

# The Great Debaters Movie Response Worksheet Answer Key

**The Great Debaters: Movie Response** 

**Directions:** Answer each question according to your interpretation of the movie. Write in complete sentences. This assignment will be taken for a grade.

1. Explain the contrasting images in the beginning scenes of the movie.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Describe the setting (time & place) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who wrote the poem that Tolson (Denzel Washington) read? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What are the two places that Mr. Lowe says you can read all day? \_\_\_\_\_
5. In debates, what are your weapons? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What does affirmative mean? \_\_\_\_\_ What does the negative mean? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Who are the main characters (3)? Write their names in the movie and describe each one.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How old is Mr. Farmer? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What colleges are the debaters representing? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Summarize the incident with the pig.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. At the homecoming dance, what does Mr. Farmer say about \_\_\_\_\_
12. Would you have followed Mr. Tolson to the secret meeting in the barn? Why? Why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. What is the topic of the first debate against Palpaon College? \_\_\_\_\_
14. What is the result of the first debate? \_\_\_\_\_
15. What kind of support does Ms. Boone use to support her opening argument against Oklahoma City?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**The great debaters movie response worksheet answer key** is a valuable resource for educators and students who wish to delve deeper into the critical themes and lessons presented in the film. "The Great Debaters," directed by Denzel Washington, is based on the true story of the Wiley College debate team, which challenges the norms of the 1930s by competing against Harvard University. This film not only showcases the art of debate but also addresses important social issues such as racial inequality, justice, and the power of education. In this article, we'll explore various aspects of the film, provide insights into the response worksheet, and offer an answer key for educators and students alike.

## Overview of "The Great Debaters"

"The Great Debaters" is set in the 1930s in the segregated South, focusing on the lives of four students who strive to make their voices heard. The film is inspired by the true story of the Wiley College debate team, led by their professor Melvin B. Tolson, played by Denzel Washington. The other main characters include James Farmer Jr., played by Nate Parker; Henry Lowe, portrayed by David Oyelowo; and Samantha Boone, played by Jurnee Smollett. The film highlights their journey as they prepare for and compete in debates against prestigious universities, all while grappling with the harsh

realities of racial discrimination.

## Key Themes in the Film

The film is rich in themes that resonate with contemporary audiences. Some of the critical themes include:

- **Racial Injustice:** The film addresses the struggles against racial discrimination and the fight for civil rights.
- **The Power of Education:** It emphasizes the importance of education as a tool for empowerment and change.
- **Debate as a Form of Resistance:** The act of debating is portrayed as a way to challenge societal norms and advocate for justice.
- **Unity and Teamwork:** The bond among the debate team members demonstrates the power of unity in overcoming obstacles.
- **Individual vs. Collective Identity:** Characters wrestle with their personal aspirations and their roles within the African American community.

## The Importance of a Response Worksheet

A response worksheet for "The Great Debaters" serves multiple purposes in an educational setting. It encourages students to engage critically with the film and reflect on its themes, characters, and historical context. Here are some benefits of using a response worksheet:

- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze the film's messages and how they relate to current societal issues.
- **Enhanced Understanding:** The worksheet prompts discussions that lead to a deeper understanding of the film's context and significance.
- **Personal Reflection:** It allows students to connect their own experiences to the themes presented in the film.
- **Assessment Tool:** Educators can use the responses to gauge students' comprehension and engagement with the film.

## Components of the Worksheet

Typically, a movie response worksheet may include the following components:

1. **Character Analysis:** Questions examining the motivations and development of main characters.
2. **Theme Exploration:** Prompts that encourage students to identify and discuss key themes in the film.
3. **Historical Context:** Questions relating the film's events to the historical backdrop of the 1930s.
4. **Personal Reflection:** Sections that allow students to express their thoughts and feelings about the film.
5. **Debate Techniques:** Analysis of the debate techniques used by the characters and their effectiveness.

## Answer Key for the Response Worksheet

Providing an answer key for the movie response worksheet can help educators guide discussions and ensure that students grasp the essential concepts presented in the film. Below are sample answers for common questions that might appear on such a worksheet.

### Character Analysis

1. Describe the character of Melvin B. Tolson. What are his motivations?  
- Melvin B. Tolson is a passionate and determined professor who seeks to empower his students through education and debate. His motivations stem from his desire to challenge societal injustices and inspire young African Americans to find their voices.
2. How does James Farmer Jr. evolve throughout the film?  
- James Farmer Jr. starts as a timid and unsure student but gradually gains confidence and assertiveness as he participates in debates. His character arc represents the journey from self-doubt to self-advocacy.

### Theme Exploration

1. What role does education play in the film?

- Education is portrayed as a powerful tool for social change and personal empowerment. The characters use their knowledge and skills to confront and challenge systemic racism.

2. How is the theme of racial injustice depicted?

- Racial injustice is depicted through the characters' experiences with discrimination and their determination to fight against it. The debates serve as a platform for addressing these issues.

## Historical Context

1. What historical events align with the film's setting?

- The film is set during the Jim Crow era, a time when racial segregation and discrimination were rampant in the United States. It reflects the struggles faced by African Americans during this period.

2. How does the film reflect the broader civil rights movement?

- While set before the civil rights movement gained momentum, the film foreshadows the fight for equality and justice that would become central to the movement, highlighting the early efforts of African Americans to assert their rights.

## Personal Reflection

1. How did the film impact your understanding of debate?

- The film illustrates that debate is not just about winning; it is a way to communicate ideas, advocate for change, and confront difficult issues. It emphasizes the importance of rhetoric and persuasive skills.

2. What lessons did you learn from the characters' journeys?

- The characters' journeys teach the importance of resilience, the value of education, and the need to stand up for one's beliefs, regardless of the obstacles faced.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the **great debaters movie response worksheet answer key** plays a crucial role in enhancing the educational experience surrounding "The Great Debaters." By engaging with the film through structured questions and reflections, students can gain valuable insights into its themes and historical context. The film serves as not just a tale of debate but also a poignant reminder of the struggles for justice and equality, making it an essential viewing for both students and educators. By utilizing the worksheet and answer key, educators can foster meaningful discussions that resonate with contemporary issues and encourage students to think critically about

their own roles in society.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What themes are explored in 'The Great Debaters' that can be discussed in a response worksheet?**

The film explores themes such as the power of education, social justice, racial inequality, and the importance of free speech, all of which can be analyzed in depth in a response worksheet.

### **How does the character of Melvin B. Tolson contribute to the overall message of the film?**

Melvin B. Tolson serves as a mentor who inspires his students to challenge societal norms and fight for their rights, embodying the film's message about the importance of activism and intellectual courage.

### **What role does the historical context play in shaping the narrative of 'The Great Debaters'?**

The historical context of the 1930s, particularly the civil rights struggles, provides a backdrop that emphasizes the significance of debate as a tool for social change and highlights the challenges faced by African Americans during this era.

### **What impact does the debate competition have on the characters' development throughout the film?**

The debate competition acts as a catalyst for personal growth, pushing characters to confront their fears, articulate their beliefs, and develop a stronger sense of identity and purpose.

### **How can the film's portrayal of debate as a form of empowerment be reflected in a response worksheet?**

The film illustrates debate as a means of empowerment by showcasing how the characters use their voices to advocate for justice, which can be reflected in a response worksheet by prompting students to analyze specific debates and their implications for empowerment.

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