

# 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.

### SHOULD 12-YEAR-OLDS BE ALLOWED TO VOTE?

America from Scratch | April 20, 2018 | Video

8:07 minutes

A video from PBS Digital Studios exploring recent and not-so-recent push to grant the right to vote to younger citizens.

- Toussaint Morrison interviews people on the street about whether 12-year-olds should be allowed to vote. Answers vary, but people say they shouldn't because 12 year-olds are easier to manipulate because they are younger, or they should be allowed to vote because young people should be heard. Those in the middle said maybe if the 12 year-olds passed a test, they could vote or maybe if they were 16 instead of 12.
- In 1776 only white male landowners who weren't Jewish, Catholic, or Quaker could vote but in the past 240 years, more people have had access to voting. By 1830 property ownership and religious restrictions were mostly eliminated and in 1868, the fourteenth amendment gave African American men the right to vote. In 1920, the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment gave voting rights to women-although many states denied them this right. In 1971, the 26<sup>th</sup> amendment granted 18 year olds the right to vote.
- Minnesota state representative Phyllis Kahn spent several decades trying to expand voting rights to younger people. In 1989 she made her case to expand voting rights to 12-year-olds by arguing that "when a segment of society is denied the right to vote, all the rights of that segment are inferior."
- Kahn proposed voting rights for 12 year-olds because government documents are generally written in a seventh grade reading level. So she contends that if 12 year-olds can understand the forms and laws, they should be able to vote.
- Kahn states that some of the arguments against giving the 12 year olds voting rights were the same arguments used against giving women voting rights.

### 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.

*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.*

- Advocate Michelle Blackwell believes that lowering the voting age will engage more young people and increase voter turnout.
- 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 16-YEAR-OLDS BE ALLOWED TO VOTE?

PBS NewsHour | April 20, 2018 | Article

1,490 words

An in-depth article from PBS Newshour about cities in America that are giving 16 year-olds the right to vote and the history of the voting age. *We recommend condensing this article for your students.*

- As a result of the recent school shooting deaths, the question of whether teens should have a voice in making laws has resurfaced.
- Constitutional law expert Michael Morley says that individual states have more power than Congress to set the voting age for state and local election. However, Congress regulates federal offices.
- As a result of the nation's long involvement in the Vietnam War, popular opinion held that if young people were old enough to fight in the U.S. military, they were old enough to vote. This and other factors led to the ratification of the 26<sup>th</sup> amendment that lowered the voting age from 21 to 16.
- Since the 26<sup>th</sup> amendment was ratified in 1971, four cities in the U.S. have created laws allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to vote.
- Proponents of these laws say that 16-year-olds should have the right to vote on laws that affect them and since many are taxpayers, they should be represented by a vote. Opponents say that 16-year-olds are not yet mature enough to vote and that popular opinion may skew them to one party.

## 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:

1. Who created this message?

*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.*



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.

*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.*

# 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     |