



Teacher Resource

UK Voting Age

Focus Questions

Discuss the BTN story as a class and record the main points of the discussion. Students will then respond to the following:

1. What country is lowering their voting age to 16?
2. What other countries allow 16-year-olds to vote in national elections? Name two.
3. What is the most common minimum voting age around the world?
4. What are some arguments for and against lowering the voting age to 16?
5. What do you think about lowering the voting age to 16? Give your opinion on the topic.

Activity: What do you think?

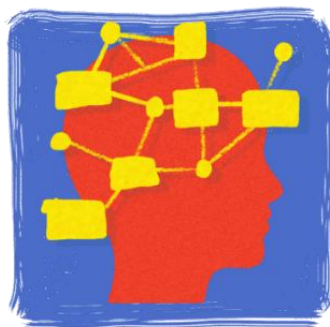
Before watching the BTN UK Voting Age story facilitate a class discussion asking students the following question.

How old do you think someone should be to vote? Why?

In pairs, students will respond to the question, recording their ideas on a piece of paper. Ask some volunteers in the class to share their thoughts. Follow on this discussion with a quick classroom poll “*Should 16-year-olds be allowed to vote in elections?*”.

After watching the BTN UK Voting Age story record what students already know and what they have learnt about voting. What questions do they have about voting and elections? Use the following questions to help guide discussion.

- Have you ever voted for something? Think of different situations where you have been able to have your vote. For example, in the classroom with hands-up voting, at home in family decisions or at clubs voting for new members.



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KEY LEARNING

Students will explore the arguments for and against lowering the voting age to 16.

CURRICULUM

HASS – Year 5

The key values and features of Australia’s democracy, including elections, and the roles and responsibilities of elected representatives.

HASS – Year 6

The key institutions of Australia’s system of government, how it is based on the Westminster system, and the key values and beliefs of Western democracies.

English – Year 6

Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, choosing and experimenting with text structures, language features, images and digital resources appropriate to purpose and audience.

- Who can vote at an election?
- Who should have the right to vote?
- How old do you have to be to vote in Australia?
- Is voting compulsory in Australia?
- How has people's right to vote changed over the years?
- Is voting important? Give reasons for your answer.
- Imagine If you were going to vote in an election, which issues would be important to you?
- Complete the following sentence. It is important that young people's voices are heard because...
- How can young people get their voice heard about issues they care about?
- Think of three questions you have about the BTN story.

Activity: Glossary

Create your own classroom glossary about voting. Start by brainstorming words as a class using a mind map to record your responses. Find definitions for each word. Here are some words to get students started.

BALLOT BOX	CAMPAIGN	ELECTORATE
POLITICAL PARTY	ELECTORAL ROLL	ELECTION

Further activities for students:

- Choose one word/term from your glossary. Find a definition for the word and explore its meaning in more detail. Explain the meaning of the word or term to your classmates. Use examples to help explain the word's meaning.
- Visit the Parliamentary Education Office (PEO) for a [glossary](#) to browse or search the meanings of key parliamentary terms.
- What is suffrage?

Activity: Public Opinion

Students will interview a range of people to find out the different attitudes and feelings people have towards lowering the voting age to 16 in Australia. Students will use the following as a guide during the interview process:

- Think about who you will interview, for example, family and/or friends.
- Prepare for your interview by writing some questions that you will ask your interviewee. Write open-ended questions. Open-ended questions have no right or wrong answer and can't be answered with a 'yes' or 'no'.
- Find out what voting means to them.
- Ask if they think the voting age should be lowered and ask them to explain their answer.
- Think about ways to record peoples' responses – written, audio or video.

Activity: Opinion Poll

Hold a poll in your class. Students will conduct their own opinion poll on the issue of lowering the voting age in Australia. Working in groups, students will need to decide who their sample group will be and how many people will be polled.

- Write a poll question. Poll questions should be clear, concise, and relevant to the topic. For example, *Should the voting age be lowered to 16 in Australia?*
- What method they will use to conduct the poll? (Face to face interviews or written responses).
- Ask students to graph the opinion poll results and display in the classroom. Students can reflect on how reliable they think the results were. What would they do differently next time?
- Students may want to film their interviews and then create a movie to present to other students.



Activity: Class Debate

Debating is an activity that helps students improve a range of skills including public speaking, communication skills, research skills, persuasion, confidence, teamwork and critical thinking. Use the following guide to help plan a classroom debate.

Before starting this activity watch the BTN [Voting Age](#) story which covers the topic.

Brainstorm

As a class brainstorm a list of arguments for and against the issue, using a T-chart to record your student's responses.



BTN – [Voting Age](#)

Arguments **for** lowering the voting age to 16...

- Many 16 and 17-year-olds have to pay tax so they should have a say in how their money is used.
- Helps young people learn about politics, democracy and responsibility at a young age.
- Voting while still in school means young people will have access to support and resources about government and elections.
- Young people already make serious decisions, like driving and working.
- Many policies affect young people – like education, climate change, housing – so they should be able to have a voice in politics.

Arguments **against** lowering the voting age to 16...

- Some people say that many 16 and 17-year-olds aren't mature enough and don't have enough life experience to make informed voting decisions.
- Some people believe that many 16 and 17-year-olds aren't interested in politics so may not know who to vote for.

Classroom Debate – Should the voting age be lowered to 16?

Divide your class into groups of 6. Each group will then be divided into 2 teams, one representing the affirmative and the other the negative. The team arguing for the topic is called the affirmative and the team arguing against is called the negative, and the team that's judged to make the best argument wins!



To learn more about how debates work watch the BTN High [School Debating](#) story.

For each team there is a 1st speaker, 2nd speaker and 3rd speaker, each with a special role. Each speaker will prepare a 1–2-minute speech. Working together as a team students will choose their 3 best points to argue during the debate, work out their roles and what points each speaker will cover.

Activity – Active Citizenship

Ask students to brainstorm ideas on the whiteboard about what it means to be an active engaged citizen. Encourage them to think about actions that individuals can take to make a positive impact on their communities. Individually or in pairs students will discuss and respond to the following questions.

- What issues are important to you in your community?
- How can individuals contribute to positive change in these areas? Think of big and small actions.

Below are some ways that students can become more active and engaged citizens.

Join your SRC

Would you like to have a greater say in your school community? Nominate yourself for your School Representative Council.

Write a letter

Would you like to see an improvement in your local community? Write a letter to the mayor of your council asking for change.

Petition

Would you like to raise awareness about an issue in your school, local community or in parliament? Get involved and have your say by starting a petition.

Run a Class Poll

What's important to your school community? Conduct a poll in your class or whole school to learn more about your community's needs and opinions.

Useful Websites

- [UK Voting Age](#) – BTN Newsbreak
- [16 and 17-year-olds could be able to vote in the next election](#) – BBC Newsround
- [UK Voting age: Should you be able to vote at 16?](#) – BBC Newsround
- [Voting Age](#) – BTN
- [Lowering the Voting Age](#) – BTN High
- [History of Voting](#) – BTN
- [Why do people over 18 have to vote?](#) – PEO
- [Australian voting history in action](#) – Australian Electoral Commission