

Opposing Viewpoints™ Live Radio for Television: Cloning

Teacher's Guidelines for Generating Class Discussion and Critical Thinking



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In this Opposing Viewpoints™ Live Radio for Television video, two speakers debate the issue of whether cloning is ethical. Below are some of the key ideas that are presented and suggestions for analyzing the speakers' arguments.

Analyze the Speakers' Credentials

At the start of the video, the host identifies the speakers' credentials. Students should be asked to pay especially close attention to this information. One of the unusual aspects of this video is that students may find the less qualified person the most convincing. This paradox could be used to examine students' personal views and biases. Generate discussion with the following questions.

Student Questions

1. What are the speakers' credentials? In what ways do you think their background and education affects their viewpoint? Why?
2. If I had just told you about each of the speakers' credentials, and you knew nothing more than this, who would you think would have the most authoritative statement? Did one speaker seem to be more qualified to speak on the issue of cloning than the other? Why or why not? As you watched the video, which speaker seemed more convincing? Why? Was it the person who you thought had the better credentials? If so, what confirmed your opinion? If not, what changed your opinion?

Analyze the Arguments

Debate 1: Can Reproductive and Therapeutic Cloning Remain Separate?

Dr. Larry Goldstein begins by stating that cloning is a medical advance that holds much promise in curing currently incurable diseases, such as Lou Gehrig's disease. He also flatly states that he is not in favor of human cloning. When the host tells Professor Bruno Leone that they will not be discussing human cloning, Leone states that there are two types of cloning, reproductive and therapeutic, but that the two cannot be separated. The essence of his argument, and the debate that follows, hinges on

this point. The following questions could be used in a guided discussion on this topic.

Student Questions

1. Do you think any type of cloning must inevitably lead to human cloning? Why or why not? Do you think Leone's or Goldstein's argument is more convincing?
2. Do you think that certain types of cloning should be considered ethical? If so, which types? If not, why not?

Debate 2: Will Cloning Have Dire Consequences?

Leone uses a common persuasive technique called a "slippery slope." This argument predicts that a particular premise will inevitably lead to another (worse) premise. This technique is sometimes considered deceptive, because the worse premise has not happened and may never happen. In this case, Leone claims that any type of cloning will inevitably lead to human cloning, which could have dire consequences such as enemy cloning of troops to fight the United States. Goldstein argues that Leone's argument is exaggerated, and the idea of cloning an army is rather ridiculous.

Student Questions

1. What scenarios does Leone say cloning would make possible? Do these scenarios seem likely? Why or why not?
2. Do you agree or disagree with Goldstein's rebuttal of Leone's argument. Why or why not?

Debate 3: Can Science Be Moral?

Leone also argues that science has one goal: reaching its scientific objective. He claims that there is no moral aspect to scientific advances, which are controlled purely by scientific methods. He uses the fable of the scorpion and the frog to illustrate his point. Goldstein objects, claiming that society monitors and alters science's goals.

Student Questions

1. Do you agree or disagree with the comparison that Leone draws between the fable and science? Why or why not? Support your answer.
2. Goldstein argues that society has the final word on limiting scientific advances. Do you think society is able to control science? Why or why not?

3. Do you think Leone's example of Albert Einstein and the atom bomb supports his arguments that science must take scientific development to its logical ends, even if it results in something destructive?
4. Can you give examples where scientists have discovered or implemented something that most people considered immoral? What happened in those cases?

Debate 4: Are Religious Arguments Against Cloning Valid?

On this issue, Dr. Goldstein and Leone agree. Neither finds the religious arguments against cloning (that cloning interferes with territory that is exclusively God's) valid. This is a valuable point to make with students, who may not realize that even in the midst of spirited debate, people may find points on which to agree. Students who want to explore the religious argument may be guided by the following questions.

Student Questions

1. Both Leone and Goldstein agree that religious arguments against cloning are not compelling. On what points do they agree?
2. Do you think that any form of medical or technological science may result in altering nature in such a way that it can never be justified? Are there some areas of science that, because they interfere with life and death decisions, should be beyond the realm of human interference?