

Three Gorges Dam Debate Student Handout

Background:

It is now 1998, five years before the first lock of the Three Gorges Dam in China will be flooded and at least eight years before the Dam itself is fully operational. You have been called to a mediation session about the Dam by mediator, Qi Ren. Qi Ren notes that proponents and opponents of the dam have been unable to reach any compromise on this project, not because there aren't ways to compromise, but because opponents and proponents talk past each other, fail to listen, and derail the other side's views. Some of them are motivated by self interest, either for survival or for their organization's gain. Also at this meeting are villagers who have been or will be resettled by the dam project, Li Boning (an official and a major proponent of the Dam project), and Dai Qing (a vocal critic of the Dam project). You have been asked to join in this mediation because this is the last opportunity to reach a compromise on the project before it is implemented. You have arrived with the instructions not to talk past the other side, to listen, and to try and find a compromise solution.

Instructions:

- Decide what your group's main arguments are in terms of support or opposition to the Dam.
- Decide on what points your group would be willing to compromise.
- Come with reasons why your group is willing to compromise on these points, or why your group simply cannot compromise.
- Be prepared to present your case to Qi Ren, the mediator, defend your case against or in alliance with other groups, and respond after Qi Ren renders a decision (about whether or not a compromise can be reached, what additional information is needed before a decision can be made, and on what points compromise is possible and why).