Lesson Plan Ideas for Nuclear Proliferation
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1. Setting a Framework for Discussion
   Objective: Students will consider the pros and cons of nuclear proliferation by asking questions and finding answers.

   a. Have students in small groups generate a list of questions they would like to answer about nuclear proliferation.
      i. Examples include what are the costs involved?
      ii. What advantages does a country gain by having nuclear weapons?
      iii. What are the potential risks involved?
      iv. What would be the environmental impact of a nuclear explosion?
      v. What are the benefits of having a nuclear energy program?
      vi. What treaties dealing with nuclear proliferation have been signed?
         Main points?
      vii. How are nuclear programs monitored?

   b. Have groups go up to the board one at a time and write one of their questions.
   c. Assign each group to research the answer to one of the questions. (Google Doc)
   d. Have each group present their findings.

2. Nuclear Proliferation Today
   Objective: Students will understand the differing viewpoints regarding the topic of nuclear proliferation today.

   Organization of the Activity:

   a. Assign students to serve as advisers, government officials (President and National Security Council), NGO activists against nuclear weapons (see http://gsinstitute.org/ngo-links for a list of NGOs against nuclear proliferation), activists who support nuclear weapons, and representatives from other countries such as the countries that have nuclear weapons as well as Iran, South Africa, Germany, Japan, South Korea,…

   b. Have students research their respective positions and write debate points that support their positions.
c. Conduct a role-playing discussion among the students. You can organize the discussion in rounds.
   i. Round 1: Conduct a formal discussion where each person gets a chance to present his/her position by delivering a formal statement (1-2 minutes each).
   ii. Round 2: Give students a chance to respond to points made by their classmates in more of a debate format.
   iii. Round 3: Students complete reflection questions. (Which argument in favor of keeping nuclear weapons was the most persuasive? Which argument against nuclear weapons was most persuasive? If you were President of the United States would you work to reduce nuclear weapons, maintain the current level, or increase nuclear weapons?)

3. Dealing with Nuclear Proliferation Crises

   a. For homework, assign each student (or use pairs) to research a specific country’s position on nuclear energy and nuclear weapons. To help organize student’s research, you could give them a worksheet with the information/topics to research including
      i. Does the country have nuclear weapons? If yes, how many weapons do they have? How much money have they spent on them?
      ii. Have they ever begun a program to develop nuclear weapons? If yes, why did they end the program?
      iii. Does the country have a nuclear energy program? If yes, to what extent. If not, why not?
      iv. Has the country signed any nuclear treaties? If yes, which ones?
      v. Write a brief statement about your country’s position on nuclear energy and nuclear weapons.

   b. In class, arrange the desks in a circle or semi-circle.

   c. Have each country stand up to deliver the statement. Each student should keep track of the positions of each country. (You could have a sheet for them to fill in with country names provided.)

   d. Present the first crisis. A reputable news source states that there is plausible evidence that North Korea has developed the technology to create a long-range missile and is threatening to strike the United States.

   e. Give students a few minutes to do research and respond to the crisis from their country’s point of view.

   f. Conduct a debate on how to respond to this crisis.
g. After most countries have spoken, give students time to meet in like-minded groups to write up a proposal for a solution.

h. Have students present the proposals, discuss/debate them.

i. Vote on each proposal.

Crisis #2: U.S. intelligence reports that ISIS secretly has been working with North Korea to develop nuclear weapons.

a. Students may continue to represent their assigned country. Students should write out responses to this crisis and offer solutions. You might want to challenge the group to negotiate one common solution.

Crisis #3: India-Pakistan

a. For homework, have students research the relationship between India and Pakistan. Have them respond to the following question: DO you think the fact that India and Pakistan both have nuclear weapons has had a positive or negative impact on their relationship? Explain.

b. In class, have students share their perspectives in small groups.

c. Introduce the crisis: The United States has threatened to cut off economic relations and introduce sanctions against India and Pakistan if they refuse to dismantle their respective nuclear weapons programs.

d. Assign each group to represent India or Pakistan. Assign one group to represent the United States.

e. Ask each group to respond to the crisis. What will their country do? The U.S. group should prepare arguments to justify this threat.

f. Have each group present their response. Ask the U.S group to respond in return.

4. Straight Debate: Pro-Con Nuclear Proliferation

   Objective: Students will understand the opposing viewpoints on nuclear weapons today and determine their own viewpoint at the end of the debate.

   There are many ways to stage this basic debate.

   a. Split the class in half and have each side develop arguments and present the points in timed speeches.

   b. Speed-Debating:

      1. Divide the class into partner pairs.

      2. Each partner takes a side of the issue (pro/con) and gets ten minutes to research points
3. 1-2 minutes each to present points
4. 1 minute rebuttal for each partner
5. Select one partner pair to redo their debate in front of the class.
6. Conduct a discussion on the points presented.

c. Point-Counter-Point
   1. The Pro side presents one argument
   2. The Con side refutes that argument
   3. The Con side presents one argument
   4. The Pro side refutes that argument
   5. Continue until all points are exhausted.

d. After the debate, have students write a reflection explaining their position on the issue based on the arguments presented.

5. Nuclear Proliferation and Real Policymaking
Create a “You Decide” handout that includes each issue and provides room for note-taking and a space for the student to write down their decision after both sides of the issue have been presented.

Before dividing students into groups to prepare their arguments, conduct a discussion about setting criteria for decision-making as a government. What criteria should government follow to make important political decisions?
For each issue, students will be asked to make a decision based on the arguments presented. They should keep in mind that they should make the decision from the perspective of the government of the country being discussed for the Iran, U.S., Russia, and Israel issues. For the India-Pakistan and North Korea issues, students should decide from their own personal perspective.
Possible Issues
   ✓ Iran Nuclear Deal Debate: Should the U.S. keep the deal or repeal it?
   ✓ India-Pakistan: Nuclear Weapons good or bad for peace and security?
   ✓ North Korea: Is North Korea a real threat to international security?
   ✓ U.S.: Should the U.S. reduce its nuclear stockpile?
   ✓ Russia: Should Russia feel threatened by U.S. missiles in Europe?
   ✓ Israel: Should Israel be allowed to have nuclear weapons?

Break students into groups. Each group tackles one of the case studies and presents their arguments (1/2 pro, ½ con). Other students ask questions and then discuss and decide what to do. Students share their decisions and reasoning.
6. Additional Debate Topics:


1. The United States should have worked harder to persuade the Soviets to accept international control of nuclear weapons after World War II.

2. As an example to others the U.S. should voluntarily cease testing and developing of nuclear weapons and turn over its nuclear stockpile to the United Nations.

3. The United States, due to its political culture, developed institutions, and record of responsibility has the right to forcibly disarm those countries that it does not feel are responsible enough to have nuclear weapons.

4. Did nuclear weapons serve to prolong the Cold War or hasten its end?


Duck and Cover Educational Film 1950s: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xLMpd_iZvc