

BREAKING NEWS

AN EDUCATOR GUIDE FOR ENGAGING WITH CURRENT EVENTS

Analyzing current events helps students connect their own experiences to a larger context. Students learn to ask questions that improve their critical thinking skills: Who's being quoted and what's their perspective on the issue? How much decision-making power does this person have? How are different media outlets covering the same issue?

These types of questions encourage students to lean into controversial and complex topics like defunding the police and public safety. We've created a series of activities that can help your students analyze media coverage by diagramming the different players and perspectives on the issue.

These resources have been designed with high schoolers in mind, but many of these activities can be adapted for younger students. These lessons are written using news articles, but can be easily adapted for other kinds of media, including videos and podcasts.

A Note for Facilitation

When you see text in italics like this, you can say the suggested text out loud to your students to get the conversation started. But, feel free to improvise and bring your own experience to the activities!

GETTING STARTED:

You can have all students analyze the same news source together, or students can use the worksheets to analyze individual news sources of their choosing. The worksheets are easy to re-draw by hand so students don't need to worry about printing out this guide.

Is this a collaborative project or a one-off activity? If the whole class will be exploring the same topic, we suggest taking some extra time outside of class to plan. Collaborative projects work best if you choose an issue that's current, local, and relevant to students' lives and everyday experiences.

WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE?

Lesson 1: What's at stake? Who's involved?

- Worksheet 1: What's the conflict?

Lesson 2: What makes an article trustworthy?

- Worksheet 2: Where do they stand?

Lesson 3: Illustrating Worldviews: What do stakeholders stand to gain?

- Worksheet 3: If the player got what they wanted...

Next Steps

TIME: 30 MINUTES

Goal: Students will be able to identify basic conflicts and stakeholder positions at the center of a local issue.

Materials: News source (article, video, podcast, etc.), **What's the conflict?** worksheet (printed or re-drawn by hand), pen or pencil, at least 4 different colored markers or highlighters.

Modification for Remote Learning: If you're doing this activity remotely through live instruction, you can do the following:

- Copy and paste the text from a news article in a Google Document. Students can use the colored highlight function to identify different stakeholders.
- Re-create the worksheet in Google Slides. Students can use digital sticky notes to identify players and stakeholders.
- Re-create the worksheet with annotation tools on a video chatting platform (e.g., Zoom)
- If students are doing the activity with articles printed on paper and multiple color-coding is not possible, ask students to use different shapes or different line styles to highlight each player and their opinions.

LESSON 1: WHAT'S AT STAKE?

INSTRUCTIONS

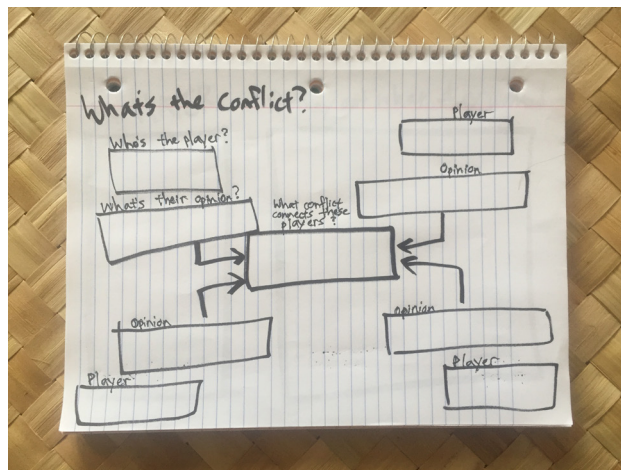
1. Warm Up: Ask students to reflect on the following prompts. Give students a couple of minutes to think and then have them share out.

- *When's the last time you thought you were totally right about something?*
- *When's the last time you were really conflicted about something?*

2. Introduce the Activity: Tell students that they will be diagramming the different players or stakeholders involved in a local current issue. Explain that this will help students understand how different opinions are formed on a local issue.

