

Best Modern-Day Capitalist

Grade Levels: 9-12

Time Commitment: 90 Minutes

Subject(s): Economics, U.S. History

Overview: It's tournament time! Looking at America's modern-day capitalists, students will decide: who is the best? What criteria should be used to judge them? Then, students will pit modern-day capitalists against each other to see who emerges as the best.

Materials: • Student Handouts (Digital or Printed) • 1:1 Computers or Tablets
• Optional: Printer • Smartboard or Projector

Opener (15 Minutes):

1. Pose this question and allow the students to brainstorm ideas: "How can an average American citizen participate in capitalism?"
 - a. Capture student ideas on a whiteboard, giant sticky note, or digital platform such as [Mentimeter](#) or [Canva](#)
 - b. Answers could include some variations of: owning small businesses, starting new companies, investing in stocks, buying and selling goods and services, competing in the marketplace, or shopping at their local stores
2. Once the discussion culminates, pose this question and allow the students to brainstorm ideas: "How would you describe a 'modern-day' American capitalist?"
 - a. Capture student ideas on a whiteboard, giant sticky note, or digital platform such as [Mentimeter](#) or [Canva](#)
 - b. Answers should eventually lead to these key descriptions: own or invest in businesses, take financial risks, and seek profits in a market economy

Activity (60 Minutes)

1. Present the student with a list of well-known American business owners, investors, and entrepreneurs often associated with "modern-day" capitalism ("Capitalist List," Page 4).
2. Present the students with the most often used descriptors of a capitalist ("Capitalist Descriptors," Page 5). Have students nominate and vote on the top three criteria to use when evaluating capitalists.
 - a. Be sure to post these on a dry-erase board or chalkboard for the groups to reference.
3. Break the students into groups of 4 or more. Provide the groups with the "Baseball Cards" (Pages 6-11) and a Championship Bracket (Page 12) with the modern-day American capitalists randomly pitted against each other.
4. Tell the students that their groups need to:
 - a. Research all the capitalists in the bracket and capture their notes in the Baseball Cards (Pages 6-11) to aid in discussions about each comparison.
 - b. Use the **3 criteria selected by the whole class**. Groups will want to reference these when discussing the matchups in the bracket.

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Activity (Continued):

- c. Discuss and determine the winner of the matchups until an overall champion is determined.
- d. Use the fill-in-the-bracket (Page 12) to track the results
- e. Prepare answers to the Whole Group Discussion prompts:
 - Who their overall winner is and why
 - Criteria that were most important in their decision
 - Which matchup was the most difficult to decide
5. Have groups share their answers out loud (who the group winner was, the most influential criteria, and which matchup was most difficult)

Closer (15 Minutes)

1. Assign students a “3 Hot Takes” Exit Ticket. They should finish the following statements:
 - a. “The most important idea today was...”
 - b. “I disagree with...”
 - c. “I was surprised that...”

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Tips & Tricks for the Activity

- Number the capitalists in brackets and assign each student a number. This will prevent a single student from researching and deciding the Round of 16 and Quarterfinals games. It will also force the group to discuss each matchup.
- Display a timer during group work and remind students of the time left.
- Remind students about the whole-group discussion so they are ready to participate.

Extension Activity Ideas

- Have each group create a presentation on their champion or the two capitalists in the championship game.
- Have students choose different criteria (one or more) not used by their group to see whether their bracket results would change.
- Tell students to write a short reflection paragraph on their process.
- Do additional exit tickets, such as:
 - 3-2-1 - Students provide:
 - 3 - Three characteristics of a modern-day capitalist.
 - 2 - Two surprising facts learned about a capitalist today.
 - 1 - One modern-day American capitalist they want to learn more about.
 - Would You Rather - Students answer questions such as:
 - Would you rather start a business or invest in one? Why?

Modified Activity Ideas

- Use the empty bracket (Page 13) for other activities or lessons.
- Allow each group of students to choose the three evaluation criteria they will use to pick a winner. During the whole-group discussion, they will need to share their chosen criteria and reasoning. This will create more variance between the results each group determines.
- Create only four groups of students and assign each group four capitalists.
 - The group will determine the winners of the matchups up to the semi-final round.
 - Then, groups will defend their winners against the other groups' winners in the semi-final round.
 - The winners of the semi-final round then repeat the process in the championship round until a champion is crowned.
- You can make this an individual project with a presentation or paragraph requirement.

