

Politics Transition Tasks



Find out who your local MP is. What party do they belong to? What percentage of the constituency voted for them in the 2017 General Election?

1. **TASK 1:** The most important thing to do when studying Politics at A Level is to keep abreast of current affairs. Exam answers which contain up-to-date examples to justify an argument will be rewarded. Due to the importance of current affairs to the study of Politics, it is an excellent idea to start getting yourself into the habit of reading the news daily. Over the summer, keep abreast of current affairs by consulting one or more of the following sources of political news every day:
 - A daily broadsheet newspaper - e.g. The Guardian, The Times, The Independent, The Financial Times
 - BBC Politics website – www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics
 - Weekly political magazines – e.g. New Statesman, The Spectator, The Economist 1905 Revolution:

Of the news articles you read over the summer, keep one that you found particularly interesting and thought-provoking. Consider the following questions:

a) Briefly, what is the news article about? Summarise in 100 words or fewer.

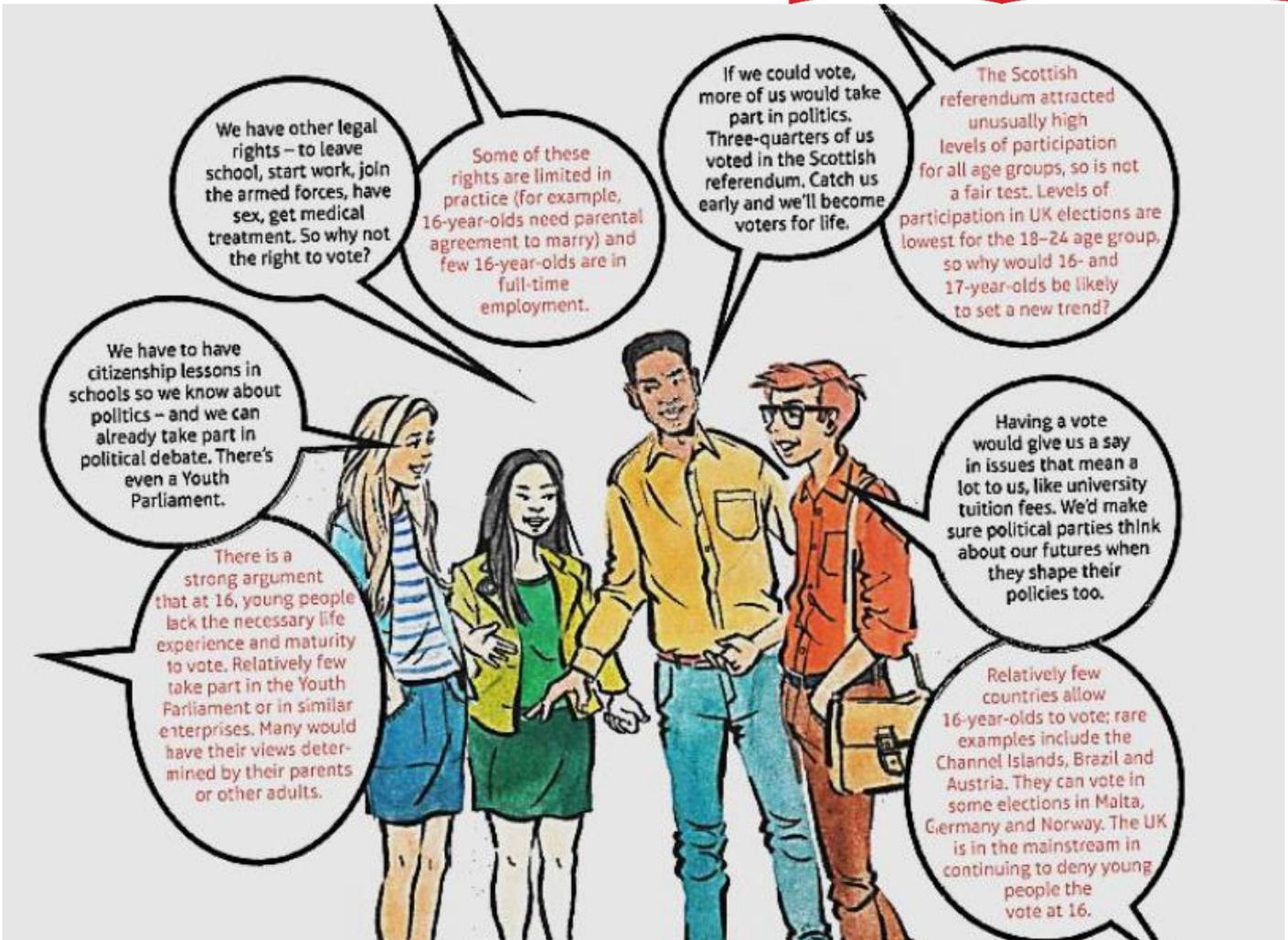
b) Why did you select this news article? What does it tell you about politics in the UK?

