

## Congressional Hearing on Controversial Issue

### Summary

Students analyze a controversial issue from the perspective of a stakeholder, and make a brief presentation to ‘Congress’. They follow up with a written statement of their own position.

**Student Handout:** Congressional Hearing Notes

Example: Mock Congressional Hearing for Stem Cell Research Issues

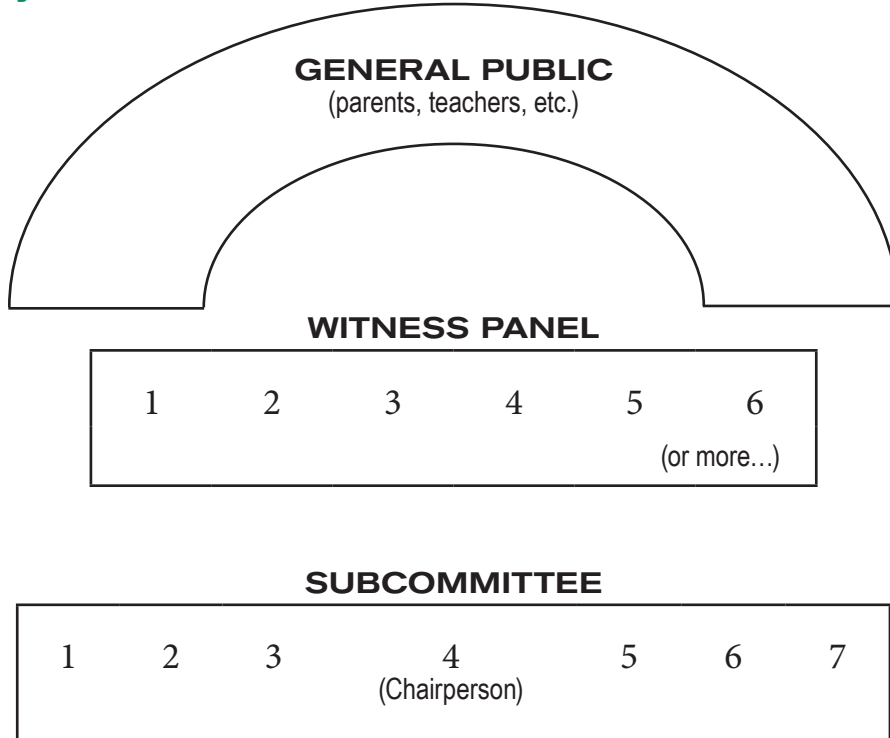
### Teacher Instructions

1. Students collect background information individually
  - Individual students read/research articles related to question (can be assigned as homework).
  - Students complete Critical Reasoning Analysis (see section on Critical Reasoning Analysis using the Elements of Thought) in order to contribute to class discussion.
2. The larger class creates a community Critical Reasoning Analysis sheet
  - Individual students share research findings within larger classroom community.
  - Teacher gathers class input into a community Critical Reasoning Analysis form with special emphasis on Purpose, Question/s, Concepts, and Perspectives.
  - Each participant receives completed copy of community critical reasoning analysis form in order to have a common basis for understanding the inquiry task and concepts at hand.
3. Students identify and research stakeholder positions
  - Students identify and choose (or are assigned) stakeholder positions to research further.
  - Individual students prepare a two-minute testimony focusing on the most salient points relating to their specific stakeholder perspective.
4. Hold Congressional Hearing/Forum. See **Hearing Procedure** for details.
  - Congressional Panel times/facilitates/moderates testimonies and questions participants
  - All participants take notes on all testimonies using form designed for this purpose (Congressional Hearing Notes)
  - Open Forum/Discussion including all participants; moderated by Congressional Panel.
  - Congressional Panel announces decision/recommendations after deliberation.
5. Follow up with individual student perspectives
  - Students complete an ethical Decision-Making Framework.
  - Students write a letter to a congressperson, or alternatively, a reflective essay emphasizing the Critical Reasoning Elements: Inference, Conclusion, and Implications.
  - Debrief and Reflect
6. Share Research Findings/Reflections within greater public context and/or with policymakers (legislators, newspaper editorials, President’s bioethics, etc.)

*(Washington State Social Studies Classroom-based Assessment YOU DECIDE),  
contributed by Paula Fraser, Bellevue School District PRISM program, Bellevue, WA.*

## Hearing Procedure

### Classroom Layout



### Hearing Procedure

Call to order by Subcommittee Chairperson. General introduction, including that of the rest of the subcommittee and of the witness panel (other stakeholders). Include a brief description of the Resolution being debated. State their name and who or what they represent.

Opening Statements made by each member of the witness panel, as directed by the Subcommittee Chairperson. (They should present their testimony in the order in which they are seated.) Time should be limited to 2-3 minutes, with no clarifying questions from others. (They may keep an additional copy to use for questions later, etc.)

