

Politics and Youth

Topic: Politics

Aims:

- To develop reading and speaking skills
- To revise language of politics

Level: Pre-intermediate and above

Introduction

This lesson gives students the opportunity to find out about the political system in the UK and to discuss the attitude of many young people towards politics.

Procedure

Political people and places

- This is a simple matching task to introduce the topic. If you want to make the task more challenging, add more items.
- Answers 1 – The Prime Minister 2 – The Queen 3 – Members of Parliament 4 – The Houses of Parliament 5 – The Conservative Party 6 – The Labour Party.

Tip:

For higher levels or for students that already have some knowledge of the political system in the UK, extend the task using information from these sites:

<http://www.parliament.uk/education/> – a site for young people about the Parliament

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UK_politics – UK political system explained.

Worksheet A – Political people and places

- 1) This person is the head of the government.
- 2) This person is the head of state.
- 3) These people are elected to represent their areas (known as constituencies). They are also known as MPs.
- 4) This place is where the Parliament meets.
- 5) This is the name of the main right-wing party.
- 6) This is the name of the main left-wing party.

The Queen / The Conservative Party / The Prime Minister / Members of Parliament / The Houses of Parliament / The Labour Party

Find Somebody Who...

- Copy **worksheet B** for each student or put it on the board for students to copy into a notebook. Ask students to add two more statements of their own in the blank spaces at the bottom of the chart before they begin. Then get everyone standing up and moving around the class to ask each other the questions. Make sure students know they can't write the same person for more than one question and that the extra information is important.

Tip:

'Find Somebody Who...' activities are generally more challenging for students than they appear at first sight. Before letting the students stand up and walk around the class to mingle with their classmates, check they are all able to form the correct sentences from the FSW statements. For example:

'Do you know the name of the British Prime Minister?'

'Would you like to be a politician?' 'Why / why not?'

Worksheet B – Find Somebody Who...

Find somebody who...	Name	Extra information
... knows the name of the British Prime Minister.		
... would like to be a politician.		
... thinks that voting in elections is very important.		
... thinks there should be more women politicians in their country.		
... believes that most politicians are too old!		
... can name five politicians from their own country.		

Politics – sentence completion

- This task leaves students completely free to express their own opinions. If you are working with young learners, think carefully about whether or not your students are mature enough to be able to do this before you offer them this task. With teenagers there is a certain element of risk involved in a completely open ended task like this.
- To save photocopies and to make the task more challenging, dictate the sentences to your students. Alternatively, give each student a copy of **worksheet C**.

Worksheet C – sentence completion

Complete the following sentences to express your own opinion. Then compare your sentences with a partner.

- 1) In my opinion, most politicians...
- 2) If I were Prime Minister or President of my country I would...
- 3) The political system in my country is...
- 4) I wish politicians would...
- 5) In an ideal world...

Politics and Youth – Reading

- Give each pair or group of students a copy of the reading text on **worksheet D**. They should read the text and put the headings in the right place. Worksheet E offers some follow-up discussion questions from the text.
- The text is written by the British Council's Trend UK team. For more information about Trend UK:
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/indonesia-common-trend-uk.htm>

Answers: 1 – C, 2 – A, 3 – D , 4 – B

Tip:

The vocabulary in the text could be a little tricky so be sure to pre-teach the words you think your students won't know. If you don't pre-teach the challenging vocabulary, encourage students to guess the meaning of unknown words from the context – this is an important skill for language learners.

Worksheet D – Politics and Youth – Reading

Read the text about Politics and Youth and put the paragraph headings in the right place.

- A – **Street politics**
- B – **Green generation**
- C – **Parties and partying**
- D - **Hi-tech politics**

Politics and Youth

Last year the BBC announced that more young people voted on Big Brother than the election. Does this make UK youth politically apathetic?

1 –

I spent a couple of days asking young people in the Manchester and London area how they felt about party politics. I spoke to 11 twenty-somethings and only one had voted in the last general election. Here's some of their comments;

'To be honest I'm not too bothered. I don't keep up with developments at Westminster [the site of UK government]. These days my job, my cash flow and socialising are more important!'

Tom, 28, from Manchester.

'I can't relate to any of the politicians. They all seem fairly similar and rarely listen to young people. Only one party [the Liberal Democrats] made student debt an issue, and they are a long way from coming to power.'

Fiona, 25, from London.

These two examples were typical of many young people's attitudes to state politics.

2 –

This would suggest that we are just not interested in politics but a closer study is more revealing.

For many young people politics is not about Westminster. Issues like the US-UK led Iraq war have sparked debate and action in recent years. In 2003 over a million people marched through London, many of them young and passionate.

3 –

Technology played a huge role in organising this protest on a global scale. It has become a factor in providing many young people across the world with a chance to interact and discuss without the traditional middle-man of the politician or news media.

The British Council's Café Society project allows young people from countries across the world to meet in a relaxed, informal setting and share opinions through video conferencing.

4 –

David Cameron, the leader of the Conservative Party, started cycling to work as gesture of the need to take green issues more seriously. Since then politicians have been keen to win the green label and secure the support of the younger generation. Young people are often perceived to be the 'greenest' age group. Indeed environmental issues are taken far more seriously than ever before. Perhaps they'll leave behind a greener UK.

Tip:

If you and your students want to find out more about politics and youth, these sites may be useful.

<http://www.funkydragon.org> – Children and young people’s Assembly for Wales

<http://www.scottishyouthparliament.org.uk> – Scottish Youth Parliament

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork> – BBC Action Network. Young people discuss everyday democratic issues that concern them and get help to make changes in their local area

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4586995.stm – Article from 2005: BBC News. Is Big Brother really more popular than General Election?

Politics and Youth – Let’s discuss the issues

- This activity of discussion questions would follow on nicely from the reading task on worksheet D. Students could discuss them in small groups or you could have a whole class discussion. Be prepared to feed-in new language as and when your students need it. Either give out copies of **worksheet E** to each group or introduce the questions in turn and use for a group discussion.

Worksheet E - Politics and Youth – Let’s discuss the issues

When you have read the text in task four, discuss the following questions in groups.

- What are the main problems facing young people in your country today?
- Do you think politicians understand these problems?
- Were you surprised that more young people in the UK voted in the reality show Big Brother than in the election?
- Are young people in your country generally politically apathetic?
- Would you like to be a politician? Why / why not?

Vote for us!

- This is a fun task that could lead on to becoming a mini project. Put students into groups or ‘parties’. They will have to think of a name for their new political party and to think up five policies that they will use to try and win the election. When all groups have finished, give them each two minutes to try and persuade the other groups to vote for them. Then hold a class election. If you have time to prepare it, make ballot papers and use a shoebox so students can have a secret vote. Then count up the votes and let the winners celebrate!

Worksheet F – Vote for us!

You are going to create a new political party! Think of a name for your party and think of five things you will do if you are elected. Then try to persuade your classmates to vote for you.

The _____ Party.

If we are elected we will:

✓

✓

✓

✓

✓

Vote for us!
You know it makes sense!