3. Understanding Conflict in Local News: Have students review a piece of news media about the issue, checking for understanding and vocabulary as you go. After reviewing the news media use the following questions to guide the class in discussion:

- *When I say there are a lot of "players" featured in this media, what does that mean to you?*
- *When I say the term "stakeholder" what do you think this means? Who are the stakeholders in this issue?*
- *What do they all share?*
- *Does everybody who has an opinion about this topic count as a "player"?*
- *Do they all agree with each other?*
- *Do all the "players" have the same amount of power?*





LESSON 1: WHAT'S AT STAKE?

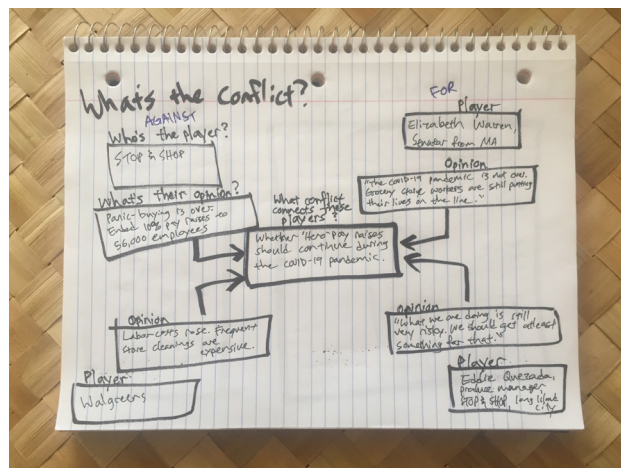
INSTRUCTIONS (CONT'D)

4. Diagram the "Players": Hand out the worksheet to each student or ask students to redraw the worksheet on their own paper. Explain that students should identify the main issue, who the key players are, and their opinions. Ask students to:

