

## Let's Talk About Election 2020

### C3WP Instructional Resource

KQED  
YOUTH MEDIA  
CHALLENGE

**LET'S  
TALK  
ABOUT**



### Overview

This instructional resource supports students in planning, creating, and publishing a commentary for the KQED Youth Media Challenge: Let's Talk About Election 2020 which is co-hosted by the National Writing Project and PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs.

It's important to note that the Let's Talk About Election 2020 instructional resource provides students the opportunity to engage in civic discourse about topics, issues, and/or controversies that are relevant to their lives. Because students will be sharing their respective viewpoints/positions about election-related issues, it's likely that multiple perspectives will be represented in our classrooms. As with all aspects of fostering a productive and supportive learning environment, it's especially important that teachers revisit the norms they have established with their community of learners regarding productive and respectful discourse.

### Skill Emphasis

- SIFT
- Selecting, Ranking, and Organizing Evidence
- Crafting a claim
- Authorizing, Illustrating, Extending, and/or Countering

### Duration

The resource includes a series of six lessons that can be taught over a period of time or in one to two weeks.

### Classroom Resources

- Writer's Notebook/Journal
- Access to digital resources - documents, online software for creating podcasts or videos

### Overview of Lesson Sequence

1. Introducing the Project and Analyzing Commentary Mentor Texts - Audio and Video Examples
2. Finding a Topic/Issue and Gathering Evidence

3. Planning and Drafting the Commentary
4. Peer Revising and Feedback
5. Copyright/Fair Use and Media Production
6. Publishing - video or audio

## Lesson Sequence

### Introducing the Project and Analyzing Mentor Texts (two 45 minute class periods)

As mentioned the overview, fostering and maintaining a learning environment where students feel supported and safe in sharing their viewpoints, perspectives, opinions, and even personal experiences is especially important for this instructional unit. Depending on your classroom culture, it might be helpful to revisit norms you've established with your students for engaging in civil discourse or take some time to set norms if you feel that is necessary.

- To begin, ask students to write for a few minutes in their notebooks in response to the following prompt:  
*As we know, 2020 is an election year which is even more reason for candidates, politicians, and citizens to discuss and debate issues that matter in our lives. What are some issues that you hear candidates, friends, family, neighbors, citizens, etc., discussing that are relevant to this year's election? Why are these issues important in the lives of Americans and/or our global society?*
- Students may share their responses with peers and/or the class.
- The teacher explains that even though we may not yet be of voting age - depending on the age of your students - it's important for all of us to have platforms where we can express our perspectives, viewpoints, and positions on issues that are relevant to our lives and over the next several days we have the opportunity to create and publish a commentary to share our voices with a broad audience.
- Continue by playing [this video](#) to introduce the media challenge. The teacher may choose to facilitate a discussion or question and answer session about the media challenge. This is also a good time to give students the [Media Release and/Parental Consent Forms](#) and set a deadline for getting the forms signed and returned.
- In order to help the students create a "vision" for the type of commentary they will create, take time to analyze mentor texts. It's recommended that students study at least four examples - [two audio](#) and [two video](#) - as a whole class or in small groups. One option is to view/listen to the commentary examples as a whole group and complete this [note-catcher](#) as a class. Another option is to have students work in pairs or small groups to complete the [note-catcher](#).
- Click here for a [model that demonstrates](#) Studying and Analyzing a Persuasive Commentary Mentor Text

### Formative Assessment

Depending on the time available and the needs of the students, teachers might want to have students select one commentary example to analyze individually and complete [this note-catcher](#) as a formative assessment.

### Finding a Topic/Issue and Gathering Evidence (two 45 minute class periods)

After students have analyzed a few commentary examples they will begin thinking about possible topics for their own commentaries. It's important that students have some type of personal connection to their topic. Based on the needs of your students, select one or more of the following options for supporting your students in selecting a topic/issue for their persuasive commentary.

