

Join the national conversation!

SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT IMPOSE A MANDATORY YEAR OF SERVICE?

Word Generation - Unit 3.07

Focus Words

voluntary | literacy | impose | allocate | rigid

WEEKLY PASSAGE



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.

Some people, like John Edwards, who ran for president in 2008, 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.

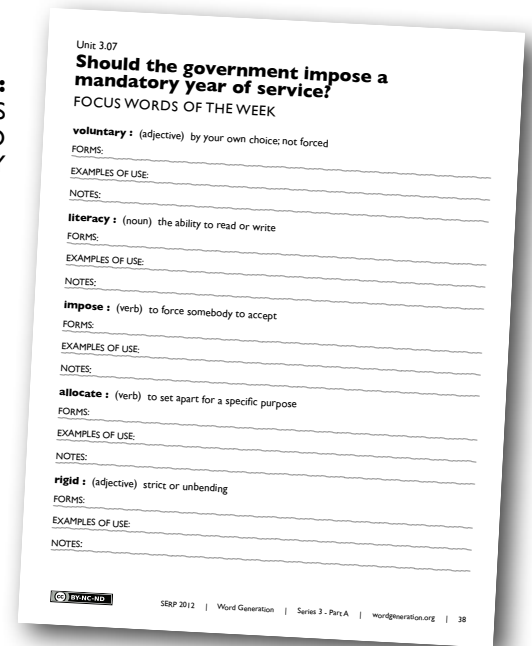
Mandatory youth service could help young people, too. While they plant trees or build homes, they would be learning valuable skills. Youth service might help them decide on a career, or make contacts that could lead to a job.

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

TEACHER: Discussion Questions

- ▶ In your own words, what was the point of the John Edwards quote?
- ▶ How could mandatory service be “a tool for solving problems like illiteracy and pollution”?
- ▶ What are some of the “freedoms and protections” we enjoy as Americans?
- ▶ Why do some people want national service to be voluntary instead of mandatory?
- ▶ If you had to spend a year serving your country, what would you like to do?

PLEASE NOTE:
THE STUDENT VERSION OF THIS
PAGE IS FORMATTED
DIFFERENTLY



Unit 3.07

WORD CHART FOR TEACHERS

This chart is not in the student book. It is a resource for teachers to support students in the use of the focus words each. Students are provided one page in each unit immediately following the weekly passage with a basic definition printed and space for taking notes.

Word	Meaning	Forms			Related Words
		Inflectional	Basic Word Classes	Prefixes/ Suffixes	
voluntary	(adj.) - by your own choice; not forced	voluntary		volunteer (n.) volunteers volunteered volunteering voluntarily involuntary volunteerism	
literacy	(n.) - the ability to read or write	literacies		literate illiterate non-literate	letter obliterate alliteration
impose	(v.) - to force somebody to accept	imposing imposed imposes		imposingly imposition	pose propose repose oppose depose
allocate	(v.) - to set apart for a specific purpose	allocated allocates allocating		reallocation allocation allocator	locate dislocate collocate
rigid	(adj.) - strict or unbending	rigidly		rigidity rigidness rigorous rigor	

Should the government impose a mandatory year of service?



PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

Option 1: Some people think the government should **impose** a **rigid** service requirement on young people. But many young people already **allocate** time to **voluntary** service.

Fifty-five percent of youth ages 12-18 volunteer. Say that 10% of these volunteers are **literacy** volunteers (people who help others learn to read and write). What percentage of youth ages 12-18 would be **literacy** volunteers?

- A) 5.5%
- B) 10%
- C) 5%
- D) .55%

Option 2: Youth perform **voluntary** service for many reasons. Sometimes, schools **impose** a service requirement. Many students argue that this kind of “voluntary” service isn’t voluntary at all! Some schools have **rigid** service rules, and require students to **allocate** a certain number of hours to service before they can graduate. Others require service as part of a class or a special project.

10.6 million youth, or 38% of the youth population, have performed service as part of a school activity.

If this is true, what is the youth population?

about 27.9 million

Discussion Question: Should schools be **imposing** service requirements? Is it okay for a teacher to **allocate** a few hours of class time to service for a special reason, like reading to kids for a unit on **literacy**, or cleaning up a park for a unit on pollution? What about a **rigid** requirement for all students, like 100 hours of service before graduation? Is it wrong to make **voluntary** service mandatory?

Should the government impose a mandatory year of service?



THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY

Students in Mr. Seemy's class are talking about community service. The class is divided on the question of whether the government should **impose** a service requirement for all young people. Malik commented, "That seems kind of **rigid** to me. I think service should be **voluntary**." Halley responded, "I basically agree, but our school should **allocate** more time for community service, that way students could really commit to projects. Right now I help at the library tutoring little kids to build up their **literacy** skills, but I feel like I could do a better job if I could be there more."

Mr. Seemy commented, "That kind of attitude might just get you into your favorite college!"

