATE ROLES:

1. **Opening Statement Presenter:** One student gathers the main arguments into an introductory statement. Does not give specific information, merely says, “this is true because of reasons A, B, and C.”
2. **Topic Presenters:** Three, (or more), students present the main arguments for the team. Each presenter gives specific details that prove his/her argument.
3. **Rebuttal Presenters:** Two, (or more), students answer the arguments of the other team. These students must take notes as the other team presents, and then respond to the opposing arguments by using specific information to disprove each one.
4. **Closing Statement Presenter:** One student presents the closing argument of the team. Briefly summarizes each argument and finishes with a powerful closing remark.
5. **Moderator:** The teacher should control the speaking order, speaking time, and overall score of the debate. Use the scoring rubric below to calculate the winner.

STRUCTURE:

- **Opening Statements:** 3 minutes each
- **Topic Presentations:** 3 minutes each
- **Rebuttal Conference:** 3 minutes
- **Rebuttal Presentations:** 2 minutes each
- **Closing Statements:** 4 minutes each

RULES:

No put-downs.

Teams lose one point for interruptions

Teams lose one point for whispering while someone is presenting.

ALTERNATIVE DEBATE METHODS: *These methods provide a venue for every student to participate in the debate. They are less formal, and more interactive.*

- **Three-Card Debate Strategy:** The teacher provides each student with two or three cards, on which is written either “comment” or “question.” When a student wants to make a point to add to the debate discussion, he/she raises a card to either make or add to an argument, or question the argument of the opposing side. Students turn in their cards once they have been used, and the cards cannot be redistributed until all they have been turned in. With this strategy, the more vocal students will reserve their cards for their strongest arguments, and the quieter students will be encouraged to participate.
- **Participation Countdown Debate Strategy:** In this strategy, students raise their hand each time they have something to say— question or comment. The second time a student adds to the debate, he/she raises a hand with one finger pointing, (indicating that he/she has already spoken once), and the third time, he/she raises a hand with two fingers pointing, (indicating that he/she has already spoken twice). After a student has contributed three times to the debate, he/she is out and cannot add anything else to the discussion.
- **Tag-Team Debate Strategy:** In this debate, each team has a set amount of time in which to present their main arguments, (for example, five minutes). When it’s time for a team to state its points, one speaker takes the floor. The speaker can occupy the debate for

no more than 30 seconds, before he/she needs to tag another team member to stand and pick-up the argument from where the first person left off. Team members who are eager to be tagged can put out their hands to let the speaker know. This way, someone who is unprepared won't be put on the spot. No member of a team can be tagged twice before all members have been tagged once.

DEBATE GRADING RUBRIC:

Debate Criteria:	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points
Organization and Clarity: Viewpoints and responses are clear and well ordered.	Unclear	Clear in few points	Clear in most points	Entirely clear
Effective use of Argument or Rebuttal: Strength of pro/con argument or rebuttal.	No relevant arguments	Few relevant arguments	Mostly relevant	Entirely relevant
Use of Examples and Facts: Examples and facts are given to support arguments or rebuttals.	No facts	Few facts	Many Facts	Entirely factual
Presentation Style: Tone of voice, use of gestures, and level of enthusiasm engage the audience.	Not convincing	Some style features used	Most style features used	Entirely convincing
TOTAL SCORE:				

EASTERN ARGUS.

PORTLAND, TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 1820

MAINE.

The question on our admission into the Union was not decided at the last dates. . . *it is probable Maine will be excluded from the union.* This result is, to say the least, exceedingly surprising. We certainly not only hoped but expected different things. How has it happened where nearly every member of both houses is in favor of the admission of Maine, that we are ultimately excluded?

THE COMPROMISE

which appears to have been adjusted with great deliberation on the part of the Senate, we had hoped would be that middle ground that would conciliate the majority in both houses. . . .

People are now beginning to understand the merits of the question that has been discussed with so much heat and acrimony. The zealots for restriction¹ commenced the controversy with inflammatory harangues on morality, religion and humanity; with painting in the most sombre colors the horrors and mischiefs of slavery. But the time is fast going by when these homilies can influence the feelings or opinions of the public in relation to the proposed restriction. The question is not whether men, who are now free shall be reduced to slavery, but whether those, who are now slaves shall forever be confined within the original limits of the United States, "*the good old thirteen,*" or whether part of them may be sent over the Mississippi. What has religion or humanity to do with the question whether one hundred or one thousand slaves shall live on the right or left bank of that river? . . . In either case, they will be subject to the will and caprice of a master, and their labor and strength must be equally expended to gratify the avarice or taste, to minister to the passions or pride of another. The condition of this unhappy part of the human race is indeed melancholy, but it will certainly be made no better by prohibiting their masters from transporting over the Mississippi. . . .

Should the restriction prevail by a small majority, and it cannot prevail but by a small majority, it will be a perpetual subject of discord and contention between the northern and southern states. The country will be divided into two great parties, limited by lines of latitude & longitude, & possibly before any great length of time, into two great nations, animated with implacable and never ending hostility. We would not even utter the name of so great a calamity as a dissolution of the union rashly. . . . I confess when I look forward to such a state of things, the thought chills me with horror. I am one of those that always viewed the harmony of the union, and not the British fleet, as our natural bulwark, and of course believe that some sacrifices may be justly made, when the occasion calls for them to preserve so great a blessing. Our earnest hope is that in the present contest in Congress neither party will triumph, but that a successful number of moderate men will be found in both houses to bring the question to a decision, with which the Hotspurs of neither party will be pleased, but in which the moderate and judicious on both, who love the peace and prosperity of their country more than the pitiful triumph of a pitiful faction may rest satisfied.

¹the zealots for restriction: people who want Missouri to enter the union only as a free state