- **Option 1:** Depending on when you teach this instructional resource in the course of the academic year, students might have already generated lists of issues and topics that are important to them. For example, perhaps students have completed a version of [Generating Ideas and Exploring Topics](#) or perhaps they have listed issues that are important to them in their community from the Making Civic Arguments instructional resource. This might be a good time to have students return to their notebooks/journals to see if there are issues/topics they would like to focus on for their persuasive commentary.
- **Option 2:** In their notebooks, have students take about two or three minutes to brainstorm a list of topics/issues related to this year's election. Then instruct students to reread the list and highlight/circle three or four issues that they feel most connected to and explain why these issues are important to them.
- **Option 3:** Instruct students to think about and reflect on a time where someone they know experienced an injustice or they observed an injustice. *Write about that experience and what you want changed as a result. Why is this issue important to you?* \*Ideas from [Assignment Sequence](#) by Samantha McMillan
- **Option 4:** Instruct students to create a [three column chart](#) in their notebooks with the following headings or provide students with a [copy of their chart](#):

Issues that are important to me	Issues that are important to my community	Issues that I find confusing and/or want to learn more about

\*Resource from [KQED Above the Noise](#)

Have students complete the brainstorm chart and then circle/highlight one issue from each column that is a potential topic for their commentary.

Once students have decided on an issue, the next step is to consider personal connections to the topic and begin gathering evidence.

### **Gathering Evidence**

This is a good point to remind students that the commentaries they produce should be 2:00 minutes or less and no more than 400 words and although the commentaries are concise, it's important to support claims with evidence.

- An essential skill is finding credible and reliable resources/information to support claims and one method to determine the trustworthiness of a source is SIFT, a strategy developed by Mike Caulfield.
- Use the [SIFT graphic organizer](#) to evaluate sources; here [is a model](#) that demonstrates the process.
- Teachers, [check out this link for more information about SIFT](#).

#### **Teacher Tip**

Consult this resource for an example of SIFT in action: [SIFTing through the Coronavirus Outbreak](#)

Students will then use this [graphic organizer](#) to identify specific evidence about their issue and then rank and select the evidence they want to use when writing the commentary.

### **Planning and Drafting Commentary (one 45 minute class period, but time may vary)**

Once students have gathered evidence, it's important to review the ways evidence is used in commentaries as opposed to more academic writing. Some of the ways evidence is incorporated into an audio or visual persuasive commentary has slight variations to the "moves" we teach in C3WP. For example, when authorizing a source in a commentary we must be concise. Likewise, journalistic writing such as commentary, uses hyperlinks to cite sources rather than in-text citations.

- The teacher should take time to [review these principles](#) of using evidence in commentaries with students.

Now that students have an issue, evidence, and have reviewed tips for using evidence in their commentaries, it's time to begin planning the commentary.

- Begin by reading this [example script](#) with students. Perhaps print copies for students or share the Google Doc for students to view digitally.

- Ask students to identify the following and discuss how these features of argumentative writing are evident in the commentary script:
  - Claim
  - Personal experience as evidence
  - Evidence from reliable sources
  - Examples of argumentative moves: authorizing, illustrating, extending, and/or countering if present
  - Call to action
- **Crafting Thesis/Claim:** At this point students should have a clear idea of their stance/position/viewpoint on the issue. As we see in the script, the claim/thesis is clearly stated in the introduction/lede of the commentary script.

#### **Teacher Tip**

Teachers are encouraged to model the drafting process by “thinking aloud” about their writing process and sharing an in progress draft of their commentary.

- **Drafting Option #1:** The teacher provides students with digital or printed copies of this [graphic organizer](#) to use for drafting/writing the commentary. As they draft, students will incorporate the evidence they selected/ranked from the [gathering evidence graphic organizer](#).
- **Drafting Option #2:** Some students may need additional support in crafting a claim/thesis and it might be helpful to provide them more scaffolding for the thesis statement.

