

SHOULD CONGRESS BAN ASSAULT RIFLES?

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.

GUN VIOLENCE, GUN CONTROL, GUN RIGHTS: WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

KQED | February 14th, 2018 | Article
1427 words

An article detailing the responses over the years to mass shooting in the United States, and how understanding these patterned reactions can help possibly break the cycle.

- A gunman in Parkland, Florida opened fire on Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, killing 17 students and teachers; the response fueled by teenage activists from the school has brought the issue of gun violence back into the forefront of political conversations in the U.S.
- Reactions to deadly school shootings in this country have become predictable on both sides of the political aisle; with predominately Democrats pushing for gun control legislation, Republicans arguing the aftermath of tragedy is “not the time to discuss gun control” and that mental health is really the root of this issue. Many point to Australia’s gun reform history as proof that positive change can take place, the conversations have still led to little action.
- Due to the 2nd amendment, many Americans see the ownership of a firearm as both a birthright as well as a rite of passage in society. Today there are over 350 million civilian firearms in the U.S. – more guns than people.
- Mass shootings only make up a small percentage of the annual death toll in America from gun violence; many coming from accidents and suicides.
- While there is little disagreement that gun violence is a problem, the issue has still remained stagnant in terms of progress addressing the issue. Public sentiment for change is usually at all-time highs following a mass shooting, and then support fades and dwindles in the following weeks as Congress neglects to act.
- Gun ownership also spikes after mass shootings, with organizations like the NRA profiting off of the increased sales. In contrast, some states have shown decreases in gun homicide rates following stricter gun laws being enacted.

FRONTLINE: NEWTOWN DIVIDED

Frontline | February 19th, 2013 | Video
4:48 minutes

A video looking at reactions to the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre, and the question of whether the horror of that event would incite change to the United States’ gun laws.

- Reporter from Hartford Courant examining cautious optimism in public perception that the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut would be a catalyst for change in the gun control debate that has become increasingly divisive in the United States.
- Strong gun culture existed in Newtown – many individuals were collectors, hunters, and shooters. Many ardent owners of firearms would see any restriction of weapons whatsoever as unacceptable, even for semi-automatic weapons.

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.

- The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), which is based in Newtown, argues that rather than trying to eradicate firearms from American culture, focus should be shifted to restricting access to weapons for those deemed unfit mentally. Argues this would have prevented Sandy Hook shooter from obtaining his weapons.
- A question is proposed of whether or not gun lobbyists would be swayed by the story of Sandy Hook to change their opinions. Two camps exist in America: one saying we need fewer guns to make the country safer, the other saying we need more guns.

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO REPEAL THE 2ND AMENDMENT?

NPR | February 27, 2018 | Audio

3:15 seconds

A radio discussion focusing on what actions would need to be taken to repeal the Second Amendment, and if this is a plausible option for Americans moving forward.

- An op-ed in the New York Times recently called for repealing the second amendment. NPR journalists have a discussion about what it would actually look like to repeal.
- Founding Fathers made it possible to repeal any constitutional amendment—they “just made it really hard.”
- First you need a supermajority in congress – meaning two-thirds vote of both the House and Senate. If passed by congress, the repeal must then be ratified by three-fourths of the states (at least 38 states) which has happened only once in the last 50 years.
- Gun control advocates argue that the line “well-regulated militia” in the Second Amendment refers to the implication that the right to bear arms was never supposed to go beyond civil defense. Proponents of this argument claim the framers were referring to strictly limited militias like today’s National Guard, while the Supreme Court ruled ten years ago that the right to bear arms was an individual right.
- The Supreme Court has also said that while bearing arms is an individual right, it may be regulated. This could mean stronger background checks, a higher purchasing age, or other provisions that are being discussed. If these stricter limitations are found to be violations of the Second Amendment, then people might push for repealing the Second Amendment entirely.

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.

- Gun control
- Second Amendment
- Semi-automatic weapon
- Militia
- Repeal
- Lobby
- Legislation

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