TASK 2: Read the following sources, considering the opinions raised. Answer the question that follows.

Source 1 – extract from an A Level Politics text book (2017)

The most prominent group still without the right to vote are 16 and 17 year olds. The Votes at 16 Coalition, formed in 2003, has pushed for reform in this area and has convinced a number of Members of Parliament to raise the issue in the House of Commons.

An important boost for lowering the voting age came when 16 and 17 year olds were allowed to vote in the Scottish independence referendum in 2014, and the Scottish Parliament voted the following year to allow them to take part in its own elections. At a UK level, by the time of the 2015 general election, all major parties except the Conservatives were in favour of extending the precedent. The Electoral Reform Society also support votes at 16.



Source 2 – article from The Economist (Feb 2017)

Why the voting age should be lowered to 16

Young voters are becoming disillusioned with elections. Catch them early and teach them the value of democracy

HOW young is too young? Rich democracies give different answers, depending on the context: in New Jersey you can buy alcohol at 21 and cigarettes at 19, join the army at 17, have sex at 16 and be tried in court as an adult at 14. Such thresholds vary wildly from place to place. Belgian youngsters can get sozzled legally at 16. But on one thing most agree: only when you have turned 18 can you vote. When campaigners suggest lowering the voting age, the riposte is that 16- and 17-year-olds are too immature. This misses the real danger: that growing numbers of young people may not vote at all.

The trend across the West is disturbing. Turnout of American voters under 25 at presidential elections fell from 50% in 1972 to 38% in 2012; among over-65s it rose from 64% to 70% (data for the 2016 election are not yet available). For congressional races, the under-25 vote was a dire 17% in 2014. A similar pattern is repeated across the rich world.

Young people's disenchantment with the ballot box matters because voting is a habit: those who do not take to it young may never start. That could lead to ever-lower participation rates in decades to come,

draining the legitimacy of governments in a vicious spiral in which poor turnout feeds scepticism towards democracy, and vice versa.

The disillusionment has many causes. The young tend to see voting as a choice rather than a duty (or, indeed, a privilege). The politically active tend to campaign on single issues rather than for a particular party. Politicians increasingly woo older voters—not only because they are more likely to vote but also because they make up a growing share of the electorate. Many young people see elections stacked against them. It is no surprise, then, that many of them turn away from voting.

Some countries make voting compulsory, which increases turnout rates. But that does not deal with the underlying disillusionment. Governments need to find ways to rekindle the passion, rather than continue to ignore its absence. A good step would be to lower the voting age to 16, ensuring that new voters get off to the best possible start.

This would be no arbitrary change. The usual threshold of 18 means that young people's first chance to vote often coincides with finishing compulsory education and leaving home. Away from their parents, they have no established voters to emulate and little connection to their new communities. As they move around, they may remain off the electoral roll. Sixteen-year-olds, by contrast, can easily be added to it and introduced to civic life at home and school. They can pick up the voting habit by accompanying their parents to polling stations. In Scotland, where 16- and 17-year-olds were eligible to vote in the independence referendum in 2014, an impressive three-quarters of those who registered turned out on the day, compared with 54% of 18- to 24-year-olds. In 2007 Austria became the only rich country where 16-year-olds could vote in all elections. Encouragingly, turnout rates for under-18s are markedly higher than for 19- to 25-year-olds. A lower voting age would strengthen the voice of the young and signal that their opinions matter. It is they, after all, who will bear the brunt of climate change and service the debt that paid for benefits, such as pensions and health care, of today's elderly. Voting at 16 would make it easier to initiate new citizens in civic life. Above all, it would help guarantee the supply of young voters needed to preserve the vitality of democracy. Catch them early, and they will grow into better citizens.

Using the sources – as well as your own knowledge, opinions and research – write a one-page 'essay' outlining and justifying your opinion for the following question: *should the voting age be lowered to 16?* You should raise three arguments maximum.

You will be marked on the points raised (out of 3 marks), how clearly your arguments have been justified (out of 3 marks) and the quality of your written communication (out of 4 marks). The total mark will scored out of 10.