



## Youth Curfews—Alternate Lesson Plan

### Student Objectives

- Understand the importance of youth participation in democratic societies.
- Understand the context and reasons why some democratic countries have created youth curfews.
- Evaluate reasons for supporting and opposing youth curfews.
- Identify areas of agreement and disagreement with other students.
- Decide, individually and as a group, whether governments should impose curfews on people under age 18; support decisions based on evidence and sound reasoning.
- Reflect on the value of deliberation when deciding issues in a democracy.

### Question for Deliberation

*Should our democracy impose curfews on people under age 18?*

### Materials

- Lesson Procedures
- Handout 1—Student Deliberation Guide
- Handout 2—Student Deliberation Worksheet
- Handout 3—Student Reflection on Deliberation
- Alternate Reading (*simplified reading with scaffolding provided*)
- Reading Handout – Preparing to Read  
(*handout to be completed before reading the text to help students with comprehension*)
- Reading Handout – After the Reading  
(*handout to be completed after reading the text to help students with ideas in the text*)
- Selected Resources
- Deliberation Question with Arguments  
(*optional—use if students have a difficult time extracting the arguments*)

## Youth Curfews—Alternate Reading

**Deliberation Question:** *Should our democracy impose curfews on people under age 18?*

1 Every democratic society must strive to grant  
2 equal protection to its citizens. Yet many laws focus  
3 on one significant group of citizens that has no  
4 formal way to shape those laws: youth. Children and  
5 adolescents are a vital part of every nation. They are  
6 subject to society's rules, but they are treated  
7 differently under the law precisely because of their  
8 age. They cannot vote, nor do they have many of the  
9 **privileges** and **responsibilities** of older citizens.  
10 Instead, laws are passed to help and protect them or  
11 to protect the larger society. One of these laws is the  
12 youth curfew.



### 13 **Youth Curfews: Historical and Legal Background**

14 **Youth curfew** laws make it illegal for young people, usually under age 16 or 17, to be on the  
15 streets during certain times. These times are typically from 11:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. Curfew  
16 violations are considered “status offenses.” A **status offense** is something that is illegal when a  
17 young person does it but legal when done by an adult. Other examples might be smoking or  
18 drinking in public, running away from home, or not being in school during a normal school day.

19 The United States is the current leader in **legislating** and **enforcing** curfew laws. These laws

20 are usually passed and enforced by state or local governments. During the 1990s, thousands of  
21 U.S. cities and towns, including nearly three-fourths of all cities with more than 100,000  
22 inhabitants, passed youth curfew laws. These laws were part of a response to an increase in  
23 **juvenile** crime that occurred between 1988 and 1992. During those four years, juvenile homicide  
24 increased 55 percent. Forcible rape increased 27 percent. Aggravated assault jumped 80 percent.

25 Youth under 16 were responsible for 62 percent of violent juvenile offenses. But statistics  
26 also showed that teenagers were the most frequent targets of youth violence. Curfew laws enacted  
27 in the 1990s were aimed at reducing juvenile crime and preventing youth from being victims.

28 Several European democracies have imposed youth curfews. In Britain, a 1998 law allowed  
29 local councils to impose curfews for children under ten. A Scottish program requires police  
30 officers to stop young people on the streets at night. The officers divert these young people to  
31 youth activities. These activities are available at clubs set up by the local council. Serbia has  
32 debated extending wartime curfew policies for young people only.

33 Curfew laws in the United States have been challenged by the American Civil Liberties Union  
34 (ACLU). ACLU lawyers argue that the curfew law violates young people's **rights** under the U.S.  
35 Constitution. These rights include **freedom of speech** and **peaceful assembly**, freedom from  
36 unreasonable **detainment**, fair treatment under the law, and the right to travel.

37 Not surprisingly, different court challenges have yielded different results. A federal court  
38 declared that the curfew law in the city of Dallas, Texas, was unconstitutional. The city appealed.  
39 The higher court ruled the Dallas curfew was constitutional because it could reduce juvenile crime  
40 and **victimization**. The higher court also ruled that certain exceptions in the law provided young  
41 people and their parents with enough freedom to move about after curfew. In 2001, however,  
42 curfew laws were successfully challenged in the states of Alaska, New Jersey, New York, and

43 elsewhere. In those cases, curfew laws were found to be unconstitutional.

