

SHOULD EACH NEW GENERATION REWRITE THE U.S. CONSTITUTION?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA FOR HOMEWORK, IN-CLASS TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the [Thinkalong module](#). Students can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

THE LONG VIEW

Constitution USA | May 5, 2013 | Video

3:06 minutes

A video report about the Constitution's ability to change and the Founding Fathers' views on how that change could take place.

- In an interview, a historian states that the Founding Fathers would be surprised that the Constitution lasted so long because they expected the document to change as the country progressed.
- The Founding Fathers understood that the framework they made had to be flexible, but they didn't all agree on how flexible it should be.
- Jefferson believed that each generation should rewrite the Constitution to suit the current time, while Madison believed that the original document had the best design and that frequent change would undermine its value.
- People can change the Constitution through adding amendments, but in order to be ratified three quarters of the states would have to vote for it.
- Only 27 amendments have been ratified.

JUDGE GORSUCH'S ORIGINALISM CONTRASTS WITH MENTOR'S PRAGMATISM

NPR | February 6, 2017 | Audio

4:31 minutes

This article is a segment from NPR concerning the appointment of Trump's SC Justice Neil Gorsuch, a self-proclaimed "originalist" interpreter of the Constitution. The article focuses on various interpretations of the constitution.

- The article defines an "originalist" interpretation of Constitutional law through Justice Antonin Scalia's own words: "the constitution that I interpret is not living but dead, or as I prefer to call it, enduring. It means today not what current society, much less the court, thinks it ought to mean, but what it meant when it was adopted."
- The article also talks about constitutional "pragmatism," which means that a judge considers the consequence of a decision and embraces a wide range of points of view, basing the decision in the broader brushstrokes of reality.
- Allan Ides, a professor at Loyola Law, says that all judges look to the constitution for guidance, and that both liberal and conservative justices look to the past to inform the present.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help students to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.

AUTHOR: SECOND AMENDMENT'S ONLY SENTENCE GENERATES RECURRENT DEBATE

NPR | June 10, 2014 | Audio

7:11 minutes

This interview from NPR's Morning Edition discusses the changing interpretations of the second amendment, arguably the most hotly debated of the Bill of Rights.

- Michael Waldman, author of the book *The Second Amendment: A Biography*, talks about how gun laws and individual rights help us understand how our moving public opinion changes how we see our Constitutional rights.
- Waldman comments that the second amendment, as written, is “one sentence, lots of commas and lots of confusion.”
- Waldman says that the amendment's single sentence has led to differing interpretations over time, with the most recent guaranteeing an individual's right to own a firearm in 2008. He says that in the past, other Supreme Court justices have come to different decisions.
- Waldman, when asked if laws written in the past can become irrelevant over time, says that public and political debate helps evolve our view of our constitutional rights, like the ones outlined in the Second Amendment.
- The interview details some historical context for federal gun regulations and laws, from post-Civil War reconstruction and 14th Amendment rights, to westward expansion, to crime control 1930's, to the evolution of the NRA in the 1970s.
- At the end of the discussion, Waldman says that despite all the debate over individual rights and public safety, the Second Amendment has never really been interpreted “as an absolute right to do whatever you want with your gun.”

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your classroom and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Constitution
- Amendment
- Originalist
- Rights
- Living document

CONTEMPLATE

Students will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help students answer these five questions about each piece of media.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help students to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.

DEBATE

Students will engage their peers in an evidence-based debate using the media they just analyzed. Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form an evidence-based response to the debate question.

In addition to rich in-class discussions, teachers can also connect with other classrooms through the Thinkalong website. [Sign up here](#) to be connected.

LET'S INVESTIGATE

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Use this worksheet to help you investigate the media sources in the Thinkalong module.



SUMMARIZE THE TOPIC

KEY VOCABULARY

MEDIA RESOURCE 1

TITLE _____

DATE PUBLISHED _____

MAIN IDEAS

MEDIA RESOURCE 2

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

MAIN IDEAS

MEDIA RESOURCE 3

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

MAIN IDEAS

CONTEMPLATE YOUR SOURCES



NAME: _____

DATE: _____

After watching the media in the module, answer the questions below.

1. **AUTHORSHIP:** Who created this message?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

2. **FORMAT:** What creative techniques are being used to grab my attention?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

3. **AUDIENCE:** How might different people understand this message differently than me?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

4. **CONTENT:** What values and points of view are represented? What's left out of this message?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

5. **PURPOSE:** Why is this message being sent?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

CREATE YOUR ARGUMENT

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Create strong arguments for both sides from the resources in the Thinkalong module.



DEBATE QUESTION	
PRO ARGUMENT	CON ARGUMENT
REASONING	REASONING
EVIDENCE	EVIDENCE