After all witnesses have presented, each senator (including the Chairperson) will have three minutes to ask questions (including responses). He/she may ask questions of specific witnesses, or to the entire witness panel. The Chairperson will be the timekeeper to ensure that the senators stay to their allotted time.

Panel is asked by the Subcommittee Chairperson to submit their written testimony at this time. They are thanked for their participation and “dismissed”. The Subcommittee (and other Congress members, if applicable) must then arrive at a simple majority vote on the Resolution.

## Congressional Hearing Notes

### 1. Congressional Panel:

Representative- Moderate-

Representative-Pro-

Representative-Con-

### 2. Political Perspectives:

President-

Senator-Pro-

Senator-Con-

Representative-Pro-

Representative-Con-

### 3. President's Council on Bioethics

Scientist and Ethicist-

Scientist and Ethicist-

### 4. Ethical Perspectives:

Ethics-Pro-

Ethics- Con-

### 5. Religious Perspectives:

Religious/Moderate-

Religious-Pro-

Religious-Con-

## **6. Legal Perspectives:**

Attorney-Pro-

Attorney-Con-

## **7. Societal Perspectives:**

Citizen-Pro-

Citizen-Con-

## **8. Economic/Business Perspectives:**

Biotech CEO-(U.S.)-

Biotech CEO-(Off-shore)-

## **9. Scientific/Biomedical Perspectives:**

National Academy of Science-

Cancer Research Institute-

University Research-

National Institutes of Health-

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## EXAMPLE: Congressional Hearing on Controversial Issue

### Stem Cell Research: Pre-Hearing Critical Reasoning Analysis

#### PURPOSE (related to inquiry on stem cell research)

- To use critical and ethical reasoning to seek and look at all relevant facts and perspectives.
- To advance knowledge and understanding.
- To understand the role of ELSI—the Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications of Scientific Research.
- To learn to make informed decisions as citizens in a democratic society.
- To share our research findings with President Bush, the President’s Council on Bioethics, and others.

#### QUESTION (for Hearing Inquiry)

**To do Stem Cell Research or Not? That is the Question!** (How should the United States proceed with stem cell research, given that this is a democratic society?)

#### PERSPECTIVE/S

(Stakeholders/Interests/ Positions/Values)

1. Congressional Hearing Panel:  
Pro- Con- And/Moderate-
2. Political Perspectives:  
-President-  
-U.S Senate- Pro- Con- And/Moderate-  
-U.S. House of Representatives- Pro- Con- And/Moderate-
3. President’s Council on Bioethics  
Ethicist- Scientist-
4. Ethical Perspectives  
Pro- Con- And/Moderate--
5. Religious Perspectives:  
Pro- Con- And/Moderate--
6. Attorney/ Legal Perspectives:  
Pro- Con- And/Moderate-
7. Societal Perspectives:  
-Cancer Patient-  
-Parkinson Patient-  
-Spinal Cord Patient-  
-Citizen: Pro- Con- And/Moderate-
8. Economic/Biotech Company (Private Funding):  
- Biotech CEO (U.S)- Biotech CEO (Off-shore)
9. Scientific/Medical Research (Public Funding):  
-National Academy of Science-  
-Cancer Research Institute-  
-University Research-  
-National Institute for Health-

#### CONCEPTS

(Related to Stem Cell/Cloning Controversy)

Embryo and Fetus, Therapeutic vs. Reproductive Purposes, Stem Cell Lines, Zygote, Pre-Embryonic vs. Embryonic vs. Adult, Fetal Cord Stem Cells, Blood Stem Cells, Progenitor Cells, Unspecialized Cells, Germ Cells, Somatic Cells, Bone Marrow, Cell Division, Cell Differentiation, Totipotent, Pluripotent, Multipotent, Blastocyst, In Vitro vs. In Vivo, Human Being, Abortion, Public vs. Private Funding, Fertility Clinic, Safety, ELSI (Ethical, Legal, Social Implications): U.S. Bill of Rights, Democratic Principles/Values, Ethical Principles (Justice, Respect, Beneficence, Nonmaleficence, Honesty, Autonomy, and Care)

#### INFORMATION

National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
President’s Council on Bioethics  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Belmont Report  
Nuremberg Code (Re. Human Subjects)  
Human Genome Project (ELSI)

#### ASSUMPTION/S

Citizens in a democratic society within the context of a complex, interdependent world need to understand the science, as well as the ethical, legal, and social implications of biomedical research. Congressional Hearings/Testimony are ways for citizens to participate in democratic decision-making.

#### INFERENCES/CONCLUSIONS

If we go ahead with stem cell/cloning research, we can conclude that there will be costs and benefits.

If we don’t allow stem cell/cloning research, we can conclude that we won’t know the costs and benefits.

#### IMPLICATIONS

If we do/don’t do stem cell/cloning research, then possible long range outcomes are...

If we have a temporary moratorium on doing stem cell/cloning research, then possible outcomes are...