

THE GREAT AMERICAN STORY DEBATE

We have experienced several major candidates for the Great American Story, either through the actual novel, a retelling, or a film adaptation. The Great American Story is the work that *best* addresses what it means to be an American by reflecting the social issues and virtues that Americans hold dear. Imagine that only *one* of these stories is to be taught to students at your high school. Which should be chosen and why?

According to your group, which is the Great American Story and why should it *alone* be taught to students at your school?

- *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller
- *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
- *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

When arguing for one of these stories, take the following criteria into consideration:

- What does the story have to say about the American Dream?
- What did the story attempt to change about America?
- Why was this an important thing to change?
- What life lesson does the story teach?
- Why are these life lessons important for young people to learn?
- Why are the life lessons in your story the most important to learn?
- Why is your story a great story?

Argument (2-3 paragraphs): Your task is to prove that the story you choose is the Great American Story, meaning it is the best story and has the best theme and life lessons to learn. Use any means necessary to persuade your audience this is so (even if you may not completely agree). If you need to refresh yourself on the events of the story by reading a summary, feel free to do so.

Counter Arguments (1-2 paragraphs): Make arguments against all the other stories and explain why they *aren't* the story that should be chosen for this title.

Presentations and Counterarguments: Each group will present their argument for their story. After this is done, other groups will be able to present arguments *against* the presenting group's story. The group who presents the best overall argument (as judged by the teacher) will be the winner!