

CAN MONEY BUY HAPPINESS?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners 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.

IS IT BAD TO PLAY THE LOTTERY?

Two Cents | November 29, 2019 | Video
6:00 minutes

Learn about who plays the lottery and why, and whether winning the lottery can make you happier.

- There is a long history of lotteries – essentially government-run gambling. Historically and currently, governments use the revenue from lotteries for government projects.
- Chances of winning the lottery are 1 in 292 million. Despite these odds, 60% of adults report they play the lottery at least once a year.
- Households with lower incomes are actually more likely to play the lottery. Households with an average income of less than \$12,400 spend an average of 5% of their total income playing the lottery. This is a result of targeted marketing to these households and lower-income communities.
- People who play the lottery often do so because they believe winning will improve their lives and make them happier. However, studies show that winning the lottery can instead have negative effects on people and decrease their sense of happiness.

HOW ECONOMIC INEQUALITY MIGHT AFFECT A SOCIETY'S WELL-BEING

PBS NewsHour | February 28, 2019 | Video [[Transcript](#)]
8:21 minutes

Economic inequality negatively affects folks on the lower end of the economic scale as well as on the higher end of the scale.

- Recent medical research found that economic inequality in a country has detrimental effects on the health of all its citizens – rich and poor. This is especially true when one considers the prevalence of mental illness in rich and developed but economically unequal countries like the United States.
- Comparisons between the United States and Scandinavian nations demonstrate that although both are rich, developed areas, Scandinavians are healthier and happier because the country's wealth is more equally distributed than it is in the U.S.
- One explanation is that "we judge each other more by status in a more unequal society. And with that goes more worries about how we are seen and judged."
- Economists say that money can make the most impact on peoples' happiness if it is used to benefit those on the lower end of the economic scale to lift them out of poverty and create a more economically equitable society.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.

PEAK MISERY AND THE HAPPINESS CURVE

The Indicator from Planet Money | February 4, 2020 | Audio [[Transcript](#)]

9:42 minutes

Economic David Blanchflower has recently published a new study in which he found that age is an important determinant of happiness.

- According to the study, people reach “peak misery” at the age of 47.2 years old. If you look at only developed countries, that age raises to 48.2 years old.
- When you are young and when you are old is when you can expect to be happiest.
- Blanchflower’s study found that this phenomenon was not unique to a specific country, but was true around the world.

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your learners and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Sudden income shock
- Hedonic treadmill theory
- Lottery
- Misery

CONTEMPLATE

Learners 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 learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.

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