

Join the national conversation!



Focus Words

decade | incompatible | temporarily | unify | violation

Weekly Passage

Buying and selling alcohol was prohibited in the U.S. from 1920-1933. Alcohol was sold illegally during those years. Violent crime increased as sellers fought with each other. Now, however, selling alcohol to adults is not a violation of the law, and selling alcohol is no longer a source of violent crime. Some people have proposed that drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and heroin also be legalized. Advocates of drug legalization suggest that the world of drugs would be safer if the criminal element were removed from selling them. They also argue that if drugs were legal, police could focus on more serious crimes. Furthermore, they point out that the government's limited resources could then be used for improving schools and providing better health care rather than funding more jails for drug dealers.

In the decade from 1985-1995, more than 80 percent of the prison population increase resulted from drug convictions. Most of those prisoners were minorities. African-American Congressman Charles Rangel feels strongly that illegal drugs should not be legalized. He says that legalizing dangerous drugs like cocaine and heroin would kill even more young black men. He is outraged that the U.S. government has not

made the drug problem a higher priority. Rangel thinks everyone should work together to unify and strengthen efforts to fight drug abuse and related crime. He believes that legalizing drugs is incompatible with initiatives aimed at improving the lives of urban youth.

Should we temporarily legalize drugs and see if crime levels go down? Or do you agree with Congressman Rangel that we cannot risk more young people becoming addicted to harmful substances?

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Discussion questions:

- ▶ Why do some people advocate legalization of drugs?
- ▶ How much of the increase in prison population in the decade from 1985-1995 was a result of violations of drug laws? Does this suggest we should legalize drugs or not?
- ▶ Why does Congressman Charles Rangel oppose legalization of drugs?
- ▶ Do you agree with Congressman Rangel that legalizing drugs is incompatible with initiatives aimed at helping urban youth?
- ▶ Will we see a decrease in crime if we temporarily legalize drugs?

Unit 1.18 - Should drugs be legalized?

Focus Word Chart (teacher version)

Word	Meaning	Forms			Related Words
		Inflectional	Basic Word Classes	Prefixes/ Suffixes	
decade	(n.) – ten years	decades (pl.)			decathlon
incompatible	(adj.) – in disagreement		compatible	incompatibility	compassion
temporarily	(adv.) - for a while; not permanently		temporary		temporal temporize tempo contemporary
unify	(v.) - to bring together	unifies unifying unified		unification disunify	unite unit unity
violation	(n.) – broken rule; crime	violations	violate (v.)	inviolate inviolable	violence

Unit 1.18 - Should drugs be legalized?

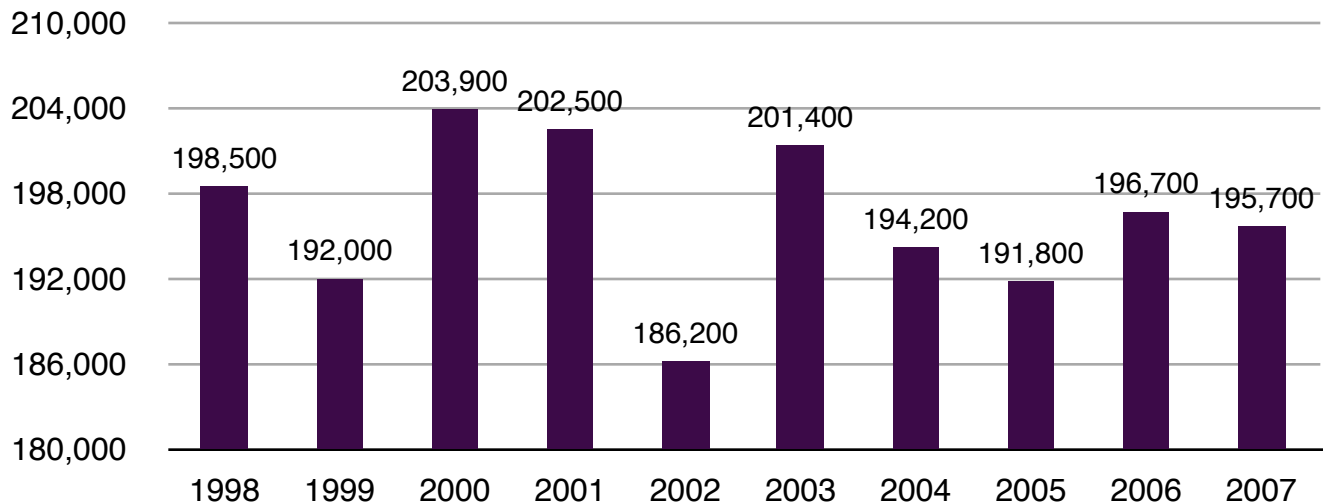
Problem of the Week

In the **decade** between 1998 and 2007, the number of juveniles (children/minors under the age of 17) arrested for drug **violations** was around 200,000.

Americans are **unified** in their desire to keep kids out of trouble but divided about the best way to do that. Should we fight harder to get rid of illegal drugs? Or should we legalize them, removing the criminal element? Is drug legalization **compatible** with a functioning society?



U.S. Juveniles Arrested for Drug Violations



Option 1: In what year(s) did the number of arrests **temporarily** exceed 202,000?

