

Preface

Discovering the World Through Debate is a guide to educational debate. It is intended to help you understand and acquire the skills you'll need as a debater and to give you information on and an insight into four of the world's most popular styles. Every effort has been made to ensure that each chapter builds on those that go before, so you'll find it most useful if you follow the chapters and tackle the exercises in order. However, poring over every page and memorizing every word would still not replace the experience of witnessing a debate live or, preferably, of participating in one.

Debate is not a body of knowledge that can be absorbed, regurgitated, and then set aside. It is a practical methodology that should affect how you interact with other people and their ideas. If you win every debate you ever speak in and end up with a cabinet-full of trophies and awards but don't use the critical skills of the debater in the outside world, then you will have somewhat missed the point. There are many ways to debate, but they all have the same goal: to gain and demonstrate the capacity to examine and evaluate ideas in a critical and objective manner, whether those ideas are other people's or our own.

The book is divided into four sections, each one of which will provide insight into how to participate in a debate and do so successfully. Part 1 begins with two chapters on what a debater does and how she might measure success. Later chapters then examine some of the debater's foundational skills: how to deliver a speech, approach evidence, listen and think critically about what others have said, as well as how to build logically consistent arguments and rebut the arguments put forward by others.

By the end of this section, you should have a clear understanding that learning how to find evidence, appreciate what others are saying, and think about the issues under discussion are as valuable as the rhetorical skills that you will acquire through debating. Indeed, they're fundamentally intertwined, reinforcing one another, and, as each one improves, the others improve also.

The purpose of Part 1 is to provide a basis for what comes next, and that is reflected in the exercises. In this section, only the exercises in Chapter 2 ask you to actually speak in a debate. The rest require you to practice certain key skills without the additional pressures