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This is a lesson I did several years ago and it went very well. Students still tell me today nearly 4 years later how powerful this lesson was and how much they learned from it.

Title: Presidential Debate
Grade: 8th
Subject: Government and Politics
Strategy: Debate
Time Frame: 2-4 days

Background: I had a group of 8th graders that were very opinionated about the Clinton/Trump election. There were side arguments in the halls, during class time, friendships were becoming strained, etc. I teach 6, 7 and 8th grade and I love debates, we do them often and in many varieties (large, small, in-depth, partner debates, whole group, etc.)

What are they going to do?: I allowed students to group into their own groups those for Clinton and those for Trump. Students had specific guidelines that they needed to research their candidate in-depth and prepare counterarguments to support their claims. After spending a full class period and homework time doing this research students came to class prepared and ready to debate for their candidate. This is when I threw a kink in the chain. I told them they would be switching sides, they would argue for the opposite candidate that they preferred. I gave students additional time to research into the opposite opponent and then we began the debate.

My role: During the research, I helped students find and verify reliable sources. During the debate, I was the facilitator. I asked questions to keep the debate moving and monitored rules for the debate. (Some rules: each side could speak once then the other side would rebut and then the first side would counter. After this algorithm the opposite side was permitted to rebut once more, bring a new topic in or have me ask them a specific question to respond to).

By the end of this lesson, students were able to

- effectively research their candidates based on reliable source material
- create counterarguments to support their claims
- argue in support of their opponent