

SHOULD WE REWRITE THE 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.

SHOULD WE REWRITE OUR CONSTITUTION

America from Scratch | June 1, 2018 | Video
8:02 minutes

A video from American From Scratch asking who would be responsible for writing out constitution if we wrote it today?

- The average shelf-life of a constitution internally is about 17 years, although recently the average has decreased to 12 years. The United States Constitution has lasted over 200 years.
- The United States Constitution was written at the Constitutional Convention, where powerful men got together and created a working document that they got approved by nine of the states.
- Today we have two different processes in which a new addition can be proposed to the Constitution. In the first and most popular option, Congress comes up with an idea and three-fourths of the states need to approve it. In the second option, the states call an Article V Convention where they get together and propose amendments. If they get the approval of three-fourths of the individual states, the amendments become law. This has never been done with our current Constitution and there are no guidelines in place that give directions for a convention like this.

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.

- Some people are saying that the Constitution needs to be rewritten to reflect our society today, but changing the entire constitution would probably require a convention, like the Constitutional Convention of 1787 that got rid of the Articles of Confederation.
- Silja Bara Omarsdottir, A University of Iceland Professor explains that Iceland decided to rewrite its constitution because it had a financial collapse in 2008. Many thought that the problems that Iceland faced could be eradicated if they had a more modern constitution.
- When the Soviet Union broke up, there were many different countries that had to write new constitutions. In 2008 a lawyer from Minnesota was a key person in writing the constitution for the Republic of Kosovo, marking a trend to have legal professionals hired to draft constitutions based on a country's goals.

STATE LEADERS FLOAT THE IDEA OF A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

NPR | March 31, 2017 | Audio

3:52 minutes

This radio story describes a new effort by state legislators to call for a constitutional convention.

- Some state Republicans are frustrated by a lack of action on their priorities so they are considering a Constitutional Convention in order to bypass Congress.
- The last time a Constitutional Convention took place was in 1787 when the Articles of Confederation were scrapped in favor of our modern Constitution.
- It takes 34 states to submit an application on the same issue to have that convention of states.
- Jason Bailey from the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy says we currently have 29 states calling for a convention, but that may not be an accurate figure because some states are calling for different state resolutions.
- People are worried that the convention could be the end of our constitution, but states can recall delegates because they are elected officials that have to answer to people and there is still a ratification process.
- Skeptics say this is like opening Pandora's Box, putting the Constitution into the hands of a small powerful group with no one supervising.

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:

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