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Capitalist List

Person	Why They Are Considered a Capitalist
Warren Buffett	Invests in companies through Berkshire Hathaway and advocates long-term investing.
Jeff Bezos	Built one of the world's largest retail and technology companies - Amazon.
Elon Musk	Creates and invests in private companies focused on innovation - Tesla and SpaceX.
Jensen Huang	Built a leading technology company through innovation and competition - NVIDIA.
Tim Cook	Leads one of the world's most valuable publicly traded companies - Apple.
Mary Barra	Oversees a major American automobile manufacturer competing globally - General Motors.
Brian Chesky	Created a marketplace connecting travelers and property owners - Airbnb.
Sara Blakely	Started a company from a single product and grew it into a global brand - Spanx.
Mark Cuban	Started businesses, sold businesses, invested in startups, and promotes entrepreneurship - MicroSolutions (sold in 1990), co-founded AudioNet (later renamed Broadcast.com and sold in 1999), Dallas Mavericks of the NBA, and participates in Shark Tank.
Reed Hastings	Helped transform the entertainment industry through innovation - Netflix.
R. Donahue Peebles	Founder and CEO of one of the largest privately owned real estate development and investment companies in the U.S. - the Peebles Corporation
Melissa Bradley	Managing Partner of an accelerator and fund that provides resources and capital to New Majority entrepreneurs (underrepresented founders including women, people of color, veterans, and LGBTQ+ individuals) - 1863 Ventures.
Robert F. Smith	Founder, chairperson, and CEO of a multi-billion dollar private equity firm focused on enterprise software, data, and technology-enabled businesses - Vista Equity Partners
Diane Hendricks	Cofounder, chairperson, and CEO of the largest wholesale distributor of roofing and building supplies in North America - ABC Supply.
Sheila Johnson	A pioneer in business, Johnson co-founded BET. She is a billionaire capitalist who holds principal ownership stakes in three major professional sports teams (the NBA's Washington Wizards, the NHL's Washington Capitals, and the WNBA's Washington Mystics), and the Salamander Collection, a luxury hospitality and hotel firm.
Alexander Karp	American billionaire businessman best known as the co-founder and CEO of Palantir Technologies, a massive data analytics and artificial intelligence software company

Best Modern-Day Capitalist

Capitalist Descriptors

Name: _____

Block: _____

Highlight, circle, or mark the class's selected **top three criteria**. Remember, as your group selects your top capitalists, only use the top three criteria that the class chose!

Name of Descriptor	Essential Question
Risk Taker	What risks did this entrepreneur take to build their business?
Problem Solver	What problem did they solve or need did they meet?
Competitor	How did competition shape or challenge their business?
Profit Maker	How does the company earn profits?
Critic's Corner	What criticisms have been made of the entrepreneur or their company?
Consumer Benefit	How have consumers benefited from their products or services?
Wealth Creator	How successful have they been at creating wealth and business value?
Innovator	How original or groundbreaking are their ideas and products?
Entrepreneurial Journey	How inspiring is their path to success?
Economic Impact	How have they influenced the U.S. or global economy?
Consumer Impact	How much have they improved the lives of everyday consumers?
Long-Term Success	Has their business demonstrated lasting growth and resilience?
Contribution to American Capitalism	How have they strengthened American entrepreneurship, markets, or economic opportunity?

Best Modern-Day Capitalist

Baseball Cards Notes

Name: _____

Block: _____

List the three criteria that the class selected here:

Criteria #1: _____

Criteria #2: _____

Criteria #3: _____

Take notes on each person in order to complete the bracket.

WARREN BUFFETT	
Short Description:	Invests in companies through Berkshire Hathaway and advocates long-term investing.
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

JEFF BEZOS	
Short Description:	Built one of the world's largest retail and technology companies - Amazon.
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

Best Modern-Day Capitalist

Baseball Cards Notes

Name: _____

Block: _____

ELON MUSK	
Short Description:	Creates and invests in private companies focused on innovation - Tesla and SpaceX.
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

JENSEN HUANG	
Short Description:	Built a leading technology company through innovation and competition - NVIDIA.
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

TIM COOK	
Short Description:	Leads one of the world's most valuable publicly traded companies - Apple.
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

Best Modern-Day Capitalist

Baseball Cards Notes

Name: _____

Block: _____

MARY BARRA	
Short Description:	Oversees a major American automobile manufacturer competing globally - General Motors.
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

BRIAN CHESKY	
Short Description:	Created a marketplace connecting travelers and property owners - Airbnb.
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

SARA BLAKELY	
Short Description:	Started a company from a single product and grew it into a global brand - Spanx.
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

Best Modern-Day Capitalist

Baseball Cards Notes

Name: _____

Block: _____

MARK CUBAN	
Short Description:	Started businesses, sold businesses, invested in startups, and promotes entrepreneurship - MicroSolutions (sold in 1990), co-founded AudioNet (later renamed Broadcast.com and sold in 1999), Dallas Mavericks of the NBA, and participates in Shark Tank.
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

REED HASTINGS	
Short Description:	Helped transform the entertainment industry through innovation - Netflix.
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

R. DONAHUE PEEBLES	
Short Description:	Founder and CEO of one of the largest privately owned real estate development and investment companies in the U.S. - the Peebles Corporation
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