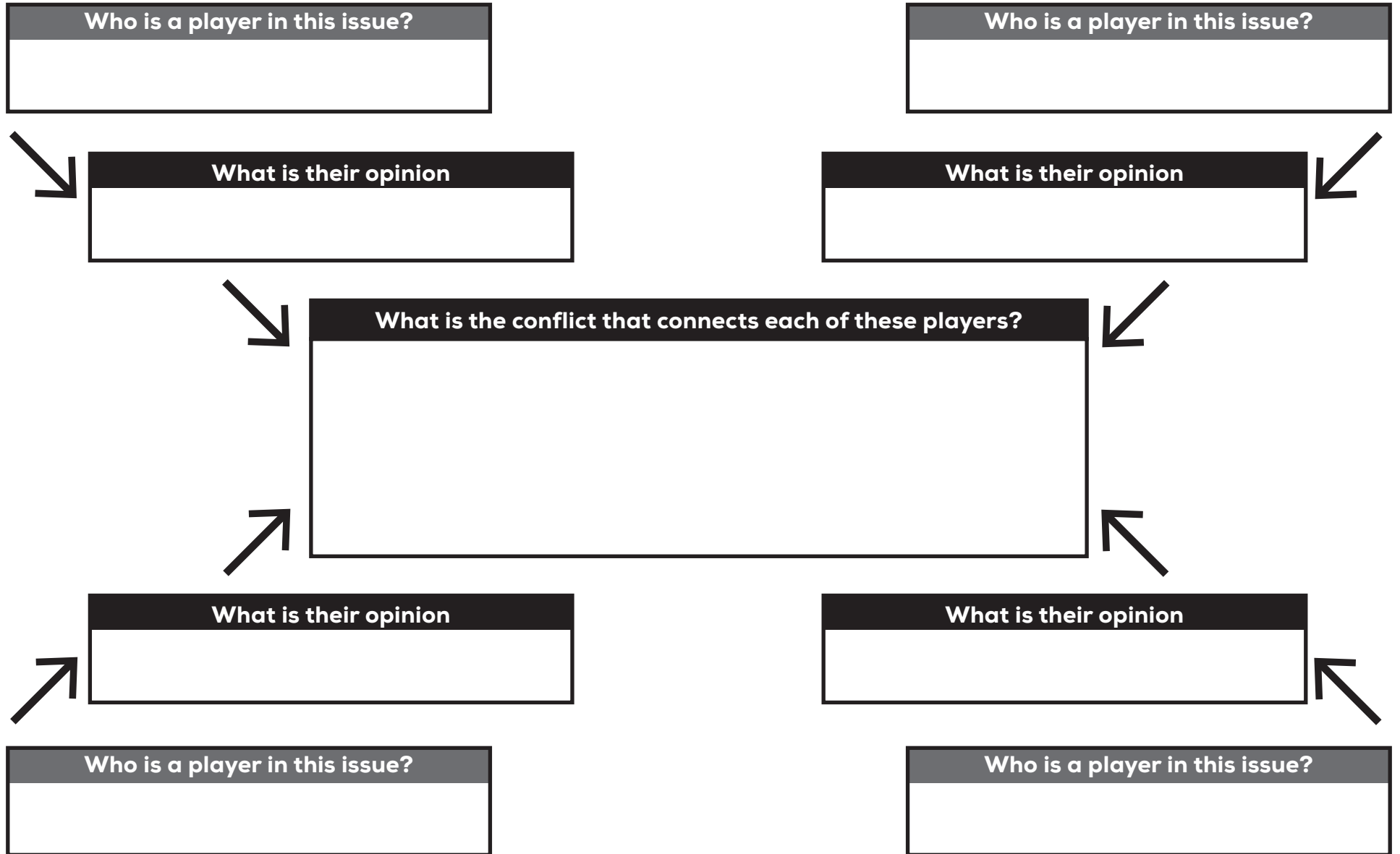
- Highlight one "player" in yellow
- Highlight a second "player" in blue
- Continue until all the "players" have been highlighted in different colors
- In any color, circle the conflict that connects all of these "players"
- In 15 words or less, write out the main conflict that connects these players on your worksheet
- Write each player into a rectangle, and in ten words or less, fill in their opinion

5. Summarize the Issue: Have students break up into small groups. Ask students to reflect on the following prompts:

- What is the issue?
- Who are the major players? Do they all represent groups or do they just represent themselves?
- Who are people that this issue would affect?
- What are the different opinions represented in the articles?
- Are any of the people who would be affected NOT represented in this media?



WHAT'S THE CONFLICT?



TIME: 30 MINUTES

Goal: Students will be able to analyze objectivity and bias in news media

Materials: News source (article, video, podcast, etc.), pen or pencil, **Where do they stand?** worksheet (printed or re-drawn by hand), blank paper

Modification for Remote

Learning: If you're doing this activity remotely through live instruction, you can do the following:

- Copy and paste the text from a news article in a Google Document. Students can use the colored highlight function to identify different stakeholders.
- Re-create the worksheet in Google Slides. Students can use digital sticky notes to identify players and stakeholders.
- Re-create the worksheet with annotation tools on a video chatting platform (e.g., Zoom)

LESSON 2: WHAT MAKES AN ARTICLE TRUSTWORTHY?

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Warm Up: Ask students to reflect on the following prompts.

- *How do you decide if you can trust someone?*
- *What makes a news source trustworthy?*

2. Identify the Players: Tell students to refer to the news source and write the names of all the players in a list, or highlight / circle the players in the article as they read. Tell students to put a small star or check mark next to players that were quoted directly.

