

## Facilitating a Current Events Discussion

### Facilitator Goals:

- Engage group members in discussion using critical thinking to consider a current event.
- Guide group to identify historical contexts, multiple perspectives, & reliable source material.

### Materials & Prework:

- Flipchart paper & markers, paper and pen for each group member.
- Select 2-3 articles, videos, and/or cartoons relating to a current event appropriate for this group. Explore [PBS](#) for short videos!

Timing	Facilitated Activities	Notes
10 minutes	<p><b>Welcome &amp; Framing the Conversation:</b></p> <p>Begin by asking each group member to introduce themselves. This is easiest if sitting in a circle! Consider adding a low-barrier “get to know you” question as well – e.g., Neighborhood you live in currently or Favorite ice cream flavor.</p> <p>Open the discussion by sharing a few <b>facts</b> and a little <b>historical context</b>. Consider incorporating personal perspectives where appropriate.</p> <p>Post this question on flipchart paper and ask the group to respond on paper. These responses are for their eyes only, participants can decide for themselves if they would like to share later in the discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How this <b>[event]</b> might impact: 1) you, 2) your community and 3) the world at large?</li> </ul>	<p>Be thoughtful about how your identities and experiences may be similar and/or different from those of group members. What impact might your share have on others before the discussion can begin?</p>
25 minutes	<p><b>Gathering &amp; Discussing Information:</b></p> <p>Distribute the <a href="#">article(s)</a> and/or play the <a href="#">video clip(s)</a> you selected for this activity. Ask the group to share their thoughts about the questions you have on the board or flip chart paper <b>with a partner</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was new information?</li> <li>• How did the resources differ from information you previously had been told, seen, or heard about this event?</li> </ul> <p>After about 10 minutes, <b>invite the group back into a circle and ask</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you talk about with your partner?</li> <li>• Are there any themes to what pairs discussed?</li> <li>• What questions about fairness or justice does this raise for you?</li> <li>• What additional information do you wish you had?</li> </ul>	<p>Students may have credible or misinformation based on stereotypes, media sources, and past experiences. Inviting these perspectives into the discussion without immediately correcting or verifying facts creates space for the group to be curious about competing narratives. This can be helpful when facilitating discussion.</p>

15 minutes	<p><b>A Deeper Dive:</b></p> <p>Combine pairs to form small groups of 4-6 people. Ask each small group to pick 1-2 questions and discuss together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What emotions does this event raise for you?</li> <li>• What moments, images, or stories stand out to you? Why?</li> <li>• How were people <i>directly</i> impacted by this event?</li> <li>• Who is responsible for addressing the harm caused?</li> </ul> <p>After 10 minutes, return to a large group. Ask participants to share one thing they discussed. Encourage group discussion by inviting others' reactions to the shares – e.g., “does that resonate with others?” or “what do others think about what we just heard?” If the discussion is slow to build, consider returning to one of the four questions above and asking again within the larger group.</p>	A “step up, step back” approach to facilitating may be useful in initiating cross-group conversations!
10 minutes	<p><b>Debrief the Discussion:</b></p> <p>Pause the discussion about the selected current event and step back to begin wrapping up the session. Ask group members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did it feel to participate in these discussions?</li> <li>• We heard differing perspectives today. How do we make sense of contradictory versions of an event? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What if the sources are people close to us?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How can we make meaning of this event in our own community?</li> <li>• What can we do to support people affected?</li> </ul>	These questions are designed to support group members to begin transitioning out of the session. Be prepared to check-in with participants individually as they leave the session, too.

**For More Information:**

- Consider [PBS lesson plans](#), [Facing History conversation guides](#), and [Ad Fontes resources](#) for additional materials to guide this and/or future sessions.
- Ask young people! Group members are best positioned to identify issues and events that are relevant to them and may have some great questions to guide initial discussions!
- Contact [MYAN staff](#) and [District Partners](#) for additional resources or facilitation ideas.