

Judging Big Questions

Resolved: On balance, societies benefit from religious belief and practice.

Prior to hearing these debates, I side with the _____ (Aff/Neg).

Make sure to recognize your personal bias and remove it from the evaluation of the round.

Your Role

There may be space for you to enter tournament information (date, location) and students' identifying codes at the top of the ballot. This can be done before the debate begins.

During the debate, a judge should keep track of the arguments being made. Organized notes of the important points you thought were raised during the round will help you complete your ballot and may help you make a decision about who was better at debating.

Students are allowed and encouraged to time themselves, but you may also choose to time various parts of the debate, particularly the Question Segments and each student's preparation time.

After the debate is over, complete the ballot by writing: 1) The best case you could make for why the affirmative wins the debate you heard and any comments. 2) The best case you could make for why the negative won the debate you heard and any comments. 3) The reason the debater you chose to win did the better debating. Mark which side you picked to win!

After the tournament, complete the brief, online post-tournament survey by navigating to:
www.speechanddebate.org/big-questions-survey

The Debate

Each round features two sides: one representing the affirmative and one representing the negative. Each side gives four speeches, and there are three periods of questions. Students will attempt to prove or disprove the statement: "Resolved: On balance, societies benefit from religious belief and practice."

Affirmative Constructive – 5 minutes
Negative Constructive – 5 minutes
Question Segment – 3 minutes

Affirmative Rebuttal – 4 minutes
Negative Rebuttal – 4 minutes
Question Segment – 3 minutes

Affirmative Consolidation – 3 minutes
Negative Consolidation – 3 minutes

Affirmative Rationale – 3 minutes
Negative Rationale – 3 minutes

Each side has 3 minutes of preparation time during the debate, to be used in increments of their choice. For example, a student may elect to prepare for 1 minute for their rebuttal speech, 1 minute for their consolidation speech, and 1 minute for their final speech. Students may also prepare "for free" during each other's preparation time.

Topic Primer

Our resolution asks debaters to analyze the effects of all religions throughout various societies and weigh the positives and negatives to come to a *general* conclusion. Debaters will discuss both the material and immaterial effects of ideology and practice.

Affirmative debaters will defend that generally, societies do benefit from religious belief and practice. The affirmative side may discuss how religious belief can result in tangible benefits to communities by citing the correlation between religion and charitable giving and harm reduction in areas like addiction or personal counseling. They may discuss less tangible benefits like the sense of community and purpose religion can create. Affirmatives may also describe cultural and historical contributions such as artwork and philosophy that have resulted from various religions.

Alternatively, negative debaters may argue that some religious groups oppose different forms of scientific research that would greatly benefit society because it may conflict with their religious teachings. Impediments to medical science, for example, may be something that costs future lives. The negative side may discuss potential exclusionary aspects of some religions that tend to impact already-marginalized groups. Even if religious texts or ideals do not necessarily lead to discrimination or anti-scientific sentiment, negatives may argue that the glorification of religious leaders can create institutions that may be ripe for abuse.

Debaters will likely bring up several examples from throughout history to illustrate their arguments, and you will be left with well-reasoned arguments from both sides about why religious belief and practice are both beneficial and harmful. At the end of the debate, judges will have to determine, *on balance*, which side best defended their conclusion.

Enter these debates with an open mind and enjoy Big Questions!