

Assembly: Youth issues ARE election issues!

Aims:

- To explore why some people's voices are louder than others in a General Election and how young people can make sure they get their voices heard.

Equipment / resources needed:

- Megaphone (or microphone), tape or something to cover a student's mouth making it difficult to talk, a chair.
- Character cards

Instructions:

1. Ask for three volunteers from the audience to be each of the three characters,
 - Mr Smith, a 50 year old man
 - Mrs Jean Thomson, a 32 year old woman
 - Sam, a 14 year old student
2. Hand out the character cards and the props to each of the volunteers.
 - Mr Smith to be given the megaphone (or microphone)
 - Place tape over Sam's mouth making it difficult for him / her to speak
 - Mrs Thomson is to speak using her everyday voice.
3. Place Mr Smith in the most prominent place in the room. Ask Mrs Thomson to sit on the chair (placed in a less prominent place but still in the view of students). Place Sam at the back of the room with their back to the students (making it more difficult for Sam to be heard).
4. Explain to students that it is election time and that these three citizens have something important to say to all of us. On the count of three, all citizens will be speaking at once, trying to get us to listen to them.
5. On the count of three participants are to read the script on the character cards. On completion ask the audience:
 - What issues were these people concerned about?
 - Who had the loudest voice? Why?
 - Who was the most difficult to hear? Why?
 - What do you think the props were supposed to represent?
 - Why are some people's voices in our community louder than others at election time? (*Eg: some people are more powerful than others, they have more of an authority, young people can't vote so they don't have a voice*)
 - Is this fair?

The **co-operative** good for everyone

6. Explain that this time we are going to make it fair. Bring each of the volunteers into the middle of the room. Remove the props and ask them to repeat their script, this time one at a time. Explain that now that we have given everyone a chance to speak equally:

- Who had the most valuable thing to say?
- Whose views were less well thought out?
- Who had the best way to get their voice heard in the next election?

7. Explain that we have a General Election coming up and although young people may not be able to vote their views are crucial. It is your opportunity to ask the questions that adults won't ask. What issues are important to you? What would you like the government to do something about? As Bono, says "this is a time for bold measures. This is the country, and YOU are the generation."

Not having the vote should not mean being silenced. There are many ways to get your voice heard as we heard each of our volunteers describe today. Make sure you take action and get your voice heard this election!

CHARACTER CARDS

My name is John, 'Mr Smith' to you. I'm 50 years old. I've had my own business for the past 25 years. I'm married, own my house and have two kids. I hear there is an election coming up. What gets me infuriated is the crime on the streets these days.

Every day I look out my window and see the hoodies hanging around the street corners. I don't know what they are doing but they don't look up to much good if you ask me. Why aren't the government doing something about it? They should bring in a national curfew for anyone under the age of 21, make all those young 'uns go home from 6:30pm. There's enough for them to watch on tv – why do they have to hang out on the street causing trouble?

Of course I'll vote in the next election. I always vote. I'm going to make sure the candidates hear what I think about these young 'uns. I'm going to hold a meeting of all the local business owners and invite the candidates along. Let's see how they think they are going to solve this problem.

My name is Sam. I'm 14, been living on this estate all my life. I go to the local school and got a good group of friends.

Only problem is there isn't much to do around here. Since the youth centre has closed my friends and I haven't got anywhere to go. So we just hang out outside, chatting and listening to music on our phones. It's a bit cold at times but a good hoodie solves that problem.

What winds me up is the dodgy looks we get from adults and all the bad stories in the paper about young people getting up to no good. What is wrong with those adults? We're not even doing anything wrong! I wish the government would do something about it. They could stop the newspapers from printing things that really aren't true. If only we had the vote then people would have to listen to us.

I might not have the vote but I'm going to make sure our local candidates listen to the views of young people. I've started a Facebook campaign with a group of mates to let the local candidates know what issues are important to young people. I've asked all my friends to comment on issues that are important to them. We're going to invite the candidates to join our group and respond to our concerns. That's only part of the plan, then we are going to speak to as many adults as we can and let them know who we would vote for. We're going to get those adults listening! It's our country too!

Hi everyone. My name is Jean Thomson. I'm 32, just had my second child. I used to work but now I stay at home and look after the kids.

I'm not really sure who to vote for in the upcoming election. There are so many issues that worry me. I suppose I would like the government to help make a better country for my kids.

Schools worry me. I wish the government would put more money into the local schools. My son is about to start primary school and I want to make sure that he gets the best education possible. We live in an IT world these days and kids really have to know how to use IT. I think every student from kindergarten should be given their own laptop. Look at those older kids who hang outside every day doing nothing. What hope do they have? Perhaps if they had all got laptops at home they would have something better to do.

I've written to my local candidates to let them know my ideas. I've also attended their meetings to find out what they are planning on doing about education. I'll make my mind up who I'm going to vote for when I've heard what they've got to say.