

SHOULD COLLEGE BE FREE?

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.

ONE WORD OR LESS: IS COLLEGE WORTH THE PRICE?

Point Taken | April 26, 2016 | Video

2:27 minutes

A short video from Point Taken exploring whether the benefits of a college education offset the debt of getting a degree.

- Since the 1970s, demand for college degrees has grown, but higher education wasn't as expensive as it is today.
- Over the past 30 years, the cost of a college education has grown more than 400 percent.
- America's student loans are currently totaled at more than 1.2 trillion dollars.

TENNESSEE WEIGHS THE COST OF A FREE COLLEGE EDUCATION

Nashville Public Radio | February 8, 2014 | Audio

3:29 minutes

A radio story about a proposal unveiled in Tennessee to make community college free for all residents of the state.

- Tennessee is one of the country's least education states, so the current governor created a proposal to increase the amount of citizens with at least a two-year degree.
- The new proposal aims to use the roughly \$30 million of extra cash generated by the state's lottery to fund the tuition payments for a two-year education for each resident at a community college.
- Residents and other lawmakers are excited about the prospect but have doubts because lottery money typically goes to providing four year merit scholarships, whose funds will have to be cut in order to implement the free community college plan.

IS FREE COLLEGE REALLY FREE?

NPR | January 5, 2017 | Article

1830 words

An article breaking down the costs of state and federal government providing free college to students.

- New York released a proposal to offer free tuition to families earning less than \$125,000 at state colleges.
- The plan would help two groups mainly: middle to upper middle income families where college enrollment is already high and lower income students enticed by the prospect of free.

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.

- Reactions to proposals like this have varied: some people believe that since education makes individuals wealthier, the individuals should pay for it. Some also argue that public funds from federal student aid only allow colleges to continue raising prices.
- Those in favor of free college proposals say there's an obligation for government to pay for college in order to promote democracy, equal rights, and other ideals.
- Since 1978 public university tuition has climbed every year, at two or three times the rate of inflation. The average student loan debt is \$29,400.

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.

- Debt
- Tuition
- Loan

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.

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