

34. PICK-UP REBUTTAL

GOAL:

To encourage students to think about strategic choices and means of comparing arguments in the final rebuttal.

METHOD:

- Present students with the following scenario, or a similar one of the instructor's own invention: You are the third speaker for the negative team, and you are late for the debate. You arrive to find that you are the next speaker. The resolution is "Resolved: television reduces the quality of modern life." Your team opposes this resolution. Affirmative has argued that television's violent content (especially news broadcasts) encourages violence in society. Your team responded that not all television content is violent, and that news is a vital part of a democratic society. Your team challenged the affirmative team to present evidence that people mimic the news. Affirmative did not respond to the point of news being vital, but presented an example of a person copying a violent act seen on the news. The affirmative team also argued—most emphatically to the judges in their last speech—that television lacks serious educational content. Your team did not address this issue. They also argued that politicians use television to lie to the public. They presented no examples, but simply said it happens all the time. Your team responded by saying that television also allows the media to uncover the lies, but similarly presented no examples. Your team argued that modern means "in the present generation." Affirmative argued that it means "in the present century." Affirmative presented statistics showing that crime and violence have risen at the same time that television has become more prevalent in society. Your team countered that it did not follow that crime and violence increased because of television. Your team's first argument was that television informs society; current events programming, weather, public service announcements were cited. Affirmative responded that the information was usually violent, incorrect, or purposefully misleading. Your team's second argument was that entertainment is a vital social need, and that television entertains. This was supported with a quotation from a psychologist saying that television helps people relax and reduces stress. Affirmative responded that they didn't find television entertaining—they said they preferred books.
- Ask and discuss the following questions:
 - What are the issues, how many are there?
 - Which issues are important, which unimportant?
 - How should we address an issue that was dropped?
 - How should we handle an issue that the other side might be winning?
 - How do we tell the judge whose reasoning, evidence, or examples are better?
 - How do we put all of this together into a reason to vote for one side or the other?