

Politics – and the people

by Paul Jenkinson



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“Populismus” – ein Thema, das sowohl bei Politikerinnen und Politikern als auch der Bevölkerung häufig Unbehagen auslöst. Diese Unterrichtseinheit behandelt das aktuelle und viel diskutierte Thema in seinen unterschiedlichen Ausprägungen. Die Schülerinnen und Schüler arbeiten dabei mit Zeitungsartikeln, einer Karikatur, einer Statistik, einem Hörtext und Videos. Sie gehen kritisch mit dem Begriff “Populismus” um und diskutieren die Auswirkungen populistischer politischer Persönlichkeiten auf das Wahlverhalten der Bürgerinnen und Bürger. Sie behandeln die geschichtliche Rolle der Politik im Leben junger Menschen und die Folgen von Demonstrationen und anderen Formen politischer Teilhabe auf die Politik.

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Oberstufe (Niveau)

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Facts	1
Notes on the material	2
Topic 1: Populism on the rise	3
Topic 2: Manipulation? – Politicians and the press	13
Topic 3: Young people and politics	24
Topic 4: Protests – provoking political change	36
Topic 5: Protests – politics in sport	43

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Competences and skills:

The unit contains texts and tasks that can be classified as level **B2/C1** (*Europäischer Referenzrahmen*). Students improve their **reading** and **writing skills** by working with different text types like newspaper and magazine articles and writing topically related compositions. Furthermore, they practice their **listening comprehension** and **viewing comprehension skills** with the help of videos and a TED-Talk and enhance their competences in **analysis** by analysing a cartoon and statistics. Students also improve their **speaking skills** in that they discuss and present various political matters. Finally, **mediation skills** are enhanced. Overall, students work on a variety of **interdisciplinary themes** concerned with society, history, arts and sport.

Overview:

List of abbreviations:

A Text analysis

E Essay/Statement/Composition

LVC Listening/Viewing comprehension

P Presentation

RC Reading comprehension

W Writing

C Comment

LC Listening comprehension

MD Mediation

R Research

T Working with the text

Topic	Material	Method
1: Populism on the rise	M1–M2	RC, W, T, E
2: Manipulation? – Politicians and the press	M3–M4	RC, T, A, W
3: Young people and politics	M5–M6	A, E, MD, R, RC, T
4: Protests – provoking political change	M7	LC, W, PR
5: Protests – politics in sports	M8	C, E, LVC

Notes on the material

Topic 1 deals with how populism is viewed using a newspaper article from *The Independent*. The worksheet requires students to complete statements in multiple choice tasks about the content and to verify their answers accordingly.

Brexit has monopolised the news recently and has left many people speechless as democracy turned into farce. **Topic 2**, an article from the political magazine *New Statesman*, approaches this complicated and highly emotional subject by providing details of how and why Brexit came about. Topic 2 also includes official statistics from the referendum allowing pupils to draw their own conclusions concerning the results and to comment upon frequently used quotes of "leave" politicians. Furthermore, the mechanics of government can be reflected upon by analysing a cartoon.

With young people becoming increasingly critical of politicians' lack of action in dealing with climate change and other environmental issues, **Topic 3** looks at how young people's protests have evolved since the Woodstock Music & Art Fair in 1969: a *Guardian* newspaper article investigates this development and relates actions to failed politics. Since political protests come in many forms, further research into the subject is suggested by focusing on aspects of sport, music and art.

Topic 4 is a Ted Talk extract describing how protest is influencing, and has influenced, political change. The speaker is very clear and the worksheet is divided into two parts. The talk may be paused after the first section to allow pupils to complete it, or listen to it a second time in order to clarify answers. The speaker makes a reference to Mugabe, who died in September 2019, however, these details are not required for any answers.

Finally, protests are not just characterised by people demonstrating in the streets or waving their banners. As mentioned in Topic 3, musicians, artists and writers have also voiced their own criticisms of political issues at times. **Topic 5** includes two short video clips showing how some leading figures in sport have publically protested, too. The videos are independent of each other allowing greater flexibility: the first shows the current on-going action of the American football superstar, Colin Kaepernick kneeling down for the American National Anthem protesting against racial inequality; the second video takes a historical perspective focusing on five sportsmen whose protests cost them dearly.

