BREXIT
SHOULD THE UK HAVE A SECOND REFERENDUM?

75 MINUTE WORKSHOP
Introduction
PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 7TH 2019

The resources for this workshop were produced by The Economist Educational Foundation, an independent charity that was set up by The Economist magazine. We combine The Economist’s journalistic know-how with teaching expertise, and we specialise in supporting teachers to facilitate high-quality classroom discussions about the news.

About this workshop
This workshop explores Brexit and the debate about a second referendum. It will take 75 minutes to run and is aimed at 11- to 15-year-olds. We suggest running it with 12 to 30 students. Teachers are encouraged to adapt it as necessary for their students’ needs.

The competencies that this workshop will develop:

- **Scepticism**: Questioning information to find the truth
- **Reasoning**: Justifying a viewpoint
- **Speaking Up**: Confidently communicating a viewpoint
- **Open-mindedness**: Listening to other viewpoints

Further reading
As part of its Open Future initiative, The Economist invited people on both sides of the debate to state their case for or against a second referendum. You can find it here:


Let us know about any interesting discussions you have...
@Econ_Foundation
#newsthinking #econfoundation

BEFORE THE SESSION YOU NEED TO HAVE:
- The Keywords cards, cut up
- The Thinking questions cut up, enough for one each
- The Event cards, cut up
- The Reasons and Examples, cut up
- The Teacher master copy
- The Discussion question
ACTIVITY 1

Keywords

Resource
The Keywords cards

Activity instructions
Split your group into two teams. One volunteer from each team should come to collect a Keyword card from the front. Both volunteers should receive the same keyword.

Volunteers should read their card silently and then try to explain the keyword to their team. However, they cannot say the keyword or any of the words underlined in red. The first team to guess the keyword correctly wins a point.

Repeat with different volunteers for all of the keywords.

Ask your students:
- Which keywords were the hardest to guess and why?
- Which keywords would you pair up and why?

Extra challenge!
There are also some italicised words in purple in each definition. Challenge your more able teams to explain the keywords without using these words too.
**Keyword:** Democracy
A form of government where everyone gets to have their say about how the country is run, usually by voting.

**Keyword:** Vote
When each person in a group expresses their choice about a decision.

**Keyword:** European Union
Also known as the EU, the European Union is a kind of club for 28 European countries. Member countries share many of the same laws and open their borders to each other.
**KEYWORD:** Brexit
Short for ‘British Exit’. This word is being used to describe Britain leaving the European Union.

**KEYWORD:** Referendum
A vote on one political issue which all voters in a specific country can vote on.

**KEYWORD:** MP
MPs are politicians. MP stands for Member of Parliament. The UK is split up into different areas, called constituencies, and each of these areas has an MP who represents the people from that area.
10 MINUTE ACTIVITY

Brexit Briefing

Resources
The Event cards

Activity instructions
Hand each Event card to a student. Ask those not holding one to order their classmates chronologically, so they are physically showing the timeline of events.

Check they are correct. Then read out each of the following bullet points in turn, pausing after each one. Teachers may wish to mention or add any relevant events that have occurred since this resource was published. Students holding the Event cards should step forward if their card falls into the category called out.

- The event signals some kind of conflict or argument
- The event signals a change
- The EU is directly involved
- MPs are directly involved
- The public is directly involved

Ask your students:
What one word would you use to describe the Brexit process so far?
The UK public vote to leave the EU in a referendum. The country is divided - 52% of people want to leave, and 48% want to remain in the EU.

Theresa May, the new Prime Minister, triggers article 50 to tell the EU that the UK is going to leave in 2 years’ time. The countdown begins.

Theresa May holds a general election so that she can strengthen her government. She continues to be the Prime Minister, but loses support. This makes it harder for her to do her job.

Discussions begin on the “divorce deal” for what the UK’s relationship will be with the EU when it leaves and what the rules will be. For example, how much the UK has to pay the EU and how to deal with EU citizens in Britain.

MPs win an argument which gives them the right to have a say on the final Brexit deal, instead of the government just deciding.

After a year and a half of discussions, EU leaders agree to Theresa May’s deal that sets out the UK’s relationship with the EU after the 29th March 2019. It still needs to get agreement from the UK parliament.

Theresa May survives a challenge by her own party. This shows that some members of her party weren’t happy with her deal.

MPs vote against Theresa May’s Brexit deal. She loses by 432 to 202 votes. It’s the biggest British government defeat ever recorded. MPs can’t agree on what the deal should be. One of the biggest sticking points is to do with the Irish border.

The date the UK is supposed to be leaving the EU. If there is still no agreement on what Brexit will be, then the UK may leave the EU without a deal, which most people don’t want because it could be costly and disruptive.
BREXIT: SHOULD THE UK HAVE A SECOND REFERENDUM?
ACTIVITY 3

10 MINUTE ACTIVITY

Thinking questions

Resources
The Thinking questions

Activity instructions
Throw the Thinking questions in the air. Ask students to grab a question and move to find other students who have the same question as them. They should discuss their initial reactions to this.