44 *Summarize: Summarize the section above in 20 words or less:*

44 *What questions do you have about the section above?*

## 45 **Balancing Rights and Safety: Arguments for and Against Youth Curfews**

46 Most arguments about youth curfews address two main ideas: (1) the safety of youth and  
47 society and (2) the rights of youth and adults.

48 **1. The Safety of Youth and Society.** Supporters of youth curfews claim that curfews can help  
49 protect vulnerable children. Most parents are responsible. But many cannot supervise their  
50 children. Their children may then fall victim to street crime and accidents. Curfews, supporters  
51 say, can protect undersupervised children and help parents face their responsibilities. Supporters  
52 also say that youth curfews can challenge negative youth attitudes in areas where defying the  
53 law is considered cool and gang membership is a status symbol. Curfews encourage young  
54 people to spend more time with their families and in more positive activities, such as sports and  
55 youth clubs.

56 Opponents of youth curfews argue that curfews limit the rights of parents to bring up their  
57 children as they choose. Requiring adults to accompany their children to outside activities is  
58 unreasonable and discriminatory. Many adults don't believe they need to—or they are unable  
59 to—transport their children around the community.

60 Advocates of youth curfews also believe that these laws help communities reduce juvenile

61 violence. Juvenile crime is a serious problem that often involves drugs and violence. Gangs can  
62 terrorize communities and create a social climate in which criminal activity becomes the norm.  
63 Youth curfews deal with these problems by keeping young people off the street and preventing  
64 them from hanging out together after dark.

65 People who oppose youth curfews are not convinced that curfews actually work. They point  
66 to studies that show no direct link between juvenile crime rates and the enforcement of youth  
67 curfews. Instead, these studies show other factors (for example, population shifts and economic  
68 changes) have more effect on youth crime than do curfews. Additionally, these studies found that  
69 most juvenile crime takes place between 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.—after students are released from  
70 school and before working parents return home—rather than during curfew hours.

71 Youth curfews, say their advocates, can support **zero-tolerance policing**. This strategy is  
72 based on the theory that low-level crimes such as graffiti-tagging, window breaking, and drug-  
73 dealing (all common juvenile offenses) can encourage development of a lawless environment  
74 where more serious crimes can flourish.

75 Opponents suggest that youth curfews can be abused. Such laws may turn generally law-  
76 abiding young people into criminals. They note that more American children are charged with  
77 curfew offenses than with any other crime. Statistics from U.S. communities suggest that the  
78 police arrest more non-white than white youth for curfew violations. Opponents also say that  
79 curfews affect the poor more harshly. Because youth in poor neighborhoods have fewer places to  
80 play or “hang out” safely, their only option is staying on the streets. Once burdened by a criminal  
81 record, many of these young people cross a psychological boundary, perceiving themselves as  
82 outlaws. A criminal record reduces the employment opportunities for youth and scars their futures.  
83 Enforcement of youth curfews can lead to deterioration in police-youth relations.

84       **2. The Rights of Youth and Adults.** Opponents of youth curfews say that these policies  
85 violate the individual rights and liberties of young people. Children, they say, have the right to  
86 freedom of movement and assembly. Curfews hurt these rights. Young people, especially  
87 teenagers, have legitimate reasons to be out at night without adults. Many hold jobs. Others  
88 participate in group activities at churches, youth clubs, or sports arenas. Young citizens cannot  
89 learn how to be responsible unless they have opportunities to act responsibly.

90       Opponents of curfews also note that this kind of law treats all young people as potential law-  
91 breakers. While only 0.2 percent of youth in the United States commit serious offenses, youth  
92 curfews limit the remaining 99.8 percent of young people who seek to engage in legitimate  
93 activities during nighttime hours. Moreover, curfew laws tend to discriminate by age, despite the  
94 fact that young people commit fewer crimes than adults.

