

COMMON CORE WRITING: RESEARCH PROJECT AND CLASSROOM DEBATE

This activity addresses the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, specifically the writing standards for grades 6–8 (1, 7, 8, and 9) and the speaking and listening standards for grade 7 (1, 2, 3, and 4).

Many of the medical experiments described in *For the Good of Mankind? The Shameful History of Human Medical Experimentation* were controversial at the time. Others didn't provoke outrage until many years later. In many cases, debate over the ethics of these experiments is still raging.

Choose several of the cases mentioned in the book to be the subjects of classroom debates. Divide students into groups of four to six and assign a case to each group. Split each group into two teams, with one team (half the group's students) arguing on behalf of the person or people who did the experiment. The other team will represent the subjects of the experiment.

Allow class time for students to conduct research about their cases. In addition to taking notes on the information in the book, they should consult at least two other sources—other books or reliable Internet resources—to learn more.

To help students focus their research and define their positions, provide copies of the “Whose Medicine Is It, Anyway?” handout on the next page. Each team should prepare the following (also listed on the handout):

- an opening statement that clearly states their stance (Should the experiment have been carried out? Did its benefits outweigh its costs?)
- at least three points, including evidence, in support of their argument
- a rebuttal against arguments they anticipate from their opponents
- a closing statement meant to persuade the audience to agree with their position

Next, let each group conduct a debate in front of the rest of the class. Give students a time limit for speaking, such as one minute each for opening and closing statements, two minutes for each point, and two minutes for each rebuttal. Allow fellow students to vote on the winner for each debate, based on the persuasiveness of a team's argument. Evaluate students on thoroughness of research, clarity in articulating ideas, and group participation.

For the Good of Mankind? The Shameful History of Human Medical Experimentation

By Vicki Oransky Wittenstein

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WHOSE MEDICINE IS IT ANYWAY?

CLASSROOM DEBATE

Many of the medical experiments described in *For the Good of Mankind? The Shameful History of Human Medical Experimentation* were controversial at the time. Others didn't provoke outrage until many years later. In many cases, debate over the ethics of these experiments is still raging.

It's time for you to take a side. You don't have to really believe the argument you make for this assignment, but you do have to try to convince your classmates. Use what you learn about your assigned experiment to defend the people your team represents. Here are some questions to consider as you research and prepare for your debate.

- What was the goal of the experiment?
- Who benefited from the experiment?
- Who were the subjects of the experiment? Why did the experimenters choose those people? Did the subjects' race, class, age, or ability influence the decision? Were the people in charge of the experiment taking advantage of them or trying to help them?
- How were the subjects of the experiment affected by it? Did the people in charge of the experiment expect this to happen?
- If the experiment had not been done, would the field of medicine be worse off? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Did the subjects ever receive compensation or an apology? If not, why not?

When you've finished your research, work with the rest of your team to create your presentation. You'll need to prepare the following:

- an opening statement that clearly states your stance (For example, state your answer to a key question, such as "Should the experiment have been carried out?" or "Did its benefits outweigh its costs?")
- at least three points, including evidence, in support of your argument
- a rebuttal against arguments you expect your opponents to make
- a closing statement meant to persuade the audience to agree with your position

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