



## Should the government impose a mandatory year of service?

### GETTING ORIENTED

The weekly passage introduces issues related to mandatory service. Here is some information that might be helpful to students less familiar the topic.

#### Military Service

Young people join the military for many reasons. Some come from families who have served in the military and they want to follow in the footsteps of their fathers and mothers. Some want to serve their country and take their turn as soldiers to protect all Americans. Some see it as a way to earn and save money, as they will be eligible for—or able to be covered under—the GI Bill. Money from the GI Bill will pay for many college expenses when soldiers finish their service. Some want to make careers as military leaders. When students graduate from high school, they can join the army, the navy, the air force or the coast guard. Sometimes during the history of the United States, when we have been at war, there has been mandatory—or required—military service. There is no mandatory military service at the present time.



#### Community Service

Community service is a way to do work that will make the local neighborhoods and the world a better place to live. Community service can be work that helps young people, old people, poor people, sick people, animals, or the environment. Many high school students participate in community service as part of their graduation requirements. These kinds of activities help expose young people to the needs of others and the needs of the community. The goal of community service is to help everyone learn about the ways they can help each other and feel more a part of a community themselves.



#### Literacy

Literacy is the ability to read and write. Often young people have difficulties reading from a very early age. There are many programs to help those who struggle with language, but literacy levels continue to be a problem in America. Often students drop out of school because they can't read or write well enough to succeed in their classes. When this happens, these young people have difficulties getting jobs. Eighty-five percent of the people in prisons have literacy problems. There are many community service opportunities in the field of literacy that work to help young people read and write.





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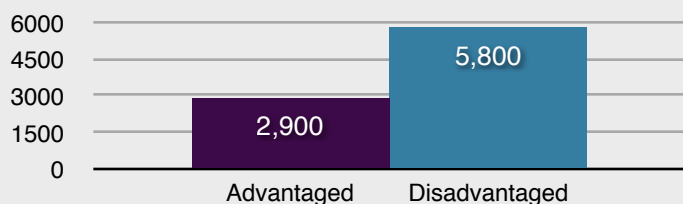
### EVIDENCE AND PERSPECTIVES

	<i>Some may have this view:</i>	<i>But others may think:</i>
<b>General Public</b>	Many people believe that mandatory community service would be a very good idea. Young people could learn specific skills, appreciate the problems of others, learn more about their own interests, become less self-centered, and generally help improve the health and wealth of others in their communities.	Although people who oppose this idea can see the benefits, they believe that a year of service is too much to ask of some young people. They believe that since schooling is already mandatory, there should not be a further obligation, or legal requirement when school is finished. They believe that if community service is considered an important part of education, it should be a requirement before high school graduation.
<b>High school Graduates</b>	High school graduates come from many different backgrounds. They think community service would bring them together in their understanding of each other and all the different kinds of people and problems that exist in their cities and towns. Often, young people grow up surrounded only by people like themselves and their parents, and they don't know much about the world around them. A year of community service would give graduates the opportunity to be more knowledgeable about their environment and the cultures of others.	Some high school graduates have very specific plans. While they can see the benefits of a year of community service, they do not want to spend any more time doing something else that is required of them. They want to earn money, or go to college or join the military. They want to have freedom of choice, which is part of their rights as Americans.
<b>Community Leaders</b>	Community leaders would like to see young people participate in community issues. They believe these activities build a stronger community because young people become invested in the people and activities with which they are involved. Leaders believe they will pay more attention to the environmental, political and economic decisions around them. They will generally feel more a part of the community.	Some community leaders are not interested in training young people and monitoring their work. They don't want to deal with young people who don't want to participate in the service to which they have been assigned. They feel this kind of program must allow young people to decide on community service by their own free will if they are going to do a good job and improve their surroundings.

✓ In 2009, Congress designated September 11th as a National Day of Service and Remembrance and charged the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) with supporting this effort across the country. The CNCS works with numerous organizations to implement one of the largest days of charitable service in U.S. history.

✓ AmeriCorps is a U.S. federal government program that was created under President Clinton and the National and Community Trust Act of 1993. More than 500,000 people have participated in AmeriCorps since its creation in 1993.

✓ Disadvantaged students in the first grade have a vocabulary that is approximately half that of



advantaged students (2,900 and 5,800 words respectively.)