95       Supporters of youth curfews agree that such programs take the law-abiding majority of  
96 young people off the streets. They see this restriction, however, as a protection and an advantage.  
97 It protects law-abiding youth from law-breakers. It also gives the police the advantage of  
98 focusing their resources on only those young people actively breaking the law.

99       Balancing the rights and safety needs of youth and adults remains a challenge.

100    *Summarize: Summarize the section above in 20 words or less:*

102    *What questions do you have about the section above?*



## **Youth Curfews—Reading Handout Preparing to Read**

**Before you begin reading, preview the text. Look at the title and the subheadings. Check the vocabulary words that are highlighted in bold.**

What is the topic of the text?

What aspects of the topic is the text going to cover (use the subheadings)?

What do you know about this topic? Do you have an opinion about the topic?

**You will be reading to learn (1) background information about the issue of youth curfews and (2) the arguments for and against youth curfews.**

As you read, annotate the text, using the following symbols:

**!** This is new or interesting.

**?** I have a question about this.

**??** This is confusing.

**☺** I agree with this.

**X** I disagree with this.

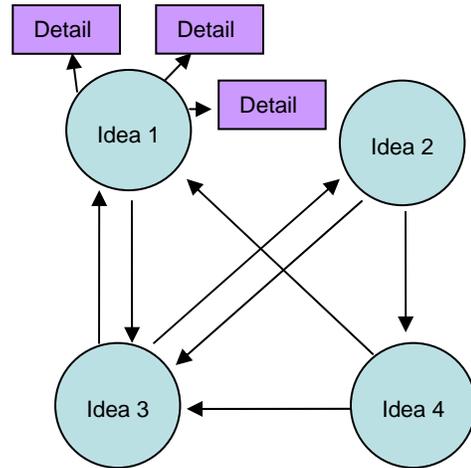
Draw a box around words that you find difficult.



## Youth Curfews—Reading Handout After the Reading

Discuss the reading with the members of your group. Remember your purpose in doing the reading: to learn (1) background information about the issue of youth curfews and (2) the arguments for and against youth curfews.

With your group, create a concept map of the reading. A concept map is a diagram (like the one to the right) that shows the most important ideas in a reading and how they are related. One way to start your concept map is by putting each main idea from the article inside its own circle on a sheet of paper. You could then draw lines or arrows to connect related ideas. You could also add details about each idea in boxes connected to the concept circles.





## Youth Curfews—Selected Resources

- Bilchik, Shay, "Curfew: An Answer to Juvenile Delinquency and Victimization," *Juvenile Justice Bulletin* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, April 1996).
- Budd, Jordan C., "Juvenile Curfews: The Rights of Minors vs. the Rhetoric of Public Safety," *Human Rights* (Washington, DC: American Bar Association, 2004), <http://www.abanet.org/irr/hr/fall99humanrights/budd.html>.
- "Child Curfews," *Deatabase: The Online Debate Topic Database* (New York: International Debate Education Association, 2001), <http://www.deatabase.org/details.asp?topicID=114>.
- "Coming of Age in America," *Bill of Rights in Action* (Los Angeles: Constitutional Rights Foundation, May 1982), Vol.16:2.
- "Curfews and Local Government," *The Challenge of Violence* (Los Angeles: Constitutional Rights Foundation, 1997).
- "Curfews: A National Debate" (Portland, OR: American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon, 2001), <http://www.aclu-or.org/issues/curfews/studentcurfew1.html>.
- "Local Child Curfews Guidance Document" (London: British Home Office, 2003), <http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/youth18.htm>.
- Ruefle, W., and K.M. Reynolds, "Keep Them at Home: Juvenile Curfew Ordinances in 200 American Cities," *American Journal of Police* (1996).
- Shepherd, Robert E., Jr., "The Proliferation of Juvenile Curfews," *Juvenile Justice Articles* (Washington, DC: American Bar Association, 2004), <http://www.abanet.org/crimjust/juvjus/cjcurfew.html>.
- "A Status Report on Youth Curfews in America's Cities" (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Mayors, 1997), <http://www.usmayors.org/USCM/news/publications/curfew.htm>.