M2 Worksheet: *Populists on both left and right claim to be fighting for 'the people' – but who exactly are they?*

Pre-reading activity

1. What does populism mean? Collect ideas on what you know about “populism” individually. You can name prominent examples, as well. Find a definition. Compare and contrast your results with your partners’.

Reading comprehension / Working with the text



2. Read the text *Populists on both left and right claim to be fighting for 'the people' – but who exactly are they?* Then work on the following tasks individually.

a)	Tick (✓) the most appropriate definition of 'populism'.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Beliefs that are common to all political leaders
<input type="checkbox"/>	The opinions and wishes of normal people
<input type="checkbox"/>	Opposition to governments

b)	Tick (✓) the correct answer. The opposite of populism is ...
<input type="checkbox"/>	... elitism.
<input type="checkbox"/>	... radicalism.
<input type="checkbox"/>	... socialism.

Tick (✓) the most appropriate ending for each sentence; quote from the text the section which verifies your decision or give appropriate line references.

c)	Populism is a phenomenon which is ...
	... making relationships with other countries difficult.
	... worldwide and varied.
	... successfully influencing politics.
Verification:	
d)	Populists believe that they are ...
	... voicing the concerns of an overlooked section of the population.
	... speaking up for the ignored feelings of the general public.
	... attempting to identify the common issues that the general public have.
Verification:	
e)	As populism increases, there have been ...
	... few attempts to stop it.
	... growing trends for confrontation.
	... many explanations of what it means.
Verification:	
f)	Analysing the trend illustrates that ...
	... there are positive and negative aspects to it.
	... it creates polarisation.
	... extremism is leading the way.
Verification:	
g)	If politicians ignore the populist voice, they ...
	... risk weakening their own positions.
	... encourage nationalistic attitudes.
	... appear undemocratic.
Verification:	

Topic 3: Young people and politics

M5 Text: *Ignore the sneering: young people's rage is an age-old sign of failed politics*



Like the rockers and ravers before them, this generation treats the choices of their elders with alarm

In the documentary *Everybody in the Place*, the Turner prize-winning artist Jeremy Deller delivers a talk to a group of sixth-form politics students about late-80s acid house in Britain. As well as documenting the massive cultural changes that took place, he draws a clear line between the decline of industrialisation, the miners' strike, sound-system culture and the rise of dance music. As Deller shows old footage of whey-faced¹ ravers in bucket hats and sports gear dancing in fields and warehouses, the students look on with a blend of bafflement and fascination. It's weird, one of them says, that no one has a phone.

Another film, also out now, reports on a youth movement born from political and social disenfranchisement, and a desire for a new way of living. *Woodstock – Three Days that Defined a Generation* tells the well-documented story of the hippy era and the 1969 music festival that took place in the shadow of Vietnam and civil rights unrest. "We were looking for answers," says one attendee. "We were looking for other people that felt the same way as we did ... If 400,000 people could get together and have absolutely no violence, absolutely no conflict, I felt like we could bring all of that love back into society – and change the world."

The similarities between the two eras go well beyond the urge to get off your face in a field. In both films we hear of politicians attempting to legislate against large gatherings; of social and generational schisms; and of young people finding common purpose via music and like-minded communities. We see this in a different guise today: our youth may not have found kinship through a specific musical movement but they have nonetheless gathered together for a higher cause. Their attempts to tackle climate catastrophe through online campaigning and protest movements such as *Extinction Rebellion*, to shake world leaders out of their torpor², would seem more urgent than the hedonistic cultural revolutions of yesteryear. But still their elders sneer.

g) Extinction Rebellion	7) (1984–85) was a major conflict in Britain between the coal mining union and the government in an attempt to prevent mine closures. Characterised by violent demonstrations and picketing ¹ ; it led to broken communities, the effects of which were still seen decades later, and the demise ² of trade union power.
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a)	b)	c)	d)	e)	f)	g)
5						

Reading comprehension



- Using evidence from the text, summarise the characteristics of youth movements and how they have altered. Compare your results with a partner and complete your answers.
- Identify and list the confrontations and anti-establishment movements mentioned in the article.
- Select any three idioms³ in the text and give their line references. Briefly, explain what each idiom means by deducing it from the context.

Working with the text

- Comment upon the different reactions to political activism mentioned in the text.
- Compare the tone of the fourth paragraph, how it is achieved and what the aim of it is, with the style of the rest of the text.

1 **picketing**: das Aufstellen von Streikposten – 2 **demise**: the end of sth. – 3 **idiom**: Redewendung