**MS Big Questions - Lesson #1**

**Unit Name**: Big Questions - Middle School - Exploring This Year’s Topic

**Topic**: Introduction to the Resolution - Day 1 (5 day unit)

Resolved: Humans are fundamentally different from other animals.

**Essential Questions**:

1. Question 1 - Why do views change over time and how do these changes affect society?
2. Question 2 - How do purpose and audience shape the content in a persuasive text?
3. Question 3 - How does research enhance the ability to persuade?

**Objectives:**

1. Objective 1 - Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
2. Objective 2 - Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual role as needed.
3. Objective 3 - Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.

4. Objective 4 - Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.

**Instructional Materials Needed**:

1. Blank Venn Diagram - attached.

2. Topic Analysis provided by NSDA - see link below.

3. One file folder for each group.

**References** *(if applicable)*:

<https://www.speechanddebate.org/big-questions-2017-2018-ms-topic-analysis/>

**Overview of Lesson** *(general outline of what will be covered)*:

This lesson serves as an introduction to the resolution used in this year’s MS Big Questions Debate - Resolved: Humans are fundamentally different from other animals. Students will work in small groups to explore the questions being asked by the resolution before beginning their debate research and construction of cases.

**Detailed Step-by-Step Lesson** *(be sure to include time allocation information)*:

1. 10 minutes - Group the students in small groups of 3-5 students. If necessary, review classroom guidelines for participating in a small group and go over roles. One possible tool to use is the acronym GROUP (there are many variations of this acronym):

G - get along with others

R - respect other ideas

O - on task

U - understand your role in the group - ex. facilitator, recorder, summarizer, presenter timekeeper

P - participate actively

2. Distribute the Venn Diagrams to each student.

3. 5 minutes - Provide time for each student to silently reflect on differences and similarities of humans and other animals by completing the Venn Diagram. List characteristics of humans on the left, animals on the right and traits they share in the middle of the diagram. Traits on either side should be unique to either humans or animals, but not both. Students should use their own knowledge and experiences at this point. Have students share a few items from their diagrams.

4. 20 minutes - Have students read the Topic Analysis provided by the NSDA. They may add things to their Venn Diagrams as they read.

5. As students read they should annotate the article - highlighting main ideas and writing notes in the margin to indicate items they have questions about or want to discuss further.

6. 10 minutes - When all the students in the small group have completed the reading they should answer the following questions:

a. What are three important similarities between humans and other animals?

b. What are three important differences?

c. What is the distinction between “kind” and “degree” in the article?

d. How do the fields of theology and science differ in their approach this topic?

e. What do we need to keep in mind as we research?

7. 10 minutes - Have students share the answers to these questions with the larger group. Then ask them to reflect on Essential Question #1 for tomorrow: Why views on the similarities and differences between humans and animals have changed over time and how this affects society.

8. 5 minutes - Collect each group’s work in a labeled folder that can be redistributed the next day.

**Informal Assessment Strategies**:

1. Observe student completion of Venn Diagram.

2. Monitor groups to make sure everyone is performing her/his role and participating.

**Formal Assessment Strategies**:

1. Group folders and evaluations will be used for a formal assessment at end of unit.

**Reflection/Review for Future**:

1. Successful completion of Lesson #1 will be necessary for Lesson #2.

2. Look through the group folders after class to see if any redirection is necessary at the beginning of the next lesson.