

SHOULD ART BE PUBLICLY FUNDED?

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.

SHOULD ART BE PUBLICLY FUNDED

The Art Assignment | May 14, 2019 | Video
11:51 minutes

In this episode, Sarah explores the history of arts funding in the United States and around the world, and what it means for artists, governments, and the public.

- While government funding for the arts comes under fire when there is controversy or during a budget proposal, but also funds programs like afterschool programs, veteran art therapy, and local theater productions.
- The UK, Germany, France, and Mexico also fund the arts through government programs and grants that allocate funding. In the United States, the bulk of arts funding comes from the private sector.
- Federal funding tends to follow the leadership of government arts agencies, and philanthropists tend to live in larger cities, leaving rural communities without private sector funding for the arts.
- Public arts funding also shines a light on lesser heard and minority voices, including the preservation of indigenous culture.
- An NEA study notes that the arts can help students find success in STEM, critical thinking, and civic engagement.
- 4.9 million Americans work in arts and cultural industries and the arts contribute more than \$760 billion dollars to the U.S. economy.

WHY DOES THE GOVERNMENT PAY FOR ART?

Origin of Everything | May 19, 2019 | Video
10:39 minutes

Dr. Bainbridge explores why governments fund the arts and the U.S. government's history of commissioning art.

- Organized government funding for the arts was initially about ensuring artists had a living wage.
- The first public agency in the U.S. to spend public money on art was the Public Works of Art Project in 1933, which helped provide relief to unemployed artists during The Great Depression. Artists created works on the theme of the "American Scene" and their finished products were displayed in government buildings.
- The Works Progress Administration included journalists, writers, musicians, ethnographers, and historians alongside working artists from 1935-1943 and employed approximately 8.5 million people.
- The National Endowment for the Arts was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965, following work by President Kennedy to bring the arts back into the government's interest.
- Arts became a way to influence opinions around the world, and offering a controlled look at American life through the art shared through government funding and allowed the government to share specific messages about the United States.

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.

A BIDEN CABINET SECRETARY FOR ARTS? ADVOCATES ARE HOPEFUL

All Things Considered | January 7, 2021 | Audio | [Transcript](#)

5:31 minutes

Some arts and culture advocates are looking to President Biden to help grow funding for the arts.

- Under President Trump, arts funding stayed the same, despite his budget proposals eliminating funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, as well as the Institute of Museum and Library Services.
- Actor Kal Penn says that Trump’s attempt to cut funding has hurt the arts, including the loss of the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, an advisory group founded in 1982. Penn wants to see the Biden administration increase the NEA and NEH budgets.
- A report in 2017 states that the arts contributed 4.5% to the country’s GDP, more than agriculture and transportation.
- Charles Segars, head of Ovation TV, notes that a Secretary of the Arts could work with other cabinet members and handle issues like copywrite and intellectual property.

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.

- Budget
- Appropriations
- Ethnography
- Intellectual property

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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