

Using Debate Skills to Engage Students in Astronomy

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To increase the excitement for the astronomy unit and to expose the subject in all of its weird glory, students debate each other in a bracket style tournament defending their idea of the coolest object in the universe. At the start of May, causing the name of this event to be called May Madness, students choose an object or concept in the universe to research and construct an opening argument on how it is the coolest object in the universe. Every student in the eighth grade selects an object and proceeds to debate its attributes in a head-to-head competition leading to a class winner. The class winners then debate in front of the grade with celebrity guest judges. In the four minute debate, two students defend, cross examine, and construct a rebuttal for their chosen object.