

SHOULD A COLLEGE EDUCATION 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.

A DEGREE WITH ZERO STUDENT DEBT. DOES IT WORK?

NPR | May 28, 2018 | Article

An article about whether offering free tuition to state universities translates to more college degrees.

- In 2015, Tennessee announced the Tennessee Promise, a program offering five free semesters to community college for Tennessee high school graduates.
- Rather than going to work on race cars after graduating from high school, Justin Napier got a degree in electrical engineering technology and works at a company that builds automated machines.
- The dropout rate for the first class of Tennessee Promise students was only 2.3% lower than the prior year's freshman class. However, the first Tennessee Promise class that graduated within five semesters had about 1,000 more degrees than the previous year, a 60% increase.
- Seton Hall professor Robert Kelchen doubts the significance of this data stating that more research is necessary to determine whether Tennessee Promise actually caused the increase in degrees.
- Other states have mimicked the Tennessee Promise such as New York State, which offers the Excelsior Scholarship, and Oregon's Oregon Promise.

HERE'S THE FINE PRINT ON THE COUNTRY'S BIGGEST-EVER FREE COLLEGE PLAN

NPR | April 11, 2017 | Audio
3:46 minutes

A clip describing the provisions and criticisms of New York State's new scholarship that offers free tuition to public universities.

- New York State has established the Excelsior Scholarship which offers students from families who make up to \$100,000 a year free college tuition to both two-year and four-year colleges within the State University of New York (SUNY) system.
- Vice president of policy and research at Demos Tamara Draut says the program favors higher-income students because students must first apply for, and use, other money like federal Pell Grants, before turning to the scholarship. Demos says

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.

that means low-income students have less to gain from the scholarship than students who are too wealthy to qualify for those grants do.

- The scholarship only covers tuition, which means that other living expenses such as books and housing are still up to the student to provide. Gail Mellow of LaGuardia Community College says her college will now direct more of its own scholarship money toward living expenses.
- The Excelsior Scholarship requires students to attend full time and graduate within two or four years, depending on the degree. However, only 34% of freshman at public universities across the country graduated within four years.
- Students who take advantage of the scholarship are required to work in New York State for the amount of years they were in school after graduating. Sara Goldrick-Rab from Temple University says this requirement makes the entire policy a “trick.”

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.

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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