

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 CONTROL DEBATE AFTER SANDY HOOK SHOOTINGS

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

Hartford Courant reporter Matthew Kauffman speaks with Newtown, CT residents from both sides of the conversation on gun laws in the wake of the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting.

- Newton resident and gun owner Aaron Cox says he does see a ban on more militarized guns such as the AR-15 as a common sense law.
- Steven Sanetti, President of the National Shooting Sports Foundation located in Newtown, opposes bans, stating that guns are already a part of American society.
- Sanetti calls for more responsibility on behalf of gun owners and claims that if the mother of the Sandy Hook shooter had properly stored her guns, the shooting would not have occurred.
- At a public hearing on proposed gun control legislation, some residents called for greater restrictions, while others stated that the only thing that prevents a shooting is a good man or woman with a gun at the right place and right time.
- Kauffman does not believe change will come due to compromise, as opinions on both sides are too divisive. Kauffman does believe that change will come when one side gains enough political support to get their way.

WHY THE AR-15 IS AMERICA'S RIFLE

NPR | February 15, 2018 | Audio
4:04 minutes

A clip from All Things Considered in which Alain Stephens from NPR's criminal justice team discusses why the AR-15 gained so much popularity among civilians and why people are now calling for restrictions.

- The AR-15 rifle was the weapon used by shooters of some of the most horrific shootings in the U.S., including Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Sandy Hook Elementary, San Bernardino, Pulse nightclub in Orlando, and the Las Vegas Strip.
- The AR-15 was developed in the 1950s and was widely used during the Vietnam War due to its accuracy, reliability, and ease of use. Alain Stephens, a part of NPR's criminal justice team, says these characteristics are what this weapon so appealing to civilians.

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.

- A basic AR-15 from a gun store costs around \$800. Many people are now calling for restrictions on the sales of AR-15s, but Stephens says that according to the latest Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms reports, 60% of guns traced back to crimes are handguns.
- Other arguments for restricting AR-15 sales cite the vertical grip and large capacity magazine as features that are too powerful for civilians, as well as the necessity for tougher background checks to limit who can access these weapons to begin with.

WHERE THE SUPREME COURT STANDS ON GUN LAWS

NPR | March 4, 2018 | Audio

3:52 minutes

NPR legal affairs correspondent Nina Totenberg on the Supreme Court's present stance on gun laws and how that stance could change in light of recent mass shootings.

- NPR legal affairs correspondent Nina Totenberg says there is not an absolute right to bear arms in the United States. In 2008 the Supreme Court said there is an individual right to bear arms but similar to other constitutional rights, this right comes with limitations.
- The 2008 Heller case says that an individual can have a handgun in his/her home for self-protection, but that does not mean that the government cannot ban firearms for felons and the mentally ill, or in schools and government buildings.
- A Supreme Court decision in 2010 says that the 2008 decision applies both the federal government and the states.
- The Supreme Court will not make any major decisions on gun control until the majority of justices agree on a case to hear. Totenberg believes the court's refusal to act could leave this decision up to the states, or some justices may end up evolving their views.
- Totenberg says that newly appointed Justice Neil Gorsuch is a staunch advocate for gun rights and his presence on the bench could make it more difficult for the justices to decide on a case to hear.

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.

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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