

foreign press covers it. You'll be surprised by the extent to which something your country considers a major issue is completely ignored elsewhere, particularly where there's a language barrier—and, when an issue is noticed, it's often seen as just one small aspect of a broader topic. Consequently, it's worth getting into the habit of using more than one news source.

MAGAZINES, BLOGS, AND JOURNALS

News magazines and popular journals can offer an understanding of why events happened or why they are significant. These sources provide context for events and give an insight into their likely repercussions. This is the area on which the debater really needs to focus. Even for debate subjects that are not obviously “newsy”—school uniforms, capital punishment, the legalization of narcotics—a surprising amount of material is available.

Articles in publications such as these are structured in much the same way as a speech and will start with an overview of the subject and the author's or authors' viewpoint. It's worth reading these introductions before deciding whether the rest of the article will be of use to you. In the light of both of these elements—the balance between currency and evaluation, and the structure of the writing, the kinds of publications discussed above are often favored sources for debaters.

BOOKS AND LECTURES

Books and lectures can provide a nuanced understanding of a topic and a detailed analysis of events. As well as offering an understanding of cause and effect, they can also offer insight into the motivations of those involved in shaping events. Be wary of falling into the “I read it in a book so it must be true” trap; authors make mistakes and hold biases, so treating a text as absolute is very risky. Instead, use the indexes and subheadings of books to find what several authors say on the same subject; this will give you an idea of what most parties accept as true and what is a matter of interpretation or in dispute.

THINK TANKS, NGOS, INTERNATIONAL BODIES, ACADEMIC CENTERS, AND GOVERNMENT REPORTS

Academic and quasi-academic organizations are excellent sources of high-quality evidence. Not only do their websites offer rich seams of data, they also provide professional analysis of an issue. Which organizations are trustworthy and which are not is the subject of dispute, but, generally speaking, they can be judged by association. If they have links