

TOMATO DEBATE

Focus Lesson: Forming and Supporting an Opinion Through Discussion and Writing

Materials:

Fruit and Vegetable definitions
Paper for writing
Various non-fiction books about fruits and vegetables

Time:

20 minutes for the debate
1-2 hours depending on writing process

*Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.1

Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.5

With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.7

Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations)

Thinking Skill: Forming Opinions

Objective:

Students will learn what it means to debate and how to do that in a kind and respectful fashion
Students will form opinions based on facts
Students will write opinion pieces using information that they read and hear
Students will gain practice in interacting with peers

Connection:

We've learned that cheese pizza is made of a crust, sauce, and cheese. Is there any fruit in a cheese pizza? Well believe it or not, some people actually debate whether a tomato is a fruit or a vegetable.

Does everyone know what "debate" means?

Explicit Instruction:

Discuss the meaning of the word debate (a friendly argument where people pick sides and argue for what they believe is right)

- sometimes we practice debating in school for fun. It's good to be able to stand up for what you believe in and be able to make a strong argument.

Today some of us will be debating whether a tomato is a fruit or a vegetable. You'll have a chance to read through the evidence for both sides and then pick which you believe to be true. I'll need a couple of people to volunteer to participate in a debate in front of the class and then everyone will be writing something that tries to convince me why what you're saying is right.

So here's your question: is a tomato a fruit or a vegetable.

Guided Practice:

Direct students to read the information you've gathered concerning the definitions of fruits and vegetables. Give students a few minutes to consider the facts and develop their own opinions.

[They can also use previous readings and use any pertinent books on fruits and vegetables.

See also attached list of definitions.]

Invite two students (one from each side of the argument) to come to the front of the classroom and stage a debate for the rest of the class. Suggest the audience listen closely to hear some good arguments that they could use in their own writing.

Mediate a debate between students. Encourage them to treat each other kindly and respectfully disagree with each other. If worthwhile, select another two students to come up and stage a debate. They will likely have very similar arguments so don't spend too much time rotating through people.

Students are now to take what they're read and heard and complete some opinion writing in which they express whether they believe a tomato is a fruit or a vegetable. Writing must include 3 reasons to support the opinion, as well as an opening and closing sentence.

Independent Practice:

Turn students loose to complete their writing. Follow any writing procedures you already follow in the classroom (i.e. rough draft, peer editing, final copy, etc.)

Reflection – Group Share:

Take a poll of how many students believe tomatoes are fruits and how many think they're vegetables.

Teacher Note:

Fruit Definitions:

Dictionary.com

- any product of plant growth useful to humans or animals.
- the edible part of a plant developed from a flower

Britannica for Kids

- the parts of the plant that contain the seeds

Answers.com

- part of a plant that has developed from a flower and contains seeds

Livestrong.com

- fleshy, [edible](#) ovary of a seed plant, or the flowering part of a plant that will flower again

Vegetable Definitions:

Dictionary.com

- any plant whose fruit, seeds, roots, tubers, bulbs, stems, leaves, or flower parts are used as food

Answers.com

- part of a plant that has developed from a flower and contains seeds

Diffen.com

- the edible parts of plants

Livestrong.com

- the parts of plants that are cultivated for eating, such as roots (celery), stems (hearts of palm), leaves (spinach) and buds (broccoli).