Deforestation Debate

Over the next few weeks, we will prepare for a debate over the question:

**Should Brazil's government preserve the Amazon Rainforest?**

During the debate, you will be assigned to one of two main sides. The **Affirmative** side answers the question above with a "yes." The **Negative** side answers the question with a "no."

Within your side, you will be assigned to role-play as a specific **stakeholder** in the Amazon. A stakeholder is a person whose life would be directly affected by the outcome of the debate. As a stakeholder, you will be required to present a speech representing your point of view. Your goal will be to persuade the judge of the debate to agree with your team's point of view.

**Affirmative Team**
- Conservationists
- Climate Scientists
- Medical Researchers
- Indigenous People

**Negative Team**
- Logging Industry
- Mining Industry
- Farmers
- Cattle Ranchers

Stakeholder groups will be partner groups of two or three students and will work together on most parts of the debate. The entire Affirmative and Negative teams will come together for check-ins throughout the process and help each other improve speeches and arguments.
### Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday, 11/26</th>
<th>Introduce Project, Groups, Topic Overview Initial Brainstorm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 11/27</td>
<td>Three main points, Set up Noodletools Project, Research Questions, Introduce Libguide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 11/28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, 11/29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 11/30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 12/3</td>
<td>Research Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 12/4</td>
<td>Team check-in, share research, confirm 3 main points, speech format directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 12/5</td>
<td>Speech writing/Debate preparation days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, 12/6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, 12/7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 12/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 12/11</td>
<td>Debate Day 1: Constructive Speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 12/12</td>
<td>Rebuttal Prep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, 12/13</td>
<td>Debate Day 2: Rebuttals and Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DEBATE FORMAT:

**DAY 1:**
- Stakeholder Constructive Speeches (each stakeholder speech is followed by 2 minutes of cross-examination from the opposing team).
  - Conservationists (3 minutes)
  - Logging Industry (3 minutes)
  - Climate Scientists (3 minutes)
  - Mining Industry (3 minutes)
  - Medical Researchers (3 minutes)
  - Cattle Ranchers (3 minutes)
  - Indigenous People (3 minutes)
  - Farmers (3 minutes)

**DAY 2:**
- Rebuttals (no cross-examination)
  - Farmers (2 minutes)
  - Indigenous People (2 minutes)
  - Cattle Ranchers (2 minutes)
  - Medical Researchers (2 minutes)
  - Mining Industry (2 minutes)
  - Climate Scientists (2 minutes)
  - Logging Industry (2 minutes)
  - Conservationists (2 minutes)

- Open Floor Debate (up to 10 minutes, Mr. Sharp moderates)

- Last Word (Decide in advance which 1-2 people can summarize 3 reasons why judge should vote affirmative or negative)
Topic Overview
Deforestation in the Amazon

The Amazon Rainforest is one of the most important physical features on the earth’s surface. It is the world's largest tropical rainforest and home to greater biodiversity than any ecosystem on the planet. While it is an irreplaceable natural habitat for thousands of species of plants and animals, it also holds most of Brazil's most valuable timber and mineral resources, and it has an enormous amount of land that can be used to support Brazil's agriculture and ranching industries. A conflict has developed over the last 50 years or so over how Brazil can use the resources of the rainforest to support its economy without destroying the life that the rainforest supports.

The most significant users of the resources of the Amazon Rainforest are people working in the logging, mining, farming, and ranching industries. Below is an overview of how each group uses the Amazon to help people make a living.

Logging Industry (Timber or Forestry Industry)
Companies in the timber industry use the rainforest in the most basic way - they cut down trees to get wood. This wood is primarily used to create lumber for building materials or paper products (sometimes the companies that make paper from trees are called the "paper and pulp industry"). There are many rare and expensive types of hardwood trees only found in the Amazon that are very popular worldwide as flooring or furniture materials for buildings or homes. In order to get to the timber most efficiently, companies bring in bulldozers to clear the land entirely, taking the valuable trees that they need and leaving the brush behind to be burned. Sometimes they attempt to replant the areas that they remove, but regrowth takes many years and occurs much more slowly than the rate of deforestation. Some companies are using more selective or environmentally friendly practices to manage the forest, but many are sticking to the traditional "clear-cut" or "slash and burn" methods. Complicating matters more, some companies or individual people cut trees illegally, finding remote areas where they do not have a permit but there is little chance of getting caught.