#### **Peer Revising/Feedback (one 45 minute class period)**

Once students have written a draft of their commentaries, it’s helpful for them to engage in peer review to receive feedback on their drafts.

- Teachers may have previously established norms for peer review protocols and/or grouping or partnering students. If students do not have writing groups or partners for peer review, then the teacher should create groups of two or three students.
- If engaging in peer review is a regular practice in the classroom, then it may not be necessary to model the process of peer review. If students are new to peer review, then teachers should model the process of providing feedback by reading aloud a draft and “thinking aloud” and annotating a draft and responding to [these questions](#) as a guide for the feedback.
- Instruct students to provide feedback about their peers’ draft(s) - one or two drafts depending on if students are working in partners or in groups of three. Make printed or digital copies of the [peer feedback guidelines](#) for each student to complete as they read drafts and provide feedback.
- Once students have provided feedback on their peers’ drafts, allow them time to read the comments and revise their drafts.

#### **Copyright/Fair Use and Media Production (approximately two 45 minute class periods, but time may vary)**

Students now have a draft/script of their commentary and they need to determine whether or not they will produce their commentary as an audio podcast or video.

- Have students return to the [noticings/analysis chart](#) about the commentary mentor texts and revisit the last column about examples of images, sounds, and/or video that contribute to the effectiveness of the commentary argument.
- At this point, it's important to review [conventions of audio and video projects](#). Take time to view and/or listen to one of the mentor texts and identify examples of the conventions: sound and image selection, sound quality and volume, transitions, narration, and copyright.
- Ask students to share what types of media they plan to include in their audio or video commentary. It might also be beneficial for students to create a list in their notebooks of the media they will incorporate and where they plan to get the media - internet, personal photos/videos, audio recordings from friends and family, etc.
- It's important to review copyright and fair use guidelines with students. Begin by asking students what they know about fair use and copyright and why it is important.
- Next, read and discuss ["What is 'fair use', and how does it apply to copyright law?"](#) and then if necessary review these guidelines for [fair use and copyright](#).
- As students gather media resources for their commentaries, encourage them to use [Creative Commons](#) and the [Free Music Archive](#).
- Students will then need to determine the software they want to use to create their podcast or video. Provide students with a [digital copy of this document](#) to help them decide what software will work best for their media project.
- The teacher should make sure that students have access to the digital software and tools necessary to create their podcast or videos.

## **Publishing**

This information is also found on the Let's Talk About Election 2020 [Teacher Instructions and FAQs](#).

The Election 2020 challenge showcase will be open for submissions from **January 2020** to the inauguration in January 2021.

- **How do submissions work?**
  - Students will submit their commentaries for the Election 2020 challenge showcase in their Student Dashboard on KQED Learn.
  - Students will provide the following:
    - A YouTube, Vimeo, Soundcloud, Google Drive or other hosting site link to their media content.
    - A brief summary of their piece
    - A title
    - A transcript that includes hyperlinks to sources
    - A reflection on their work
    - An image thumbnail
    - A tag or tags (selected from list of topics)

- You will be able to approve each student's submission in your Teacher Dashboard so it can be published to the showcase. You'll also acknowledge that you have received parental permission for each student's submission.
- **Where will the submissions live? Who can see them? And for how long?**
  - All published pieces will be shared on the Election 2020 showcase and searchable by location, media type and topic. The media showcase is publicly viewable, and your students will be identified by their first name, last initial, school name and location. Student created media will be accessible on the showcase even after challenge submissions have ended.
- **What happens after we submit?**
  - Invite students to participate in civic discourse! Students can log in to KQED Learn and contribute to discussions on their peers' submissions. For an example activity: have students comment on a video that shares their topic but takes a different stance. (Student comments are only visible to educators and students registered on KQED Learn.)
  - Share student media commentaries with your school, local communities and networks.