

Judging Big Questions

Resolved: Belief in the supernatural is incompatible with belief in science.

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:
<https://www.speechanddebate.org/bqsurvey/>

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: Belief in the supernatural is incompatible with belief in science."

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
Question Segment – 3 minutes

Affirmative Rationale – 2 minutes
Negative Rationale – 2 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 requires debaters to grapple with three things: religion, the unexplained, and belief in rationality and logic – can these co-exist, or are we doomed to exist in a paradox?

Affirmative debaters will defend that many great scientists and those of logical minds have believed in both a higher power and in science. Science also is about searching for the unexplained. It seeks to fill in the blanks and provide further clarity around the natural world. The unknown drives us to further develop our techniques and seek the truth. One can say that everything is unexplained and thus supernatural until it is discovered and explained – they could argue that belief in the supernatural advances scientific discovery.

Alternatively, negative debaters may state that scientific discovery and explanation relies on empirical evidence and repeatable testing. The supernatural quite often lacks such evidence and can be difficult to quantify or test. They may also argue that embracing the supernatural can provide individuals with a holistic understanding of the human experience. Many religious and spiritual traditions incorporate metaphor, symbolism, and allegory to convey deeper truths – these beliefs can be complementary rather than contradictory.

One item that might come up in this debate is the question of "god." The question of whether God or a higher power is considered "supernatural" depends on the specific definition and understanding of the term being used. Different people and philosophical traditions may interpret and define the concept differently.

This debate comes down to the core question of whether all things can be measured, charted, observed, and quantified or whether there are some things that just exist without explanation. This topic offers a unique chance for students to discover what it means to "discover." Enter these debates with an open mind and enjoy Big Questions!