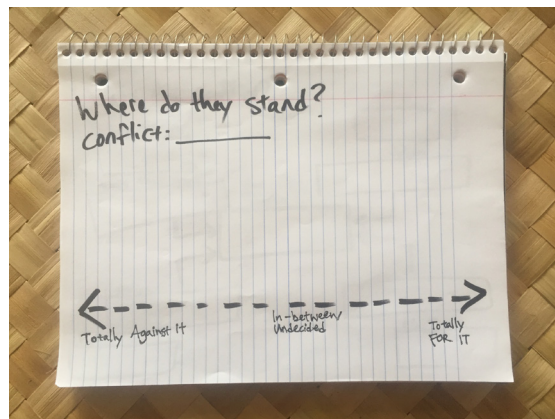
3. Diagram the Players: Hand out the worksheet or have students redraw it on their own. Tell students to line up all the players along the horizontal line according to where they stand on the issue.

4. Analyze: Have students circle the people on their diagram who get a direct quote. Ask:

- *Do you notice any patterns?*
- *Are different perspectives represented?*
- *Do you think there's a relationship between the number of perspectives in an article and its trustworthiness?*

5. Reflect: Have students hold up their diagram. Ask:

- *How many people are represented on each side?*
- *If your worksheet was a scale, would it tilt in one direction from the weight of the people represented?*
- *Do you think there's a relationship between the people who get direct quotes and an article's trustworthiness?*



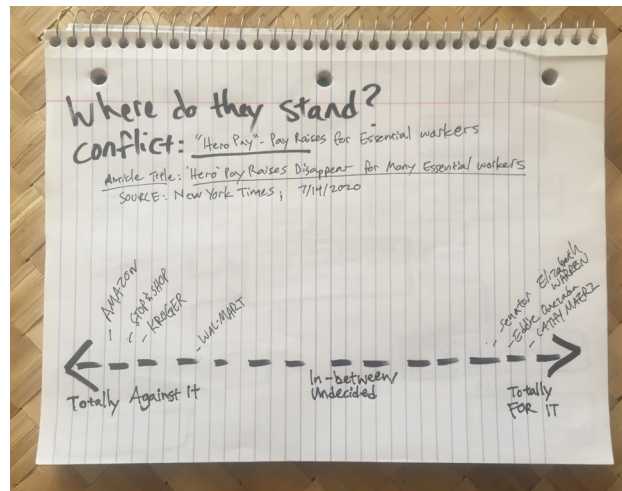


LESSON 2: WHAT MAKES AN ARTICLE TRUSTWORTHY?

INSTRUCTIONS (CONT'D)

6. Search for Bias: Have students go back to their articles and find any proof of the author's opinion. Tell them they can look for specific words or phrases they think might be biased. Have them look for words that clearly show an opinion or are judgmental. Ask:

- *Who created this? Why do you think they created this?*
- *What other kinds of content has this author created in the past?*

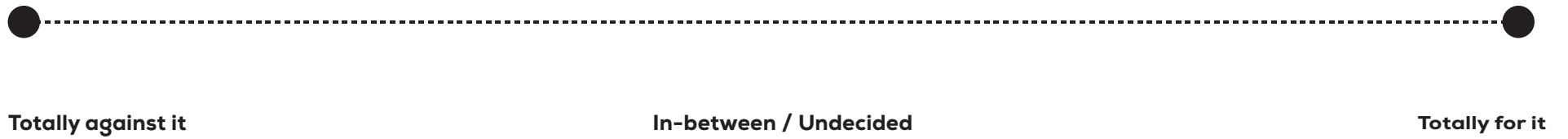


GO DEEPER

EVALUATE BIAS:

Even if a news article has a clear bias, is it necessarily less trustworthy? In an age where fake news is everywhere and political opinion is extremely polarized, does including multiple perspectives help us better understand the issue, or does it create a false sense of balance? One way to engage with these questions is to analyze the stakeholders' worldviews (see Lesson 3 for more).

WHERE DO THEY STAND?



TIME: 30 MINUTES

Goal: Students will be able to illustrate stakeholders' worldviews to better understand their positions and perspectives on a controversial issue.

