



Silent Debate – the Arctic in the future.

Notes for teachers

Silent Debate is an effective way of engaging the whole class, as all have to participate. It is a great activity to use at the end of a theme to reinforce key messages and informally assess children's understanding of the theme as a whole. This activity can be adapted by getting your more able students to create the questions or statements.

How it works

Place between five and ten pieces of large paper with a statement on around the room, depending on how much time you have and the ability of your pupils.

Pupils are allowed to go wherever they wish and write a sentence or paragraph either for or against the statement. The first time you do this it may be useful to outline the language you would encourage your pupils to use and give them sentence starters and phrases to build or refute an argument.

Pupils should visit each one or as many statements as they can in the time available and debate in writing, and in silence, whether it should be included or not in a report about what impact of climate change might have on life in the Arctic by 2050. Encourage pupils to not just write yes/no, but also to give reasons to support their viewpoint and respond to comments made by their peers.

Once they have worked at two or three different stations remind pupils to refute the arguments that other pupils have already written.

After the allocated time has lapsed, allow a few extra minutes for pupils to revisit the sheets that they contributed to earlier in the activity to see if the subsequent contributions support or challenge their initial thoughts and whether they influence their thinking moving forward.

Feedback into a whole class discussion.

Instructions for pupils

Teachers can use the following to put up around the room to remind pupils of the 'rules' of the silent debate.

- Move around the room, carefully reading the statements.
- Write your own opinion.
- If you agree or disagree with someone else's opinion, put a tick or a cross and write why or add further comments.
- Make links between different views by drawing a line between them.
- Try and visit as many stations as you can.

Statements

The statements below relate to the impact that climate change might have on life in the Arctic by 2050. Use between five and ten of the statements for your silent debate, depending on how much time you have and the ability of your pupils.

1. In less than 40 years, sea ice has already decreased by half. If climate change continues at the same rate, the Arctic Ocean will be ice-free by 2040.
2. Indigenous communities might lose their traditions as shrinking ice packs and more severe weather has made travel and hunting across the ice increasingly difficult and dangerous.
3. Seals are a key source of food and skin for waterproof clothes for indigenous communities but they are moving further and further north as the sea ice vanishes.
4. New species – such as cormorants, sharks and sea turtles – are arriving in the Arctic Ocean, chasing warming waters and the food that comes with it.
5. The majority of animals, such as polar bears, seals and seabirds, who live on or near the ice face losing their homes and food sources, and they may disappear forever.
6. Melting glaciers will cause sea levels to rise, having a devastating effect on coastal habitats.
7. New opportunities for mining and large-scale fishing will be good for the future of the Arctic.
8. Forests are likely to replace some of the ice and Arctic tundra.
9. A warmer Arctic will impact the climate across the whole world.
10. Our actions in the UK affect what the Arctic will be like in 2050.