

SHOULD THE VOTING AGE BE LOWERED TO 16?

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.

TEENS WANT MORE EDUCATION ON THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Youth Radio | October 28, 2016 | Audio

3:40 minutes

A Youth Radio story about teens who are seeking out more information on the electoral process in the U.S.

- Civics classes in San Francisco pose the questions to students: 1) Do you feel prepared to vote? 2) What would it take to make you feel prepared to vote?
- Many students who say they are ready to vote say they had excellent teachers that encouraged them to vote.
- A research team from Tufts University called CIRCLE proposed ways to measure and increase informed students, like bringing in test voting machines and allowing students to practice using them.
- According to a 2013 survey from CIRCLE, teens who learned about voting in high school were 40 percent more likely to cast ballots in the last presidential election.
- CIRCLE says civics classes used to be more heavily focused on debating issues and policies that were relevant to upcoming elections – but that is not the case today.
- Critics argue that state curriculum standards for social studies have created this trend of uninformed young voters.
- Some high school students say that teachers avoid discussing politics altogether for fear of appearing like they are influencing students to vote one way or another – and that leaves an information void for students who want to be well-informed and involved in the democratic process.
- Students volunteering at polls note that they have experienced firsthand how many adults are confused by the voting process – convincing them of the need for widespread education starting at the public school level.

UNLIKELY ADVOCATES PUSH TO GIVE 16-YEAR-OLDS A VOTE — AND A VOICE

NPR | January 18, 2016 | Audio

4:01 minutes

A radio story about a recent push to give student a voice by lowering the voting age.

- In Washington D.C., a push to allow 16 year olds to vote in a presidential election is gaining popularity and attention.
- Advocate Michelle Blackwell believes that lowering the voting age will engage more young people and increase voter turnout.

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.

- Supporters think that lowering the age will create future adults who vote more often, but critics say that 16 year old people aren't ready for the responsibility.

SHOULD SAN FRANCISCO LOWER ITS VOTING AGE?

KQED | October 24, 2016 | Video

3:23 minutes

A short video following San Francisco students who trying to change local law to give 16 year olds voting rights in small local elections.

- Voter turnout is low specifically with the 18-24 demographic – which has led a group of youth activists in San Francisco to initiate a campaign to lower the voting age to 16 for local and school board elections.
- National youth civic groups like Generation Citizen and National Youth Rights Association have been campaigning for a ballot measure, attempting to spread their message across the country in the hopes of ultimately increasing voter turnout for the critical 18-24 demographic.
- In San Francisco, a ballot measure called Proposition F was proposed – if passed would make San Francisco the first major city to extend voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds. Only two small towns in Maryland have passed measures to lower the voting age.
- Skeptics argue that American youth lack the experience and knowledge to make an informed decision on the issues being voted on. One critic, Curtis Gans of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate at American University, argues that the voting age was set at 18 because that was the age in which Americans could “die for their country” under conscription laws – and that that precedent should be respected and remain unchanged.
- Critics also argue that the voting age sets the precedent for other “age ceilings” like consent and criminal responsibility – and that altering the voting age could potentially lead to minors being treated as adults in criminal cases.
- In 1971 the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18 with the Twenty-Sixth Amendment – in which protesters argued that if young people could be drafted into war in Vietnam, they should also have the right to vote.

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.

- Suffrage
- Election
- Lobby
- Enfranchisement
- Candidate
- Conscription

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:

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.



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.

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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