

SHOULD THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MAKE WEARING FACE MASKS MANDATORY?

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.

Q&A: ARE FACE MASK REQUIREMENTS LEGAL?

NPR | June 28, 2020 | Audio

3:59 minutes

Currently the surge of Covid-19 has forced some governors, business owners, and city officials to create laws that require people to adopt face masks in the public; however, there is a conflict that some individuals refuse to wear face masks due to their “personal choice”.

- State and local governments can issue emergency orders for individuals to adopt face masks due to public health emergencies.
- Business owners are allowed to set standards for their patrons and employees to wear face coverings but many owners want their local and state governments to issue mandatory mask requirements.
- Face mask mandates are perceived to some as “paternalistic” comparing it to motorcycle helmet and seatbelt laws.
- Some individuals have not comprehended the benefits that face coverings have on suppressing the transmission of COVID-19.
- Face coverings do slow the virus transmission but coordinated testing strategies are considered a more effective preventive measure.

HOW WEARING A FACE MASK BECAME POLITICALLY FRAUGHT

PBS NewsHour | June 19, 2020 | Video

8:18 minutes

There is an increasing political debate on the effectiveness and requirements of face covering in the public as governors, local, and state officials mandate face masks. This video showcases the opposing sides and the history of how this issue was created.

- Academic research proves face masks do slow the COVID-19 transmission; however, anti-mask supporters believe wearing masks infringe on their personal choice.
- At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were mixed messages relayed to the public concerning the option to wear face coverings. Later the public learned this recommendation was a response to a shortage of facial masks that needed to be reserved for healthcare workers. As time progressed, this face mask option evolved into a mandatory practice in some locations and states, which created further division among the mass.
- Many people believe COVID-19 is a hoax and that mask-wearers are anti-Trump, creating political and social division.
- Regardless of the promoted ideologies of both factions, there is a surge of COVID-19 hospitalization.

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.

GROWING BODY OF EVIDENCE SUGGESTS MASKS PROTECT THOSE WEARING THEM, TOO

NPR | July 20, 2020 | Audio

3:44 minutes

Research and cases demonstrate that wearing masks are beneficial not only for protecting others but providing protection for the mask wearers themselves.

- JAMA reported that face mask wearers that do catch the coronavirus either have asymptomatic infection or minor infections.
- Countries that backed universal mask wearing have fewer fatalities and illnesses in their population.
- 95% of a population in country did not show symptoms of COVID-19 during an outbreak in a factory because they were wearing facial masks.

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.

- Covid-19
- Face Masks
- Human Rights
- Legal

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?
6. When was this media created, and is it still relevant?

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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