Materials: News source (article, video, podcast, etc.), pen or pencil, **If the Player Got What They Wanted** worksheet (printed or re-drawn by hand), blank paper

LESSON 3: WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS STAND TO GAIN?

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Warm up: Ask students to reflect on the following prompts.

- *Do you think all perspectives should be represented in a news source?*

2. Introduce the Activity: Hand out the worksheet (or have students re-draw it on their own paper). Tell students:

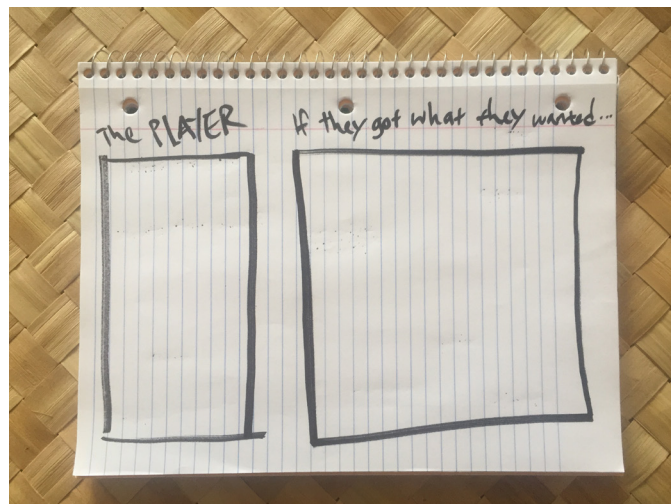
- *It's important to think about what different stakeholders stand to gain by supporting one position over another. This activity helps us better understand not just where people stand, but why they take the position they take.*

3. Sketch the Player: Tell students:

- *In the box on the left, draw a figure representing one of the stakeholders involved in the issue. Don't get hung up on making realistic drawings. It's about getting your ideas on paper!*

4. Sketch the Player's Worldview: In the box on the right, tell students to draw a picture of how the stakeholder's life would change if they got their way. If students have trouble coming up with ideas, ask:

- *How would their life be different in five years if they got what they wanted?*
- *How would their community be different in five years if they got what they wanted?*





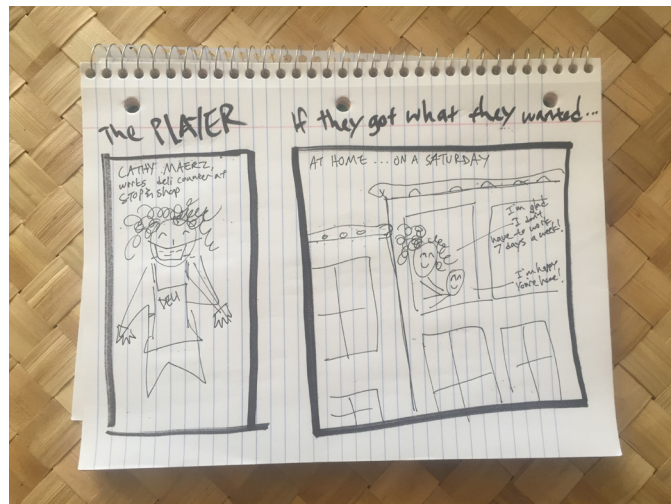
LESSON 3: WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS STAND TO GAIN?

INSTRUCTIONS (CONT'D)

5. Present: Have a few students present their drawings to the rest of the class.

6. Apply a Social Justice Lens: Ask:

- *Who benefits from this worldview? Is it a large group of people, or small?*
- *Who's included in this worldview? Who's left out?*
- *How does this worldview impact the most vulnerable?*
- *How does this worldview impact the most powerful?*