#### Additional Information for Teachers

- ✓ Learn more about the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).  
[www.serve.gov/sept11.asp](http://www.serve.gov/sept11.asp)
- ✓ Find out about the programs in HandsOn Network  
[www.handsonnetwork.org/](http://www.handsonnetwork.org/)
- ✓ Find out what you know about literacy statistics.  
[www.readfaster.com/education\\_stats.asp#literacystatistics](http://www.readfaster.com/education_stats.asp#literacystatistics)
- ✓ Learn about becoming a volunteer to champion literacy [www.proliteracy.org](http://www.proliteracy.org)
- ✓ Read about AmeriCorps and the National and Community Trust Act of 1993.  
[www.americorps.gov/](http://www.americorps.gov/)



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### ANNOTATIONS FOR TEACHERS

#### Features of Academic Text: *Scenario to engage reader in controversy*

*The first paragraph in this article may cause confusion for students. It begins with a scenario that describes what the future would be like if there were a mandatory year of service. Students may see this as a factual scenario.*

*Many articles will begin with a scenario such as this to show what it would be like if a controversial law or plan was put into place in the future. The writer will begin by saying "It is the year....."*

*Ask students if they think this is an effective way to introduce a controversy.*

The year is 2012. Omar has graduated from high school. He plans to go to college to become a teacher. However, he must wait. A new law requires that all young people **allocate** one year to community service after high school. Teens can help clean up parks, register voters, or build houses for the poor. Omar chooses to spend his year doing literacy tutoring in an after-school program, which will be good experience before he begins teaching.

Like 2008 presidential candidate John Edwards, some people want to create a mandatory service program. In a speech he gave on May 12, 2007, he said, "One of the things we ought to be thinking about is some level of mandatory service to our country, so that everybody in America, not just the poor kids who get sent to war, are serving this country" (Elliot, 2007).

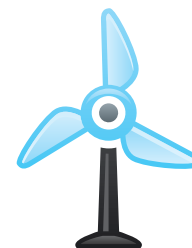
Some Americans dislike the notion of mandatory service because it limits individual freedom. They point out that a **rigid** requirement to spend time doing service could disrupt career or family plans. Some think that young people would get more out of going to college or entering a job-training program. In addition, some young people might need to earn money to help support their families.

Even some people who support national service think that young people should be free to choose not to participate. For example, President Barack Obama wants to develop national service programs. However, he believes participation should be **voluntary**.

People who do want youth service to be mandatory give several reasons. They explain that mandatory service can be a tool for improving **literacy** and helping to protect the environment. Mandatory service could help young people become better citizens. Some people predict that youth service would help reduce youth crime. People who support mandatory youth service point out that we all enjoy freedoms and protections as Americans. **Imposing** a requirement for each person to serve the country, supporters suggest, is only fair.

Mandatory youth service could help young people, too. While they plant trees or build homes, they would be learning valuable skills. Youth service might help them decide on a career, or make contacts that could lead to a job.

What do you think? Should you be required to serve your country after high school?



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### GENERATING WORDS

#### Antonyms and Roots

Antonyms are words that mean the opposite of each other. Sometimes when we are learning new words, it is useful to think about the opposite word.

##### **voluntary**

Voluntary means to do something by your own choice. You volunteer to do something. The root of voluntary is *vol* which means free will.

##### **mandatory**

Mandatory means that the action is required either by the law of the land or perhaps by the law of the school. In the United States, it is mandatory that you go to school. Maybe your parents have mandatory rules that you must follow about what time you go to bed. The root of mandatory is *manda* which means to command.

Write a sentence describing something that is mandatory at your house or in your school.

 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Tell your partner about a voluntary activity that you do. Do you voluntarily help a younger sister or brother?

\_\_\_\_\_

Can you think of antonyms for the words below? Remember antonyms are words that mean the opposite.

poverty (noun)

 wealth (noun)

young (adjective)

rigid (adjective)

to like (verb)

illiterate (adjective)









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### DEVELOPING DISCUSSIONS

#### Survey Grid

The survey grid is a matrix you can use to poll one another on issues. You get to hear your classmates explain their thinking and use academic vocabulary, which may help you develop your own positions.

	Name of student	Should schools impose a rigid service requirement on students? Why?	Should there be a law that requires young people to allocate one year to serving their country? Why?	What types of voluntary service would you like to do?
sample	Silvia	Yes. Students just watch too many video games.	Yes. There are lots of things in the country that need fixing.	Cure sick animals and find homes for them
				
				
				
				
Results	Yes: No:	Yes: No:	Are there similarities among the responses above?	

**Step One:** Fill in each row on the survey grid by talking to one person at a time. Try to talk to as many people as possible so you can fill in all the empty rows. Paraphrase their responses. If they use a focus word, write it down in the yellow box.

**Step Two:** Count how many students are for, against or neutral in the first two columns. Tally the most popular types of service from the third column.

**Step Three:** Write a sentence or two that explains what your survey showed. Here are few sentence frames that you can use.

- The results of my survey show that \_\_\_\_\_
- The majority of the responses to my survey show \_\_\_\_\_. The reasons people gave for this are \_\_\_\_\_.
- The results of my survey suggest that the majority of students are for/against \_\_\_\_\_. Reasons for this include \_\_\_\_\_.

**Step Four:** Report to your classmates your findings.

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