Mining Industry
Mining companies enter the rainforest to find valuable minerals below the earth’s surface, including gold, platinum, copper, manganese, iron, tin, and bauxite (used to make aluminum). After clearing away the plant life on the surface, these companies dig into the ground to extract the minerals. These metals are used to make products people use every day around the world that are necessary for modern life, from electronic devices to the cables that bring electricity to homes and businesses. Getting to the minerals under the earth’s surface destroys the landscape and leaves an open pit where the forest once was. Despite industry advances in technology, mining tends to be one of the most environmentally destructive human activities. However, the mining industry is a huge part of Brazil's economic success, as Brazil is a world leader in exporting (selling to other countries) many different minerals.
Farming
Large commercial farming businesses called agribusinesses use land in the Amazon to grow crops to provide food for Brazil and the world. Although Brazil produces many agricultural products, the land in the Amazon is primarily used to grow soybeans, which are one of the world's most important food crops. Brazil is one of the world's leading producers of soybeans. The agribusinesses need increasingly more farmland to provide more food for a growing population in Brazil and around the world, so they have found the land they need by converting the forest to farms. They do this by removing trees and treating the soils with enough chemical fertilizers to allow crops to grow. While there is seemingly endless land to convert to farms in this way, the soil quality is low and can therefore only last a few growing seasons. Every new acre of land converted to farmland is one less acre of rainforest.

Ranching
Raising cattle is one of the main activities that causes deforestation in the Amazon. There is a high demand for beef in Brazil and neighboring countries, but there is little natural pastureland in huge portions of South America. Several decades ago, some ranchers had the idea of clearing rainforest to create new pastures to raise beef cattle as a way to use the land to make a living. While the ranchers are taking some steps to limit their impact, they continually need to spread into new land, which causes more forest to be destroyed. Like farmers, ranchers provide food for South Americans and other places in the world. Ranching also boosts Brazil's economy, as Brazil is one of the top beef producing countries in the world.

The voice of opposition
Many people have criticized these economic activities because, while understanding people's need to make a living, they believe deforestation causes more harm than good. Conservation groups, climate change researchers, medical researchers, and indigenous people have all raised their own points against allowing the forest to be destroyed. Here is an overview of their positions.

Conservation groups
Groups like the World Wildlife Fund and Conservation International have as their mission to protect the world’s plant and animal life. In their view, the diversity of life is the most valuable resource the world has, and destroying that diversity for the sake of making money is misguided and wrong. Deforestation destroys habitats and kills plants and animals, sometimes ridding the world of entire species. Changes in biodiversity can upset the balance in ecosystems by disrupting the food chain, causing irreversible damage to the natural order of life. Protecting the natural beauty of the earth and the habitats of living creatures are the top priorities of these conservationists. These groups want to save the earth and preserve life. They believe there is only one planet, and people alive today owe an obligation to future generations to leave them a planet that is livable and full of diverse living creatures.

Climate Scientists
Scientists who study how the earth’s climate is changing argue that human economic activities are causing global warming. "Greenhouse gases" have molecules that trap heat from the sun, much like the windows of a greenhouse. Scientists argue that
adding too many of these gases to the air increases the earth's temperature and changes long-term weather patterns (climate) around the globe. Humans produce greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide, through such activities as burning coal to provide electric power or driving gasoline-powered machines. The more greenhouse gases are emitted into the air, the warmer that air becomes, since these gases trap more heat from the sun than air without the gases does. What does this have to do with the Amazon? The Amazon Rainforest serves as the world’s largest “sink” for greenhouse gases. The trees in the Amazon soak up much of the carbon dioxide produced by human activities and convert it into oxygen. Because of this, the Amazon is frequently called "The Lungs of the Earth." Additionally, cutting down trees releases carbon dioxide into the air and further accelerates the greenhouse effect. Preserving the forest, then, is believed to be one of the main ways that human beings can offset the negative impact of other activities, slowing the greenhouse effect and the increase in the earth’s temperature. Many researchers believe that human-caused climate change will destroy much of the earth’s life: the icecaps will melt, causing the water table and sea levels to rise, resulting in massive floods that will drown entire cities. Other areas will see increasing wildfires, droughts, and reduced food production in agriculture according to these scientists.

**Medical Researchers**

Medical research groups are interested in the rainforest for the valuable medicines that have yet to be discovered there. Many plants in the forest have medicinal qualities, and many of these plants have been discovered and converted into new medicines that help save people’s lives and relieve their illnesses. Traditional healers in indigenous communities that are also under threat of extinction (see next section below) hold the precious knowledge of these medicines, and as their way of life is threatened, so is the existence of this knowledge. These researchers fear that destroying just one acre of forest may rid the world of the next medical breakthrough, such as a cure for cancer, ebola, or AIDS. Making medicines is also a big business: many of the companies earning top profits around the world are pharmaceutical (medicine) companies that do this kind of research to develop new drugs.

