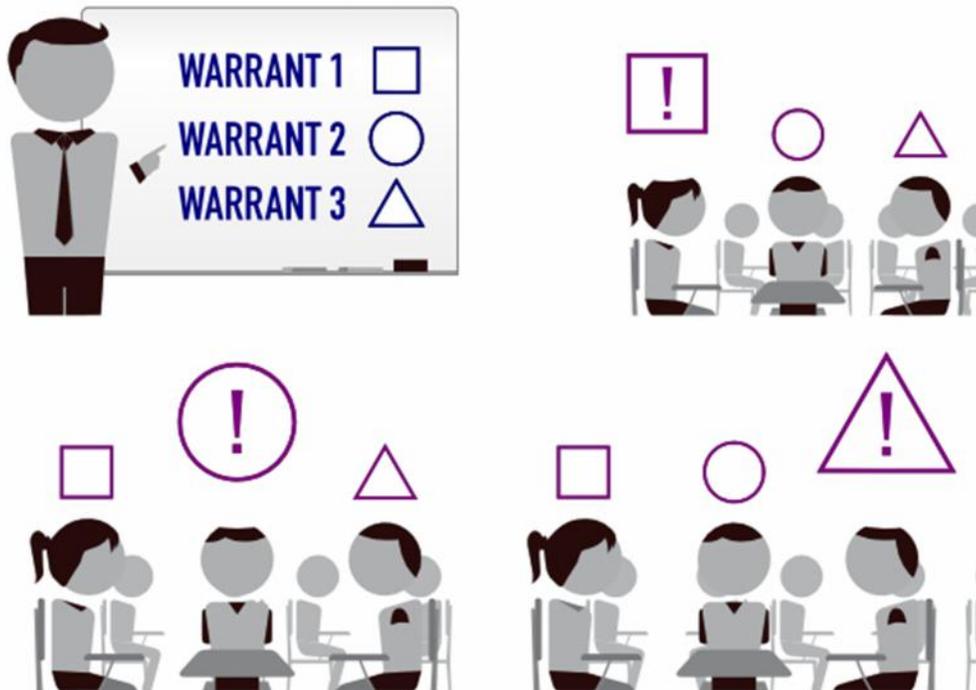


Choosing the Best Warrant Mini Debates



This activity divides the class into groups of 3 and assigns each student within the group a different warrant for accepting the same overarching claim. (Though students are assigned to defend a particular warrant, they should also know the warrants their competitors have been assigned so they can make direct comparisons.) The teacher gives students a minute or two of preparation time to gather their thoughts. Then, all students defending the first warrant stand and deliver a 30 second speech to the other two group members about why their warrant is better than the others. This process repeats with the second and third warrant. If the teacher chooses, each student may speak again to rebut their opponents' arguments. To win the mini debate, students will be forced to compare the different justifications for the original claim and generate their own reasons for why their warrant is better than the others.

This activity can be used as a follow-up to ones like Identifying Evidence in a Text or Breaking Down a Text (below). Students take a claim and three warrants supporting it—either provided by the teacher, taken from a previous activity, or developed on their own—and they argue in small groups about which warrant most strongly supports the claim. So, after reading a passage from the history textbook, students might debate about three different reasons for thinking that dropping the atomic bomb in World War II was unjustified.

The Choosing the Best Warrant Writing Exercise works well as a follow-up to this activity. More advanced classes might also initiate discussions of what exactly makes some warrants stronger than others, whether different types of warrants work better for different claims or audiences, or where speakers and authors place their strongest and weakest warrants in complex, sustained arguments.



Step	Teacher Move	Student Move
1	Make sure each student has a completed graphic organizer showing an author or speaker's claim and three warrants she uses to support that claim.	
2	Divide students into groups of three and instruct them to...	Assign each person in your group one of the three warrants on your graphic organizer.
3	Optionally, set a timer for 30 seconds of "prep time" to ensure that every student has a chance to process the task at hand before beginning it.	If prep time is given, prepare to argue that your assigned warrant is the strongest of the three. [Each small group should follow the next steps at the same time.]
4	Set a timer for 30 seconds. While it runs, monitor the class to make sure each group is on task.	First speaker: stand and give a speech proving that your assigned warrant supports the given claim more effectively than do the other two. Others: listen and prepare your arguments.
5	Set a timer for 30 seconds. While it runs, monitor the class to make sure each group is on task.	Second speaker: stand and give a speech proving that your assigned warrant supports the given claim more effectively than do the other two. Others: listen and, if necessary, prepare your arguments.
6	Set a timer for 30 seconds. While it runs, monitor the class to make sure each group is on task.	Third speaker: stand and give a speech proving that your assigned warrant supports the given claim more effectively than do the other two. Others: listen and, if necessary, prepare your arguments.
7	Optionally, repeat steps 3–6 to give students a chance to...	Respond to your opponents' arguments and elaborate on your own in further 30-second speeches if required.
8	Optionally, lead a whole-class discussion in which students...	Explain which warrant "won" in your group and why. Talk about specific arguments rather than about the people who made them.