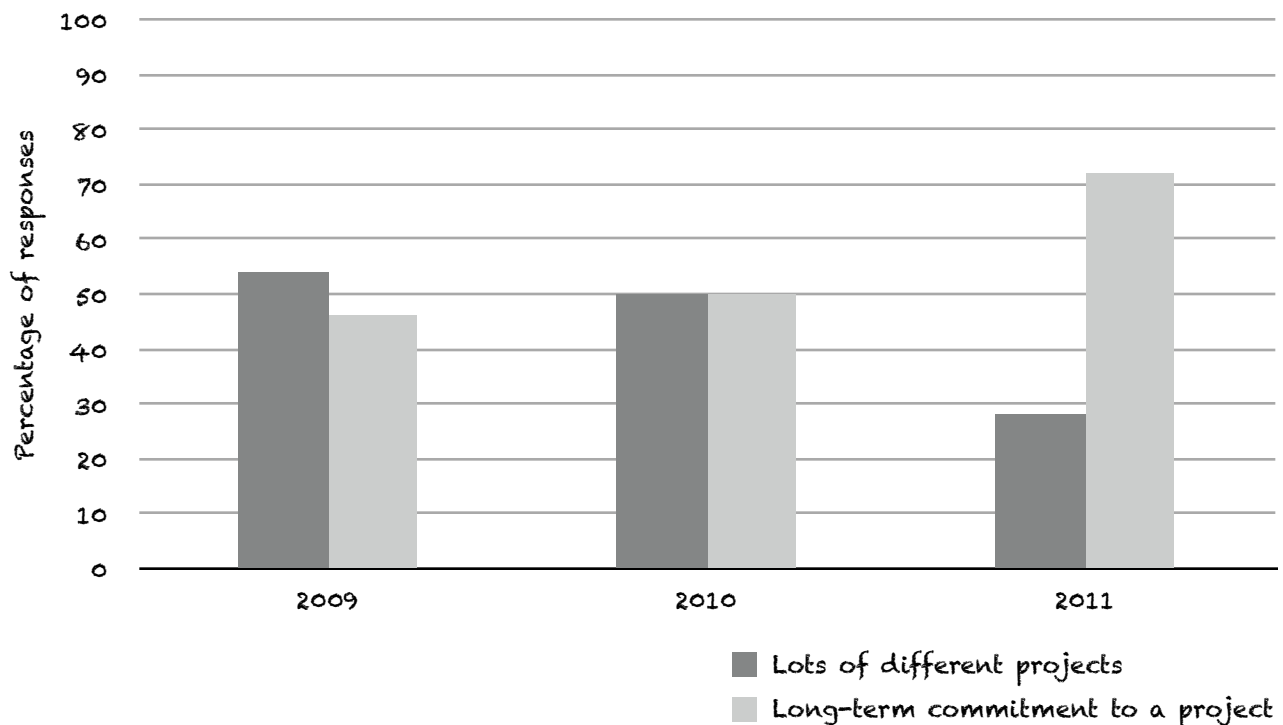
Halley questioned her teacher: "What are you talking about, Mr. Seemy? You usually push us to study harder, not to volunteer more."

Mr. Seemy decided to share results from a survey he saw in U.S. News and World Report.

"DoSomething.org is an organization that helps young people take action on things that they care about. They gave surveys on admissions and volunteering to 32 top colleges. Results led the people who conducted the surveys to see that there is a shift happening. Let me draw a graph for you on the whiteboard."

Question:

Do you think it is more important for applicants to have experience with many different projects or to show a long-term commitment to a particular project?



Can you summarize the results of DoSomething.org's survey question?

Colleges and universities have shifted to valuing students' longer-term commitments to projects than the involvement in many projects.

Do you think these data will be relevant when you apply for college?

Answers will vary. Most students will see that if this trend continues, this information will be relevant when they apply for college in several years.

From your point of view, how would you answer the survey question? Why?

Should the government impose a mandatory year of service?



DEBATING THE ISSUE

Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A The United States should impose mandatory national service. Requiring volunteer work is a good way to help fight social problems and keep the country strong.

B The United States should impose mandatory national service. Requiring volunteer work will help young people become good citizens.

C The United States should have national service programs, but participation should be voluntary.

D The United States should not impose mandatory national service. It is wrong for the government to force young people to volunteer. Some people may want to attend college or earn money right after high school graduation.

E _____

TEACHER

Whatever debate format you use in your class, ask students to use academically productive talk in arguing their positions. In particular, students should provide reasons and evidence to back up their assertions. It may be helpful to read these sample positions to illustrate some possibilities, but students should also be encouraged to take their own positions on the issue at hand.

Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

What makes you think that?

In my experience...

That's similar to what I think.

When I re-read the text, it reminded me...



Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples.
Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

Focus Words

voluntary | literacy | impose | allocate | rigid

TEACHER

Ask students to write a response in which they argue a position on the weekly topic.

Put the writing prompt on the overhead projector (or the board) so that everyone can see it. Remind students to refer to the word lists in their Word Generation notebooks as needed.

[illegible]

Source References:

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