**Indigenous People**

The ancestors of the Native Americans that live in the Amazon Rainforest were the first people to live in this part of the world. These groups and their ancestors have lived in the forest for thousands of years without causing major disruption to the environment or interfering with other cultures. Now the drive to develop the rainforest has threatened the way of life of many of these people. Their land, which is a crucial part of their identity as a people, is being taken from them. Their traditional methods of farming, hunting, and harvesting the resources of the forest, which have been working for thousands of years without harming the ecosystem, are being replaced by high-tech, high-impact methods of modern corporations. Forced away from their homes as these companies move in to take over their land and resources, many Native Americans have abandoned their traditional culture and moved into Brazilian cities seeking whatever jobs may be available as their only means of survival. They argue that they should have a right to exist as a people on the land that their ancestors have lived on for thousands of years. Brazil's government has protected indigenous people with special rights in their
constitution, but the reality of businesses needing to expand to new land to keep making money has clashed with these rights.

**Clash of Human Rights**

As you may have noticed, there are several human rights elements to this debate that come in conflict with each other. Remembering the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there are several specific rights that could be relevant for your team’s position. Some of the rights that may come up are as follows:

- The right to life
- Equal protection under the law
- Freedom to move
- Right to a safe place to live
- Right to work and earn a fair wage
- Right to food and shelter
- Right to a fair and free world
- No one can take away your human rights

**Brazil’s Government Policies**

In the spring of 2012, Brazil adopted a new "Forest Code," or set of laws regulating how the forest can be used. It was a compromise between conservationists and the agriculture industry that required some limits on new land that can be deforested but still protects farmers' and ranchers' ability to use the land. Environmentalists argue that the Forest Code gives too little protection to the Amazon, and that disrupting the climate by cutting down more forest will actually destroy all agriculture in the long run. The industries depending on the forest understand the need to protect the environment but also feel they need to be free to use the land to give people an opportunity to make a living and lift themselves out of poverty. The laws protecting the forest are also difficult to monitor and enforce, and it drives people to cut trees illegally - which is a huge problem faced by many living in remote areas in Brazil. In the years since 2012, Brazil has seen an increase in deforestation rates, showing that the new code is allowing more deforestation to occur. This brings us to the main question for our debate: Should Brazil act to preserve the rainforest more strongly, or should Brazil allow its resources to be used?

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**


INITIAL BRAINSTORM: Start thinking in your assigned role. Think of as many ideas as possible that may help you write your speech in the space below:

Three Main Points (What 3 reasons could you develop into full paragraphs in your speech to support your main position?):

1.

2.

3.

Note: It is OK to change your mind about these before you write your speech.
RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT: Deforestation Debate

Convert each of your Main Points for your Stakeholder Speech into an open-ended question below. These will be your research questions to focus your research efforts.

1.

2.

3.

RESEARCH PROCESS:

- Set up and share your NoodleTools project.

- Scan the entire Libguide to see which articles may be helpful to read. Select 3 articles to read in depth. (More if time allows.)

- Create a citation for the article before you read it in depth to take notes.

- Take notes with a pencil on the provided note-taking pages for research.

- Goal = LEARNING as much as you can about the topic! (Not necessarily ANSWERING your research questions - though that is great to do.)

- Your approach to the task of research and productivity in the research process will be assessed on the rubric at the end of the project.
SPEECH FORMAT: Stakeholder Constructive Speech

1. Introduction
2. 3 Main Points
3. Conclusion

Introduction:
- Opener: Startling statement, Fact/statistic, or Rhetorical Question
- Thesis (example: "Brazil's government should...")
- Preview of Main Points

Three Main Points - For each one...
- State and explain the main point
- Provide examples of evidence supporting the main point (Cite sources specifically. Example: "According to National Geographic in October 2016, ...")
- Review/Preview as a transition (on first two main points only - example: "Now that I have told you about ...,")

Conclusion
- Restate thesis and main points
- Closing with reminder that the judge should vote for your team (affirmative or negative)

SPEECH FORMAT: Rebuttal

After day 1 of the debate, you will have one day to plan your rebuttal based on arguments you recorded in the debate.

There are two main functions of the rebuttal:

1. Make arguments against opposing teams’ arguments:
   a. State the specific point the other team made
   b. Give one or two arguments against this point supported by your evidence/research or logical reasoning.

2. Review or emphasize the most persuasive arguments your team made and explain why they are preferable to the other team’s position.
   a. Explain what the “2 worlds” would look like- Affirmative vs. Negative – and describe why yours is a better world
   b. Get to the core values of both sides and explain why your side’s values should be preferred
**SPEECH FORMAT: Last Word**

*Wait until after Day 1 to prepare this*

1. **Introduction**
2. **Review of 3 Strongest Reasons**
3. **Closing**

**Introduction**
- Clear statement of your team's position (example: "We, the affirmative team, strongly believe that Brazil's government should...")
- Reminder of the four stakeholder groups and their main positions from your team

**Review of 3 Strongest Reasons**
- 3 general, overarching reasons why the judge should agree with your team's point of view

**Closing**
- Call to action - convince judge voting for your side is the best choice