

Structured Academy Controversy: The Girl Group Era



A Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) is similar to a debate, in which students investigate two sides of a particular issue or question. However, in a debate, each side's goal is to make the more convincing argument and thus be declared the winner. In a SAC, the goal is for students to explore the issue at hand in depth, carefully consider both sides of the argument, and see if they can find any common ground or consensus between the two positions.

The procedure is simple. Students will work in groups of four. Each group is divided into a "Side A" and a "Side B," consisting of two students each. In the first part of the activity, each side will review its position and find evidence to support it in the lesson materials. After doing this, Side A will argue its position as Side B listens. Then, Side B will summarize the arguments Side A has made. Next, the roles are reversed: Side B will argue its position, and when they have finished, Side A will summarize the arguments Side B has made. In this way, all students become familiar with the main arguments on both sides.

At this point in the activity, students in each group will give up their sides and work together to see if they can identify any common ground between the different arguments. In other words, they will ask whether it is possible that neither side is 100 percent correct, but that the answer lies somewhere in the middle. They will work together to formulate a statement that they believe best answers the question, ideally drawing from arguments made on both sides.

The specific steps in the process are summarized below.

Question: Were the Girl Groups of the 1960s voices of female empowerment or a reflection of traditional female roles?

Positions	
Side A The Girl Groups represented voices of female empowerment and reflected changing views of women that would emerge during the Women’s Rights movement of the 1960s and 70s	Side B The Girl Groups reflected traditional female roles that revolved around men, marriage, and family

Step 1: Partners prepare their arguments. Using the chart below, they should gather evidence from the lesson materials to support their positions.

Step 2: Side A presents its main arguments, being sure to use specific examples from the lesson materials, as Side B listens.

Step 3: Side B summarizes the arguments Side A has just made.

Step 4: Side B presents its main arguments, being sure to use specific examples from the lesson materials, as Side A listens.

Step 5: Side A summarizes the arguments Side B has just made.

Step 6: Students abandon the roles they have assumed up to this point, and discuss the arguments made by each side, asking: What are the strongest arguments? What are the weakest?

Step 7: Students should see if they can identify any middle ground between the two arguments, working together to try to create a consensus statement that addresses the main arguments made by each side.

Students may wish to use the following questions to help guide their discussion:

- Why were these groups called “Girl Groups”? Does calling the performers “girls” (as opposed to women) suggest a certain attitude toward them?
- What themes seem to dominate the hit songs performed by these groups? Are they different from the themes that dominated Pop hits sung by men in the late 1950s and early 1960s?
- Why might it have been important for young girls (and boys) to see young women becoming successful Pop artists? For female singers to have the opportunity to express their own perspectives through song?



Position A The Girl Groups represented voices of female empowerment	Position B The Girl Groups reflected traditional female roles in society
Evidence 1	Evidence 1
Evidence 2	Evidence 2
Evidence 3	Evidence 3
Evidence 4	Evidence 4
Evidence 5	Evidence 5
Consensus:	