## **Youth Curfews—Deliberation Question with Arguments**

### **Deliberation Question**

*Should our democracy impose curfews on people under age 18?*

### **YES—Arguments to Support the Deliberation Question**

1. Youth curfews can help solve major juvenile crime problems such as drug abuse, violence, and gang activity by keeping young people off the streets.
2. Youth curfews can help parents accept child-rearing responsibilities and help protect vulnerable children who might otherwise fall prey to youth—or adult—predators.
3. Youth curfews can help create a safer community by stopping minor crimes and criminals from progressing to more serious—and destructive—law-breaking. Curfews support zero-tolerance policing.
4. Youth curfews can discourage the growth of negative youth attitudes and behaviors about defying the law and gang membership while they contribute to more positive, supervised activities.
5. Youth curfews, by keeping the law-abiding majority of young people off the streets, allow police to focus on serious lawbreakers.



## **Youth Curfews—Deliberation Question with Arguments**

### **Deliberation Question**

*Should our democracy impose curfews on people under age 18?*

### **NO—Arguments to Oppose the Deliberation Question**

1. Studies suggest there is no direct link between youth curfews and reduced juvenile crime. In fact, most juvenile lawbreaking happens just after school, before typical curfew hours begin.
2. Youth curfews violate individual rights and liberties such as freedom of assembly and the right to travel. They also violate parents' rights to raise their children as they wish.
3. Many young people have legitimate reasons for being on the streets at night—they hold part-time jobs and participate in supervised social activities or arts and sports programs. Besides, it is unreasonable to expect that all parents can take their children to evening activities.
4. Youth curfews have great potential for abuses such as racial profiling and lack of consideration for young people who live in neighborhoods with fewer recreational resources. This abuse can lead to a further breakdown of police-youth relations.
5. Youth curfews assume that all young people are criminals. Excessive curfew arrests add to the number of juveniles who are hampered by criminal records.



## Lesson Procedures

### Step One: Introduction

Introduce the lesson and the Student Objectives on the **Lesson Plan**. Distribute and discuss **Handout 1—Deliberation Guide**. Review the Rules of Deliberation and post them in a prominent position in the classroom. Emphasize that the class will deliberate and then debrief the experience.

### Step Two: Reading

Distribute a copy of the **Reading** to each student. Have students read the article carefully and underline facts and ideas they think are important and/or interesting (**ideally for homework**).

### Step Three: Grouping and Reading Discussion

Divide the class into groups of four or five students. Group members should share important facts and interesting ideas with each other to develop a common understanding of the article. They can record these facts and ideas on **Handout 2—Deliberation Activities** (Review the Reading).

### Step Four: Introducing the Deliberation Question

Each **Reading** addresses a Deliberation Question. Read aloud and/or post the Deliberation Question and ask students to write the Deliberation Question in the space provided on **Handout 2**. Remind students of the Rules for Deliberation on **Handout 1**.

### Step Five: Learning the Reasons

Divide each group into two teams, Team A and Team B. Explain that each team is responsible for selecting the most compelling reasons for its position, which you will assign. Both teams should reread the **Reading**. Team A will find the most compelling reasons to **support** the Deliberation Question. Team B will find the most compelling reasons to **oppose** the Deliberation Question. To ensure maximum participation, ask everyone on the team to prepare to present at least one reason.

**Note:** Team A and Team B do not communicate while learning the reasons. If students need help identifying the arguments or time is limited, use the **Deliberation Question with Arguments** handouts. Ask students to identify the most compelling arguments and add any additional ones they may remember from the reading.

### Step Six: Presenting the Most Compelling Reasons

Tell students that each team will present the most compelling reasons to **support** or **oppose** the Deliberation Question. In preparation for the next step, Reversing Positions, have each team listen carefully for the most compelling reasons.

- Team A will explain their reasons for **supporting** the Deliberation Question. If Team B does not understand something, they should ask questions but NOT argue.
- Team B will explain their reasons for **opposing** the Deliberation Question. If Team A does not understand something, they should ask questions, but NOT argue.

**Note:** The teams may not believe in or agree with their reasons but should be as convincing as possible when presenting them to others.

## Step Seven: Reversing Positions

Explain that, to demonstrate that each side understands the opposing arguments, each team will select the other team's most compelling reasons.