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Baseball Cards Notes

Name: _____

Block: _____

MELISSA BRADLEY	
Short Description:	Managing Partner of an accelerator and fund that provides resources and capital to New Majority entrepreneurs (underrepresented founders including women, people of color, veterans, and LGBTQ+ individuals) - 1863 Ventures.
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

ROBERT F. SMITH	
Short Description:	Founder, chairperson, and CEO of a multi-billion dollar private equity firm focused on enterprise software, data, and technology-enabled businesses - Vista Equity Partners
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

DIANE HENDRICKS	
Short Description:	Cofounder, chairperson, and CEO of the largest wholesale distributor of roofing and building supplies in North America - ABC Supply.
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

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Baseball Cards Notes

Name: _____

Block: _____

SHEILA JOHNSON	
Short Description:	A pioneer in business, Johnson co-founded BET. She is a billionaire capitalist who holds principal ownership stakes in three major professional sports teams (the NBA's Washington Wizards, the NHL's Washington Capitals, and the WNBA's Washington Mystics), and the Salamander Collection, a luxury hospitality and hotel firm.
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

ALEXANDER KARP	
Short Description:	American billionaire businessman best known as the co-founder and CEO of Palantir Technologies, a massive data analytics and artificial intelligence software company
Notes on Criteria #1:	
Notes on Criteria #2:	
Notes on Criteria #3:	
Other Notes or Important Facts:	

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Championship Bracket

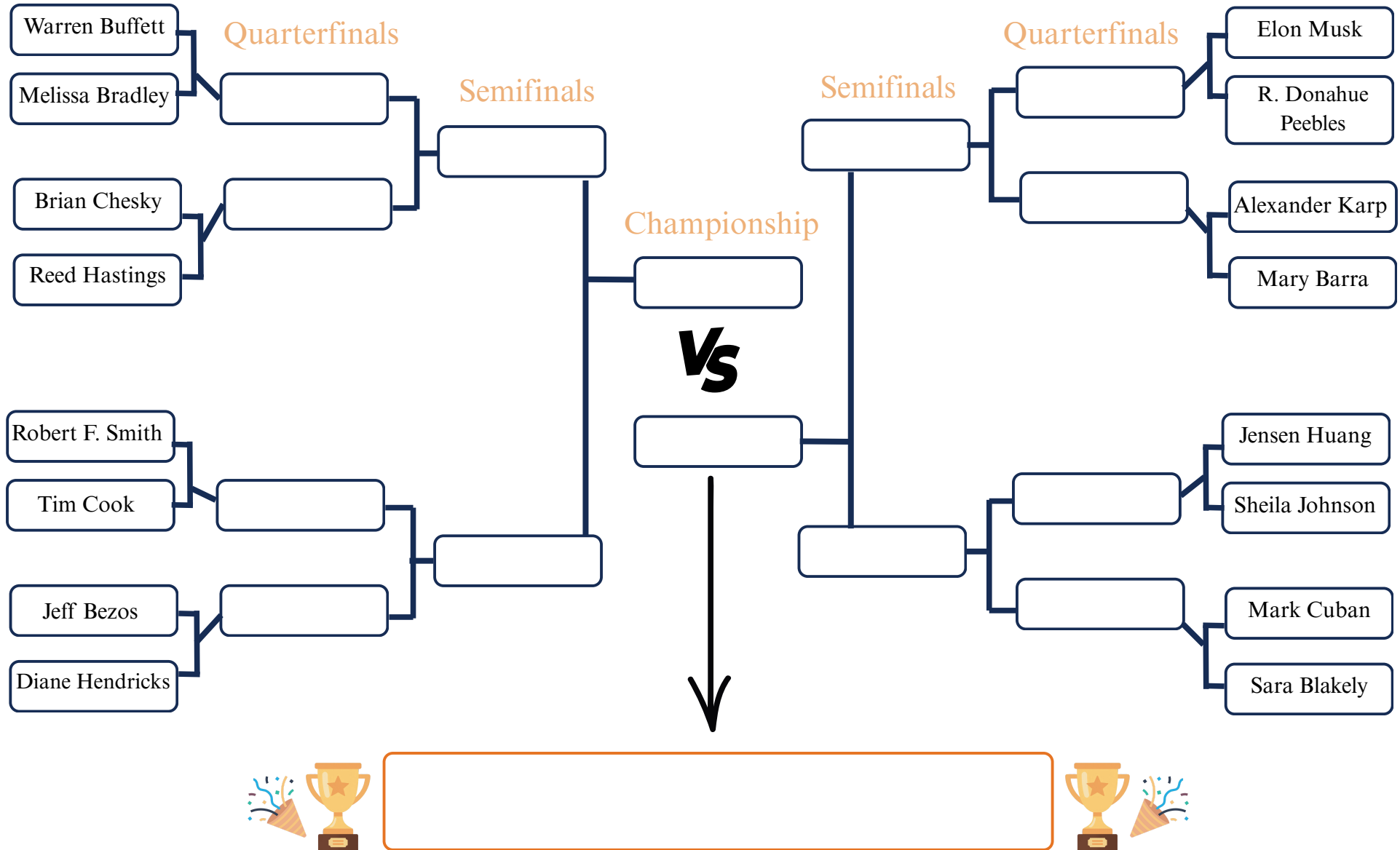
Name: _____

Block: _____

Fill out the bracket as your group decides who will win each round.

