

Too young to vote

Topic

The voting age, young people's rights and responsibilities

Aims

- To practise speaking about rights and responsibilities
- To practise reading skills – understanding opinions
- To think about what makes a good citizen and the concept of citizenship

Age group

12 - adult

Level

B2

Time

60 – 90 minutes

Materials

1. Too young to vote Student worksheet
2. Website links: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking_point/2093082.stm -BBC site with debate about lowering the voting age
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/ztvg9j6> - BBC Schools Citizenship page
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/z7f3cdm> BBC site for young people on citizenship

Introduction

This is a series of activities to discuss the best age for young people to have political responsibility. It could be a sensitive subject so it would be wise to consult the regular class teacher before deciding whether to use these materials or not.

- Take the title of the lesson and speculate: Who is too young to vote? Have you ever voted? Why do

Put up some key words and ask intermediate students to brainstorm words they associate with: maturity, adult, child, responsibility

Procedure

1. Task 1 – Are you an adult?	<p>What equivalent expressions are there for talking about being grown up or mature in your host language? Remember that these words might seem like equivalents but they are culturally loaded. For example: a Yuppie and a young Manager in 1990s Italy meant someone of about age 40 when the equivalent words in English indicated someone in their early 20s.</p> <p>Be aware that attitudes towards age differ and you may learn more about your host culture with this task. Students can discuss the last question in pairs then get suggestions round the class. What is maturity? What types of responsibilities do adults have?</p>
2. Task 2 – What's the right age?	<p>Put students in pairs or small groups to decide what they think. Discuss the first one with them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you mature enough to get married at 16? • Do you think it is better to wait until you are older? • Does it depend on the person? <p>This exercise prepares the language needed to discuss the following tasks on voting and it prepares the underlying concepts of the lesson. Hold a class vote on the right ages if you wish. Do not reveal at this stage that you can do all these things in the UK except vote - tell them this after doing the letters to the Editor.</p>

3. Task 3 – Letters to the editor	<p>Put students in groups of 3 if possible to do this activity. Give each student a letter to read and then they can report to each other orally, compare details or pass the letters round their group.</p> <p>Make sure they know that a general Election in the UK is when the government are voted in.</p>
4. Task 4 – Votes at 16	<p>Pairs can compare their choices and then pairs or small groups discuss whether they would lower the voting age in their country. Hold a class vote on this.</p> <p>Task 4 Votes at 16 - answers <i>Here are the main arguments put forward in the Votes at 16 debate.</i> <i>Which views support lowering the voting age? (1,2 and 4)</i> <i>Which views argue against a change in the law? (3,5)</i> <i>Tick the opinions you agree with.</i> <i>Would you change the voting age?</i></p>
5. Task 5 – Are you interested in politics?	<p>This light hearted quiz can be done in pairs. When you run through the quiz try to bring out discussion of the issues that might interest them and how much they feel involved in the workings of their own country. Do their parents involve them in political discussions? Do they watch the news regularly?</p> <p>After doing the quiz, they can go back to the letters to the editor and write a reply to one of the letters. Monitor and help with language here.</p>
6. Task 6 – Making your views known	<p>Pairs or groups can discuss these questions. Hold a feedback session on the first question before continuing. Ask students to consider ways that communication could be improved between themselves and their schools when talking about the final question.</p>
Task 7 – Citizen X	<p>It can help students to imagine what a new person in their country (like yourself) might need to know in order to live there. Look at the BBC's Citizen X site to get more idea of the types of topics covered and look at some of the links above for more information on citizenship courses and what citizenship is. Read out some of the definitions: A good citizen is a person who...</p> <p>The mini project on citizenship can be done in pairs using the internet.</p>

Contributed by

Clare Lavery