



Our Brothers' Keeper

Springboard:

Students should read "America IS..." and answer the question.

Objective: The student will analyze information to draw conclusions about America's role in world affairs.

Materials: America IS... (Springboard transparency)
On the Inside (handouts)
Taking the Lead: Specific Points for Discussion (transparency)

Procedure:

- In discussing the Springboard, explain that none of the choices given represents the one correct approach to dealing with world problems. Yet the ways in which the United States, the world's only remaining superpower, pursues these goals is often hotly debated. Go on to explain that this lesson examines some opposing views about America's role in the world.
- Assign roles for the Congressional debate "On the Inside." Have students read their parts as though they are participating in the Foreign Relations Committee meeting and then open the floor to discussion, as indicated. The "Taking the Lead: Specific Points for Discussion" transparency will be helpful as a guide, although students can certainly introduce other points as well.

America IS ...

1. Willing to use force when necessary to deal with serious threats to security.
2. Committed to the spread of democracy in the world.
3. Trying to promote global stability and well-being by encouraging other nations to adopt free-market economies.
4. Working in partnership with other nations and global organizations to address the world's problems.

Adapted from *By the People: America's Role in the World* @ www.pbs.org/newshour/btp/role.html

Which of these descriptions of America's role in the world do you see as MOST important, and why?



ON THE INSIDE: A CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE



CHARACTERS

Foreign Relations Committee Chairperson
Republican Congressmen – RC's #1, #2, #3, #4
Democratic Congressmen – DC's #2, #3, #4

Chairperson – Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. As we all know, a large portion of our nation's budget goes to funding our military and to foreign aid. Before Congress begins work on this year's budget, the Finance Committee has asked that we, the Foreign Relations Committee, clear up some questions about foreign policy. They have asked us to define America's role in the world in order to help decide on spending needs. That makes sense but may be difficult to do since I'm not sure we can agree, but I think it is certainly worth a try. Comments?

RC #1 – You are correct in saying we will likely have problems agreeing since Republicans and Democrats have very different views about foreign affairs. The Republican Party tends to see our country as the protector and defender of the world. The United States as the world's strongest and wealthiest nation and the only superpower has a responsibility to oversee the global economy and, more importantly, global security.

DC#1 – Our parties definitely differ in our views on this subject. Republicans seem to see America as the dominant power and decision-maker in the world, while Democrats tend to view our country as the leader of partnerships with other nations and organizations in solving world problems.

RC #2 – If I might say something, it seems as though we are focusing on the differences between our two parties. Perhaps we should begin by looking at our points of agreement. For example, both Republicans and Democrats see the United States as the world's greatest power.

DC #2 – That's right. Both parties also agree that America has a responsibility to help other countries: to strengthen economies and foster democracy and peace around the globe.

RC #3 – But our parties differ in regard to which countries we choose to help and when. My party tends to focus on countries or regions which most directly impact the United States. Since we cannot help everyone, we believe we should help in situations that most affect the safety and well-being of Americans at home and abroad. The War on Terrorism is a prime example.

DC #3 – The War on Terrorism is an excellent example of our party's differences: Democrats want to act against terrorism with the support of other countries and the United Nations, but Republicans want to act with or without global support.

RC #4 – Yet the UN and other organizations have been unwilling or unable to act, so the U.S. steps in to do what is necessary, as in the case of Saddam Hussein.

DC #4 – In the case of Saddam Hussein America acted with the support of the United Nations in forcing Iraqi troops out of Kuwait in the Persian Gulf War.

RC #1 – But then the UN failed in its efforts to inspect Iraq in the years since that war to insure that Saddam Hussein was not building weapons of mass destruction, so the U.S. stepped in to enforce the UN inspections requirement.

DC #1 – The United States used military force to overthrow Hussein’s government without UN support. Because of that action and others like it, many world nations see America as a bully. We overthrow governments because we can.

RC #2 – That’s ridiculous! We fight against bullies! Think of a schoolyard: kids who are small and weak are forced to tolerate bullies because they can’t do anything about them, but the biggest kid doesn’t have to and shouldn’t tolerate them. The strongest kid should, in fact, fight the bullies on behalf of the weaker ones, which is what we do. The world is a dangerous place and we have to do whatever it takes to make it safer.

RC #3 – It is more dangerous for us not to act than it is for us to do so. We cannot sit by and allow terrible dictators to abuse their people or take over others. We cannot allow terrorist groups to threaten the lives of innocent people. We have the power and money to stop them and the responsibility to do so.

DC #2 – The question, though, is which dictators and terrorists do we stop? There are and always have been other governments that are just as evil as Saddam Hussein’s was, and we haven’t overthrown them. There are many nations plagued by terrorism where we don’t send troops. It leads people in the world to question our reasons for how and why we involve ourselves.

DC #3 – And they often conclude that our decisions are based on what is best for America economically. They think Saddam Hussein was overthrown for Iraqi oil.

RC #4 – Saddam Hussein was ousted from power because he was a danger to his people and the world. He would not obey the United Nations and allow inspectors to search his country for weapons of mass destruction.

DC #4 – We can say whatever we want about our reasoning, but other countries interpret our actions in their own ways. When we anger other people, we make the world more dangerous, not less, providing terrorists with reasons to attack those they view as “evil Americans.”

RC #4 – But we are the “good guys” and most people in the world understand that. We have, again and again, proven that we can and will help countries in need: in the World Wars, during the Cold War, and in countless other situations.

Chairperson – I have noticed that a number of our committee members have not yet expressed their views on this subject. Why don’t we listen to what some of them have to say on the subject?

(Open discussion)

TAKING THE LEAD: Specific Points for Discussion

Pro	Con
<p><i>Unstable regions can be havens for terrorists.</i></p>	<p><i>American actions could increase anti-American sentiment around the world.</i></p>
<p><i>Nations cannot develop socially and economically under constant threats by terrorists or others trying to gain power.</i></p>	<p><i>We make mistakes that backfire on us /others (such as arming and financing Saddam Hussein in Iraq's war with Iran).</i></p>
<p><i>Humanitarian aid cannot get through to unstable and dangerous countries.</i></p>	<p><i>U.S. soldiers are put in harm's way.</i></p>
<p><i>Genocide and other dangers can be avoided or lessened.</i></p>	<p><i>Countries can be destroyed by military actions meant to help them.</i></p>
<p><i>Oppressive dictators must be stopped from harming their own people or taking over others.</i></p>	<p><i>Civilians die or must live with difficulties and dangers brought on by U.S. involvement.</i></p>
<p><i>American involvement could eventually bring a united and more stable world.</i></p>	<p><i>The high cost of military involvement takes needed money from other programs (such as education, social welfare, etc.).</i></p>
<p><i>No other country in the world has the power to play this role.</i></p>	<p><i>Countries have the right to control their own destinies.</i></p>