Ask for feedback from different groups. Then ask students to throw their question in the air and grab another one. Repeat the process a few times.

Ask your students:
Which question sparked the most discussion?
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Referendo or referendon’t

Resources
The Reasons, the Examples and the Teacher master copy

Activity instructions
Read the following to your students:
“There has been a lot of disagreement throughout the Brexit process. There is lots of debate about how to make decisions. One option is to ask the public to vote again, in a second referendum.”

Tell students you are going to read out a reason which is either for or against a second referendum. Students must move to the left side of the room if they think that the reason is ‘for’ a referendum. They must move to the right side of the room if they think the reason is ‘against’ a referendum.

Read the first Reason. Once the group have moved, give the correct side that Reason to stick on the wall or place on a table on that side of the room. Repeat this for all of the Reasons and check against your Teacher master copy.

 Afterwards, assign students to a side, either for or against a second referendum. Each side must order their Reasons from strongest to weakest, either on the wall or on a table. Ask for feedback.

Then hand out the relevant Examples to each side. Ask students to place each Example next to the Reason it relates to. Then ask students to reconsider their order based on this information.

Ask your students:
– Did you change your order? If so, why?
– Can you think of any other examples or reasons?

Ask students to pair up with someone from the other side and explain what their Reasons and Examples were.
People are now better informed
During the campaign of the first referendum some incorrect information was shared and some important things weren’t really talked about. This means people may have based their decision on information that was wrong or incomplete.

We still don’t have enough information about Brexit
There are still many unknowns about what Brexit would mean for the UK. Without all the facts, it would be hard for people to decide how to vote.

Politicians can’t agree on a Brexit deal
Politicians have been unable to agree on a Brexit deal so a sensible way forward is to ask the people what they want.

It would disregard a clear instruction by the UK public
People who voted to leave in the 2016 referendum would feel angry and ignored if a second referendum gave people the option to remain in the EU.

A second referendum would ask a different question to the first one
Although people in the UK voted to leave in the 2016 referendum, they didn’t know what the Brexit deal would be.

Politicians know more about Brexit so they are able to make a better decision than the public
The UK’s democracy works by MPs making decisions on behalf of the public. It’s their job to know about issues and make the best decisions possible.
During the campaign it was suggested that the £350 million that the UK pays the EU each week could be spent on the NHS instead. This was misleading because the £350 million figure is disputed and Brexit might actually mean the NHS gets less money. During the campaign it was also said that a leave vote would immediately push up unemployment, which has not happened.

We don’t yet know what the Brexit deal is.
And we don’t know what the rules will be. For example, how much we have to pay the EU when we leave and how to deal with EU citizens in Britain and vice versa.

Theresa May’s Brexit deal was strongly rejected by MPs on the 15th January 2019 but there doesn’t seem to be a majority in Parliament on any of the other alternative plans.

Although the referendum was close it gave a clear result: more people wanted to leave than remain in the EU.

In the 2016 referendum people were only asked if they wanted to remain in or leave the EU.
In a second referendum people would have a chance to decide if they wanted to accept the Brexit deal that is on offer.

Theresa May’s Brexit deal is 585 pages long.
Politicians have to read this to really understand Brexit but most members of the public won’t read it.
### Arguments for a Second Referendum

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ACTIVITY 5

25 MINUTE ACTIVITY

Discussion

Resources
The Discussion question

Activity instructions
Remind students of the Keywords, paying particular attention to ‘democracy’.

Place the Discussion question in the middle of the room. Tell students they’ll be discussing this question. This is not a debate where one side will ‘win’. Instead, they should be trying to listen out for and give reasons on both sides of the argument.

To facilitate the discussion:

STUDENTS: should stand in a circle around the question. They should hold out two fists in front of them. To contribute, they should stick up one thumb. Once they have spoken they should put this hand behind their back so they have one more chance to speak, using their other hand. Each speaker can choose the next person to contribute.

The Brexit debate has often exposed politicians’ inability to listen or seek common ground. Encourage students to begin their contributions with the following:
“Something I’ve heard so far that’s made me think, is…”

TEACHER: stand outside the circle. Only get involved to rectify incorrect information or to ask one of the following prompt questions if conversation dries up.
– Is it better for politicians or the public to decide important decisions?
– If there was a referendum, should the voting age be lowered to 16?
– Would having another referendum open the doorway to a third, fourth, fifth…?
– It is always fair to do what the majority want?

Extra challenge!
Halfway through the discussion, pause and ask students to raise their hands if they think a second referendum is a good idea. Ask students to get into mixed groups of four with people who agree and disagree.

Ask these groups to discuss:
– What would it take to change your mind?
– What is the strongest reason that most persuades you at the moment?

Return to the circle. Tell students they should try to address what they heard in their small groups in the remaining discussion time.
DISCUSSION QUESTION

Should the UK have a second referendum?