- Team B will explain to Team A what Team A's **most compelling** reasons were for **supporting** the Deliberation Question.
- Team A will explain to Team B what Team B's **most compelling** reasons were for **opposing** the Deliberation Question.

## Step Eight: Deliberating the Question

Explain that students will now drop their roles and deliberate the question as a group. Remind the class of the question. In deliberating, students can (1) use what they have learned about the issue and (2) offer their personal experiences as they formulate opinions regarding the issue.

After deliberating, have students find areas of agreement in their group. Then ask students, as individuals, to express to the group their personal position on the issue and write it down (see My Personal Position on **Handout 2**).

**Note:** Individual students do **NOT** have to agree with the group.

## Step Nine: Debriefing the Deliberation

Reconvene the entire class. Distribute **Handout 3—Student Reflection on Deliberation** as a guide. Ask students to discuss the following questions:

- What were the most compelling reasons for each side?
- What were the areas of agreement?
- What questions do you still have? Where can you get more information?
- What are some reasons why deliberating this issue is important in a democracy?
- What might you or your class do to address this problem? Options include teaching others about what they have learned; writing to elected officials, NGOs, or businesses; and conducting additional research.

Consider having students prepare personal reflections on the Deliberation Question through written, visual, or audio essays. Personal opinions can be posted on the web.

## Step Ten: Student Poll/Student Reflection

Ask students: "Do you agree, disagree, or are you still undecided about the Deliberation Question?" Record the responses and have a student post the results on [www.deliberating.org](http://www.deliberating.org) under the partnerships and/or the polls. Have students complete **Handout 3**.



## **Handout 1—Deliberation Guide**

### **What Is Deliberation?**

Deliberation (meaningful discussion) is the focused exchange of ideas and the analysis of arguments with the aim of making a decision.

### **Why Are We Deliberating?**

Citizens must be able and willing to express and exchange ideas among themselves, with community leaders, and with their representatives in government. Citizens and public officials in a democracy need skills and opportunities to engage in civil public discussion of controversial issues in order to make informed policy decisions. Deliberation requires keeping an open mind, as this skill enables citizens to reconsider a decision based on new information or changing circumstances.

### **What Are the Rules for Deliberation?**

- Read the material carefully.
- Focus on the deliberation question.
- Listen carefully to what others are saying.
- Check for understanding.
- Analyze what others say.
- Speak and encourage others to speak.
- Refer to the reading to support your ideas.
- Use relevant background knowledge, including life experiences, in a logical way.
- Use your heart and mind to express ideas and opinions.
- Remain engaged and respectful when controversy arises.
- Focus on ideas, not personalities.



## Handout 2—Deliberation Activities

### Review the Reading

Determine the most important facts and/or interesting ideas and write them below.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

### Deliberation Question

### Learning the Reasons

Reasons to Support the Deliberation Question (Team A)	Reasons to Oppose the Deliberation Question (Team B)

### My Personal Position

On a separate sheet of paper, write down reasons to support your opinion. You may suggest another course of action than the policy proposed in the question or add your own ideas to address the underlying problem.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

## Handout 3—Student Reflection on Deliberation

### Large Group Discussion: What We Learned

What were the most compelling reasons for each side?

Side A:

Side B:

What were the areas of agreement?

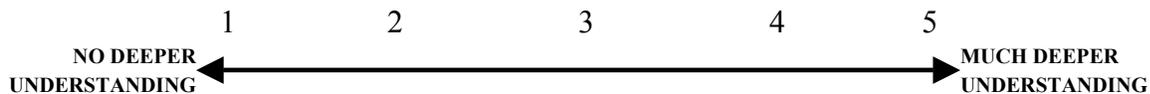
What questions do you still have? Where can you get more information?

What are some reasons why deliberating this issue is important in a democracy?

What might you and/or your class do to address this problem?

### Individual Reflection: What I Learned

Which number best describes your understanding of the focus issue? [circle one]



What new insights did you gain?

What did you do well in the deliberation? What do you need to work on to improve your personal deliberation skills?

What did someone else in your group do or say that was particularly helpful? Is there anything the group should work on to improve the group deliberation?