



Historical Association
The voice for history

The Great Debate 2018/2019

Rules and guidance



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Great Debate 2018/19

Based on the idea of a Balloon Debate, this is a competition aimed at students aged 16-19 years old nationwide. The rules are as follows:

The Rules:

1. The competition is open to students who will be in the sixth form (Years 12 and 13) in the academic year September 2018 to July 2019. However if you have a Year 11 student who is keen and capable we are happy to accept their entry.
2. The entrants will have to create a 5-minute speech on the set question: What was the greatest failure of the Age of Revolutions?
3. Entrants may be penalised if their speech exceeds the 5 minute limit.
4. Entrants' speeches should establish the following points:
 - Why they consider their chosen topic to count as a failure, and
 - Why it is the *greatest* failure by those same criteria when compared to any similar events and outcomes within the Age of Revolutions.



What constitutes a 'greatest failure' has deliberately been left open to the student's personal interpretation. It might be considered in terms of failure of a revolutionary faction to meet its goals; defeat or overturning of a revolution that had every means to succeed; failure in achieving change in the long term; or succeeding to revolutionise one area only to drastically fail in another. The key thing will be for their argument to be convincing.



They should take care to consider the significance of the event within the Age of Revolutions as a whole, and to keep a focus on the question. For example, an entrant who chooses to argue that the French Revolution was a failure due to not fulfilling the goals of 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité' must consider other failed revolutions within the period, and argue for why this particular failure is the 'greatest'.

Conversely, an entrant arguing that the development of mass production during the Industrial Revolution was a failure as it resulted in many lost livelihoods, the de-skilling of many trades and exploitation of workers would need to consider this negative social impact of the Industrial Revolution in relation to some of what could be said to be the more beneficial outcomes of mass production, and argue why the negative outweighs the positive. They should also consider other developments in this period, perhaps comparing them in terms of scale or lasting impact; alternatively, they might try to find similar technological advances in history which did *not* result in this negative outcome to a comparable extent.

5. Judges may ask one or two post-presentation questions.
6. The judges will assess the speeches on the following criteria:
 - a) The quality of the entrant's argument – its structure, clarity and power to persuade.
 - b) The entrant's use of historical argument and detail.
 - c) The links between their chosen topic and its wider historical context.
 - d) The way in which the speech is presented.
7. The judges' decision will be final.