

THE BLUE RIVER CRISIS

1a WARM-UP: WATER IN YOUR DAILY LIFE

Discuss the questions with your partner:

- How do you use water every day?
- How is water used in your community, beyond your home?

1b THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF RIVERS

Read the text below and discuss the questions.

Rivers are vital economic resources. They provide water for agriculture, industry, and energy production. They support fishing, transport, and tourism, creating jobs and trade opportunities. Protecting rivers is therefore essential for long-term sustainable development.

☞ Reflective Questions:

- Who owns the water in a river?
- What happens when a river starts in one country and flows into another? Who should control it?

2a THE STORY OF THE BLUE RIVER

Watch the short video about the Blue River conflict between Highland and Lowland. While watching, think about this question:

- What is the main problem between the two countries?

2b DEBATE PREPARATION

Your teacher will give you a Role Card. You will represent either Team A – Highland, or Team B – Lowland.

Read your Role Card carefully. Then, with your team:

- Select the strongest arguments from the card.
- Decide who will speak in each round.
- Decide in which order you will present your arguments.

Remember: you are representatives of your country in an **international negotiation**.

2c PING PONG DEBATE

Face the opposing team.

Remember: the debate represents a real conflict between two countries.

Round 1 – Opening Statements

One spokesperson from each team has **2 minutes** to explain:

- Why your country's needs are urgent
- Why your position is justified

Try to make the audience understand what is at stake for your people.



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Round 2 – Crossfire:

The teams now alternate arguments:

Highland → Lowland → Highland → Lowland.

Each contribution must be **maximum 45 seconds**.

You may:

- respond to the previous argument
- challenge the other side
- introduce a new argument

In this phase, each team has one **“Diplomatic Pause”** card. At any moment during the crossfire, you can raise this card **to stop the clock for 30 seconds**. Use this time to huddle with your team, check your notes, or translate a difficult word.

Strategy Tip: Use your pause if you are surprised by an opponent's argument and need time to think of a good counter-argument.

Round 3 – The Vote

The class votes (or a 3-student jury decides):

- Which side presented the stronger argument?

Discuss:

Would the winning side necessarily win **in real life**?

2d REFLECTION

Discuss the following questions as a class:

- Did Team Highland convince Team Lowland? Or are they now even more opposed?
- If Highland builds the dam anyway, what might Lowland do? (Sanctions? Protest? Conflict?)
- Think about **Sara** and **Omar**. Is either of them wrong? Can both of them be right?
- Does arguing about **who owns the river** actually solve the problem?

3a NEGOTIATION: FROM CONFLICT TO AGREEMENT

You have argued strongly for your country. Now the goal changes. Your goal is not to win the debate, but to avoid a conflict between Highland and Lowland.

Work first with your team, then with the other country to try to reach an agreement.

3b TEAM DISCUSSION

Work with your original team. Discuss and write your answers.

- What is your country’s most important need? (This is something you cannot give up)

- What is the one thing your country might compromise on?



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c. What solution could you propose to the other country?

3c NEGOTIATION MEETING

Now form a mixed negotiation group with students from the other country. Your group should include Highland representatives and Lowland representatives.

Your task is to create **ONE agreement both countries can accept.**

Try to agree on at least **TWO concrete points**, e.g. minimum water flow, shared dam management, electricity sharing, etc.

OUR AGREEMENT

Point 1:

Point 2:

Optional Point 3:

3d PRESENT your agreement to the class.

Say if the agreement is:

- a. fair for both countries
- b. better for one country than the other
- c. only a temporary solution

Explain why.



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HOMEWORK – MINI RESEARCH

Case Study: a Real-World Water Conflict.

The Blue River simulation was fiction, but these conflicts are real. For homework, choose ONE of the following river basins to research.

Recommended Case Studies:

- **The Nile River** (Conflict: Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia) – very similar to the Blue River story!
- **The Mekong River** (Conflict: China and Southeast Asian nations like Vietnam and Thailand)
- **The Colorado River** (Conflict: USA and Mexico)
- **The Danube River** (Example of successful cooperation between many European countries)

Your task:

- Which countries are involved? Who is upstream/downstream?
- What is the main dispute? (Dams, pollution, or scarcity?)
- Is there a current treaty or agreement?