



Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Let's Debate: Good Decisions or Not?

An activity of the Maria Hertogh series

The Maria Hertogh saga took place over seventy years ago. Yet, there are still big questions about whether life could have been kinder to Maria. Let's explore how her life might have been better — looking back, we can sometimes see more clearly what happened. Then, when we share our views and respond to other people's views, we become better at seeing something from different standpoints.

Have a debate in your class to help you think through one of the complex issues that affected Maria's life.

THE MOTION

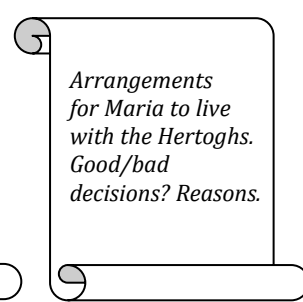
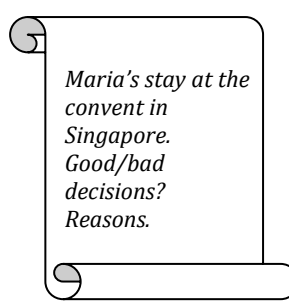
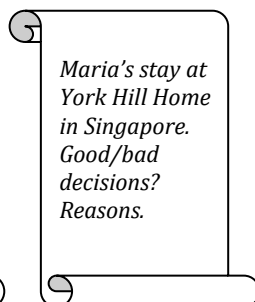
That good decisions were made for Maria leaving her home in Malaya and settling into her new life in the Netherlands.

1. Split your class into two camps: "**The Proposition**" (for the motion) and "**The Opposition**" (against the motion). You can either draw lots or sign up for the camp you prefer on a first-come-first-served basis.

WITHIN YOUR CAMP

2. Select four debaters and a chairperson to represent your side. The rest of the side provides support for them.
3. Gather information about the motion. Reflect on the differing views out there.
4. Brainstorm by conducting a **Round Robin**. Agree on four good questions relating to the debate's motion. Write each on a separate sheet of mahjong/poster paper.

Sample Round Robin Questions



Then, divide your camp members into four groups.

Round 1: Group A works on Question 1, Group B on Question 2, Group C works on Question 3, and so on. Each group writes down key points in response to its Round 1 question. Then, at the end of five minutes, each group passes its Round 1 sheet to the group on its right to start Round 2.

Round 2: Group B gets Question 1, Group C gets Question 2, Group D gets Question 3, and so on.

By the fourth round, every group should have had a chance to respond to all four questions. You can add points or comment on earlier groups' points.

5. Develop your camp's debating points using the Round Robin input. Prepare supporting data. Avoid writing full speeches — phrases are better as they allow your debaters to be more spontaneous and responsive to their opponents.

AS A WHOLE CLASS

6. Select a chairperson to conduct the debate. The chairperson can double up as the timekeeper.
7. Conduct the debate. The team for the motion starts and ends the debate. Each speaker gets five minutes.
8. First speakers present their teams' respective positions. Last speakers wrap up. You may also wish to have a few minutes after the third speakers for the audience (or, floor) to speak.
9. Take a quick poll on who was the best speaker from each side and which team was more convincing. Whichever side wins, the whole class benefits from having participated in this exercise!
10. Open the discussion to the whole class so that all of you can share more thoughts. Take a few minutes to affirm every debater for the effort to defend his or her team's stances.

Round Robins are a great way to get everyone's input, building on each other's points as you go along. Conducting debates makes us better at seeing the pros and cons of every decision.