Round of 16

Round of 16



WINNER

Best Modern-Day Capitalist

Championship Bracket

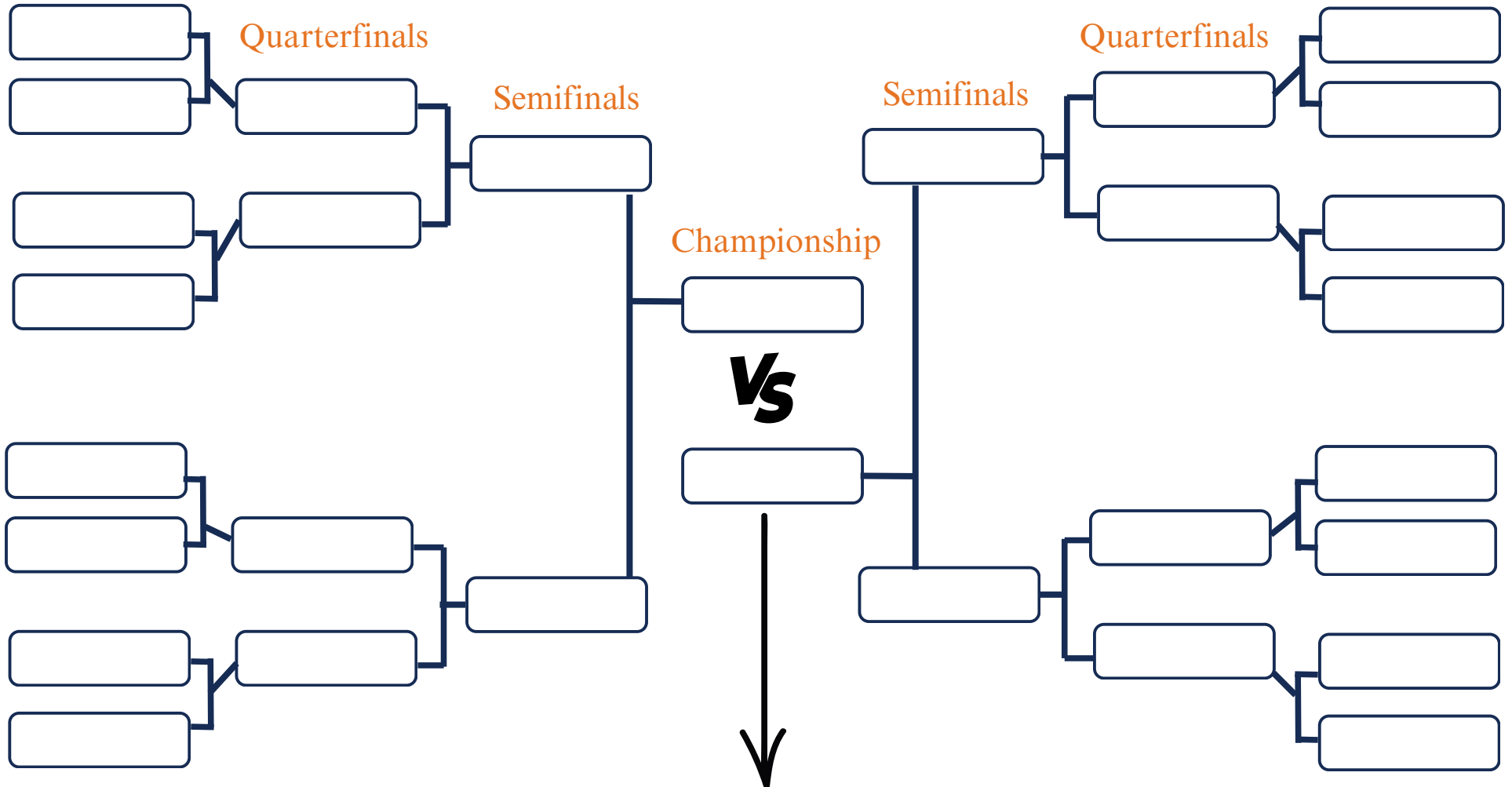
Name: _____

Block: _____

Fill out the bracket as your group decides who will win each round.

Round of 16

Round of 16



WINNER