GO DEEPER

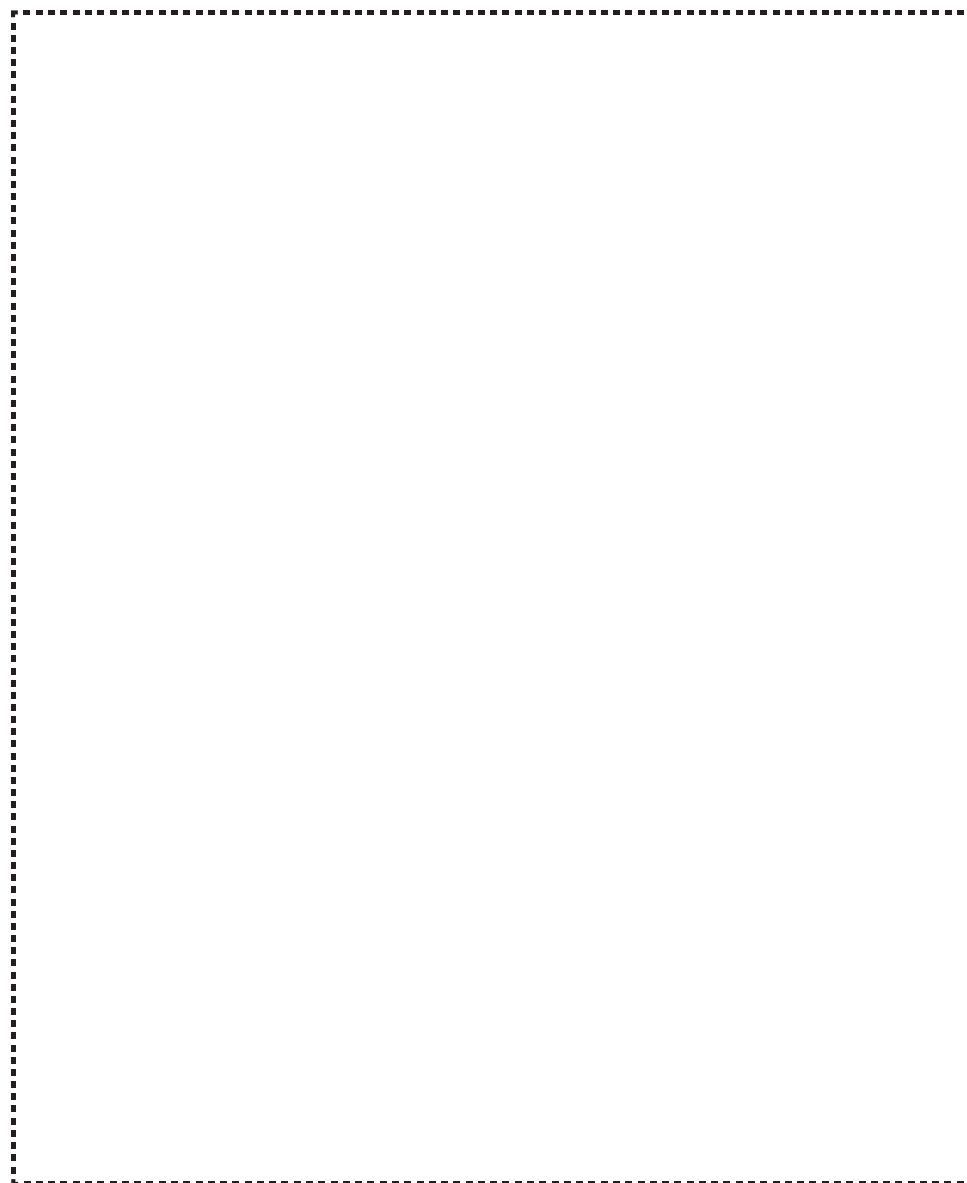
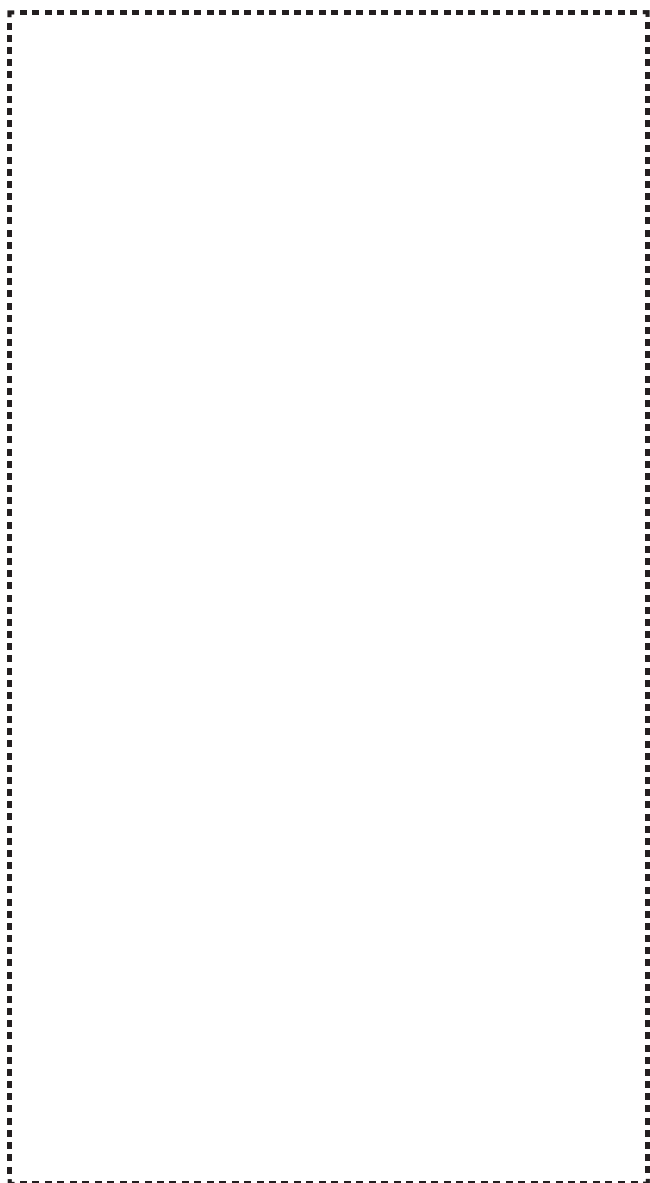
WORST CASE SCENARIO:

