

Topic: The legal system

Lesson: Legalising drugs	KS or Year Group: Year 10/11
Resources: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Resource 1 – Sky News clip 1 – Police chief: ‘All drugs should be legal’2. Resource 2 – Sky News clip 2 – Netherlands’ liberal drug review3. Resource 3 – Interesting concepts from the video clips4. Resource 4 – Trigger words	Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students can appreciate that some citizens wish to legalise all drugs in the UK.• Students can reflect upon different ideas, opinions, assumptions, beliefs and values when exploring drug legalisation in the UK.

National Curriculum

Key Concepts: 1.1b, 1.1c

Key Processes: 2.1a, 2.2a, 2.2b

Range and Content: 3g

Curriculum Opportunities: 4a, 4b, 4c, 4g

Lesson overview

Students explore the controversial debate surrounding the legalisation of drugs in the UK through video clips, class debate and written responses.

Starter

- Share lesson objectives and outcomes with students.
- Explain that there are various pressure groups (such as Legalise Drugs) that try to influence the government to legalise drugs. Also point out that certain leading public figures attempt to do the same.
- Show students the two video clips. Encourage them to take notes.
- Invite students to share their notes with the class.

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- Examples of good responses:
 - ▶ ‘It was interesting to see a police officer campaigning for drugs to be legalised. I always associate the police with being keen to see drug dealers locked away.’
 - ▶ ‘I found the one about the Netherlands quite informative. Some British people think that everyone in the Netherlands takes loads of drugs but in some ways their culture is actually quite anti-drugs.’

Main activity

Activity 1:

- Give students **Resource 3 – Interesting concepts from the video clips** and ask them to choose one comment that they strongly agree with and one comment that they strongly disagree with.
- Ask students to cut and stick these two comments into their books and to write a few sentences underneath each one explaining why they strongly (dis)agree with it.

Activity 2:

- Invite students to leave their books open on their tables and to walk around the room reading each other’s work.

Plenary

- Split the class into groups of four or five. The students in half of the groups should make lists of reasons why drugs should be legalised in the UK; the others should make lists of reasons why drugs should not be legalised. Allow students to consult other members of their group for ideas. Also display **Resource 4 – Trigger words** on the whiteboard.
- Invite members of each group to come to the front of the room to share their arguments.
- Examples of good answers:
 - ▶ ‘Legalising drugs would free up hospital beds. At the moment lots of adverse reactions to illegal drugs come from drugs being cut with something like rat poison. If drugs were legal then they would be safer because people would know exactly what they were taking.’
 - ▶ ‘Legalising drugs would cause too many problems. Young children would think that drugs were an acceptable way to relax before SATs because they would trust politicians that drugs were safe. This could lead to higher levels of drug use at primary schools.’

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- ▶ ‘Drugs should be legalised so that people who want to stop taking them can be more open about their addictions and get help from the authorities. At the moment, loads of people use drugs in secret and are embarrassed or frightened to admit that they need help from experts.’
- ▶ ‘Drugs should not be legalised because we have all heard stories about people dying under the influence of illegal drugs. People can feel like they are invincible and go swimming in freezing rivers or jump off buildings. The government should be going in the other direction and making alcohol illegal to help people stay safe!’

Aim high

- During the starter, high-achieving students should volunteer their notes.
- During the main activity, high-achieving students should use persuasive arguments to show why they (dis)agree with the comments on Resource 3.
- During the plenary, high-achieving students should have the confidence to read out their work.

Assessment

For homework, ask students to use www.legalisedrugs.co.uk to establish five key arguments supporting the legalisation of drugs.

Level 5:

- Students can discuss why rights need to be balanced in the case for legalising drugs in the UK.
- Students can clearly communicate their arguments about whether drugs should be legalised in the UK.

Level 6:

- Students can show awareness of the diversity of opinions about legalising drugs in the UK.
- Students can present a persuasive case for legalising/not legalising drugs in the UK.

Level 7:

- Students can represent the opinions of those with whom they do not agree about legalising drugs in the UK.
- Students can evaluate the role that pressure groups can take in shaping government decisions about legalising drugs in the UK.

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Level 8:

- Based on information obtained prior to the lesson, students can make perceptive observations about what might happen if drugs were to be legalised in the UK.
- Students can ask challenging questions about the pros and cons of legalising drugs in the UK.

Check the web

www.legalisedrugs.co.uk

Promotes the case for legalisation

news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/if/4095317.stm

Provides various comments about legalisation from the public via the BBC

www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/mar/11/prohibition-law-un-drugs-strategies

Guardian article exploring differences between prohibition, regulated sale, depenalisation, decriminalisation and legalisation

Summary of key learning

- Students can appreciate that some citizens wish to legalise all drugs in the UK.
- Students can question and reflect on different ideas, opinions, assumptions, beliefs and values when exploring drug legalisation in the UK.

Resource 3 – Interesting concepts from the video clips

As a teenager, I took drugs simply as an act of rebellion. I thought the ‘taboo factor’ would impress my friends. If the government stops banning drugs then fewer young citizens will take them.

My friend got injured by someone who was driving after taking loads of cocaine. Wouldn’t there be more drug driving issues if drugs became legal?

Heroin addicts leave loads of dirty needles in my street. If people could inject openly without fear of being arrested then maybe they wouldn’t leave their needles lying around near where my children play.

If you legalise something, then you are saying that it is morally acceptable. I don’t think we should give this message to citizens! Drugs make people act out of character. They cause infidelity, violence, crime and many other damaging behaviours.

I am sick and tired of my taxes being spent on keeping drug dealers and drug users in prison. I would much rather see drugs legalised so that my taxes can be spent on services for the elderly instead.

I’m a social worker who sees how drugs damage families. I know parents who spend most of their wage on cannabis and hardly any on food. Legalising drugs would make drugs easier to buy and so people would spend even more money on them.

We should legalise drugs so that their use can be properly regulated. My sister took what she thought was ecstasy on her sixteenth birthday and was dead five hours later. If ecstasy had been legal she would have been able to get the tablet tested and find out that it had poison in it.

Drugs should stay illegal because it’s a slippery slope otherwise. If our government legalises drugs then what next? Will people who use child pornography suddenly campaign for that to be legalised too? Will people who carry dangerous weapons suddenly want the right to buy them at the supermarket?

Resource 4 – Trigger words

acceptance	addiction	adult	celebrity
child	condone	consumer choice	criminality
cure	danger	death	demand
driving	drug classification	education	effects
Europe	family	financial implications	freedom
glamorise	hidden	human rights	injury
informed choice	leisure	limitation	manufacture
message	moderation	moral	open
pain relief	pleasure	police resources	political arena
prevention	prison service	prohibition	reality
rebellion	regulation	rehabilitation	relaxation
religion	safety	social class	society
stance	supply	taxes	teenager
	21 st century	underground	

‘Just because we are in favour of the legalisation of drugs does not mean we are in favour of drugs. It is a perfectly logical position that can be shared by anyone of any political persuasion.’

www.legalisedrugs.co.uk

‘The consumption of drugs has the effect of reducing people’s freedom by circumscribing the range of their interests. It impairs their ability to pursue more important human aims, such as raising a family and fulfilling civic obligations.’

Theodore Dalrymple