

TOMATO DEBATE

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

Materials:

Fruit and Vegetable definitions
Cards half labelled "Fruit" and half labelled "Vegetable"
Paper for writing
Various non-fiction books about fruits and vegetables

Time:

2 Days (30-40 minutes each)
-Writing Process
-Debate

*Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.5

With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 4 here.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Thinking Skill: Forming Opinions, Persuasive Writing

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:

As a class, review the parts of an opinion essay. Discuss how to really persuade your reader and let students know that half of the class will be writing about one side of an argument, and the other half will write about the other side.

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

Students will try to persuade whether a tomato is a fruit or a vegetable. They can use previous readings and use any pertinent books on fruits and vegetables (consider creating a "Healthy Living" basket). See also attached list of definitions.

Students will pick cards that have labels saying "fruit" or "vegetable" from a hat and begin writing.

Guided Practice:

Once students are finished writing, partner them up with someone from the opposite side.

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.

Allow students to debate the tomato issue.

After about 5-10 minutes reconvene the class and share some of the arguments they heard and what made those arguments strong and persuasive.

Independent Practice:

See above in Explicit Instruction. 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).