



THE GREAT DEBATE

2020

RULES AND GUIDANCE



OUR PAST
YOUR PERSPECTIVE



Based on the idea of a Balloon Debate, this is a competition aimed at students aged 16-19 years old nationwide.

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 2019 to July 2020. 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: Should we judge historical figures by the morals of today?
3. Entrants may be penalised if their speech exceeds the 5 minute limit.
4. Entrants are encouraged to consider all periods of history when deciding their argument, and to pick a subject matter of personal interest to them. How they wish to tackle the question is ultimately their choice.

They might consider the question in focus on one particular historical figure or social issue (Should Columbus Day still be celebrated in America? Does Anne Boleyn deserve a posthumous pardon?); or discuss multiple figures in light of later social change (Can we ever overlook the harm caused by imperialism? What impact might #MeToo have on historical study?); or they might decide a different approach that better suits what they wish to talk about.

The key thing will be for their argument to be convincing. They should take care to keep a focus on the question, and address counterarguments or 'bigger picture' considerations that might be raised.

For example, an entrant who chooses to argue that Winston Churchill should not have a statue in Parliament Square due to his arguable role in the Bengal Famine may also consider the fate of statues of all such figures, which may be respected by some but vilified by others; should they all be removed? Does the location matter, or who set it up? Who decides such things? In what way could such a judgment and decision set a bad context for the future, and could this ever be avoided?

5. Judges may ask one or two post-presentation questions.
6. The judges' decision will be final.

Judging guidelines:

The judges will assess students' 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.

Content:

1. If there is any inaccuracy regarding content, then this should be penalised. It is important that there should be historical accuracy. The students will have time to do their research and write their speeches.
2. The main point is that there is an argument. The key thing is whether the judges are convinced by the argument.

Timing:

The rules have stipulated that the speech should be for 5 minutes, therefore the judges might note when the 5 minutes are up and judge the speech from there.

The students will have time to practise and being aware of the time limit should be able to reduce what they say to the 5 minute barrier. Anything beyond the 5 minutes should be ignored.