

Part III: Policy Debate

Allow 90-120 minutes

You will now step into one of the most contentious debates of United States Indian Policy: that of President Grant's "Peace Policy." On one side, there was Grant's desire to pursue peace with Indian tribes and create reservations that would attempt to "civilize" the Indians. On the other, many American settlers deemed efforts to assimilate Native Americans into Anglo-American culture as fruitless, and sought to pursue continued conflict with the Indian tribes. Both sides neglected to take Native American viewpoints on the issue into account.

The class will be divided into five groups. One will advocate the position of the United States government: that of the Peace Policy. The second group will advocate the position of most American settlers in Arizona territory, who wanted to pursue continued hostilities with the Native Americans. The third group will represent the interests of an Indian tribe. The fourth group will take on the role of "witnesses" which will be called upon by the groups in the debate to provide "expert" testimony in support of their arguments. Finally, there will be a group of students who will act as the jury and evaluate each side in the debate, finally advocating for a side which has won, based on who made the better argument.

Each group, beginning with the US Government, will have 3-5 minutes to present their argument in an opening statement.

The groups may then call upon a witness to support their claims. Potential witnesses include Captain Royal Whitman, General Oliver O. Howard, General George Crook, Jesus Maria Elias, William Oury, Captain Chiquito, and others. The witnesses will have roughly 3-5 minutes to make a statement for one of the sides in the debate.

Finally, after these first two rounds, the groups, beginning with the Native Americans, should prepare a brief (1-3 minute) rebuttal statement.

Each side is encouraged to research their topic in the book and in the primary documents collected on the website. It is important to ground your argument in solid facts found in the documents rather than conjecture.

For instructors:

You may evaluate the debate based on each group's argument: its clarity, organization, use of facts, presentation and overall effectiveness. Furthermore, for the students in the "jury," a debate rubric will be useful in order to facilitate evaluation of the debate. Categories for evaluation (on a scale of 1-5) include:

Clarity/Overall Organization: How well is the viewpoint organized and articulated?

Opening Statement: How well is the statement presented and argued? How is evidence used?

Use of Witness: How well is the witness utilized and presented?

Rebuttal Statement: How well is the statement presented and argued? How effectively are the other sides responded to?