Have students draw the worst case scenario if one side got its way. Encourage them to imagine the extremes. The best way to get them comfortable is to suggest a few outlandish visions yourself. This can be an extension activity, or you can have half the students draw the worst case scenario during the original lesson.

THE PLAYER

IF THEY GOT WHAT THEY WANTED...

This is how their life would look different





NEXT STEPS

If you're using these resources as part of a longer, collaborative project, you can help students share their own perspectives on the issue with a larger community.

This can take the form of an opinion letter, a PSA, or some other format that can be shared with news media, stakeholders, and decision makers. Below are a few ideas to help students become more civically engaged on a local issue.

Develop media literacy. Media literacy is the ability to identify different types of media and critically evaluate the messages they are sending. Some good resources to get you started have been created by:

- [Common Sense Education](#)
- [The Newseum](#)
- [Brain Pop](#)

Research the issue further by talking to real people.

- Interview a stakeholder or decision maker about the issue
- Survey community members about the issue

Get creative! Challenge students to collaborate to develop a specific call to action. This could take many forms:

- Launch a social media campaign with a catchy slogan/hashtag and eye-catching visuals
- Publish a collaborative zine or comic book
- Collaborate with community members to develop a public artwork
- Organize a public demonstration

If you do any of these activities, please let us know! We'd love to amplify your students' creativity! Email us at info@welcometocup.org.



CREDITS

This educator guide was produced by the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP).

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, particularly among historically underrepresented communities. For more information about CUP, visit welcometoCUP.org.

CUP

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