- A) 2000, 2001, and 2003
- B) 2000 and 2003
- C) 2000 and 2001
- D) 2000

Option 2: In 1995, 39.9% of drug arrests were for marijuana. By 2009, the percentage of arrests for marijuana had risen to 52.6% of total drug arrests. Six percent of all drug arrests were for marijuana trafficking and sale, and 45.6% of all drug arrests were for marijuana possession. Are law enforcement officials **temporarily** focusing their efforts on marijuana possession? Or is this a trend that will continue? If 45.6% of all drug arrests are for marijuana possession, how many of the juveniles arrested in 2007 would you expect to have been arrested on this charge?

Answer: about 89,239 ($195,700 \times .456 = 89,239.2$)

Math Discussion Question: In 1971, President Nixon declared drug abuse “public enemy number one.” In that year, 108,100 juveniles were arrested for drug **violations**. **Decades** later, almost twice that many juveniles are being arrested each year, and some are saying the war on drugs has been lost. What is our best strategy? Should we permit marijuana, and focus on policing more serious drugs? Without a **unified** approach nationwide, there could be problems. For example, California’s medical marijuana laws were **incompatible** with federal anti-drug laws. Medical marijuana stores were permitted by state law, but were still being raided by federal agents. If you were **temporarily** in charge of the nation’s drug policies, what strategy would you follow?

Should drugs be legalized?

Debating the Issue



GO!

1. Get ready...

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

A Drugs should be legalized, because that would mean there would be fewer criminals, and fewer people would go to jail.

B Drugs should not be legalized, because then they would kill even more people. Instead, people should unify their efforts to stop drug use among young people.

C We should temporarily legalize drugs, and see if crime rates go down. Then we will know if legalization is the right thing to do.

D Drugs should be legal, but only for people over 21. This will keep more teenagers from getting addicted.

E _____

2. Get set...

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

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

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» Students might have immediate, “gut-level” reactions to the issue of drug use in our society, but might never have thought about the actual consequences of legalization. Ask students: would there be fewer drug dealers if people could buy marijuana, cocaine, and heroin at pharmacies? Would more people use drugs if this were the case? Would our society become more violent, or less?

» Some students may need help defining their position on the weekly topic. Here are some examples:

...because...

I disagree with part of that...

An example might help convince me. Can you give me an example?

What part of the passage makes you think that?

Unit 1.18 - Should drugs be legalized?

Science Activity



This activity is designed to help you practice thinking like a scientist and to use this week's focus words. Sometimes the data are based on real research, but they should never be considered true or factual.

Decades ago, in the 1970s and 1980s, each state in the U.S. decided on its own drinking age. The drinking age was 18 in some states and 19, 20, or 21 in others. However, the Drinking Age Act of 1984 created a **unified** law for the whole country that raised the drinking age to 21. Some scientists think that 18-, 19-, and 20-year-olds started to drink even more alcohol after this law was passed, a result that is **incompatible** with the law's goal. These lawbreakers wanted to **violate** the rule because it seemed unfair or too strict. Some people say that laws against drugs have the same effect, and that legalizing drugs would make the number of users go down. Professors Seemy and Kahn decide to test this idea in the classroom by **temporarily** "legalizing" a behavior that is against the rules: cursing.

Question:

What will happen to the amount of cursing if cursing is allowed?

Hypothesis:

Students will curse less if cursing is allowed.

Materials:

- ▶ Classroom
- ▶ Students

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This experiment is made up, but it reflects a real phenomenon called psychological reactance (the urge to break rules that seem too strict).

Reactance (psychology). (n.d.). In Wikipedia. Retrieved October 26, 2009 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_reactance

Following activity read to class:

Reactance, or Word Generation?

"This study is a perfect illustration of psychological reactance," said Professor Seemy. "When cursing was prohibited, students resented not having the freedom to talk the way they wanted, so they violated the rule. Once we took away the rule, they didn't want to curse."

"I'm not sure about that," said Professor Kahn. "I think a different phenomenon may be at work. I think students may be replacing curse words with a different kind of explosive speech: Word Generation words!"

"What do you mean?" Professor Seemy asked.

"I overheard some kids talking," Professor Kahn replied. "They said that curse words got people's attention, but they weren't helpful for communicating ideas – for saying something. The kids said Word Generation words helped them express complicated ideas, understand each other, and even change people's minds on important questions."

"Hmmm," said Professor Seemy. "Was it reactance, or was it Word Generation? Looks like this requires further study!!"

Procedure:

1. Keep rules against cursing in place.
2. Count the number of cursing violations for 5 weeks.
3. Change to rules to allow cursing.
4. Count the number of cursing violations for an additional 5 weeks.
5. Calculate the total number of cursing violations for each week.

Data:

First 5 Weeks: Cursing Prohibited	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Cursing Violations	8	11	10	9	11

Second 5 Weeks: Cursing Allowed	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10
Cursing Violations	56	2	5	5	5

Conclusion:

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

Supported

What evidence supports your conclusion?

Answer: After an initial increase, the number of student curses dropped below previous levels when cursing was allowed.

How would you make this a better experiment?

Encourage students to consider sample size, number of trials, control of variables, whether the procedure is a true measure of the question, whether the experiment can be repeated by other scientists, data collection and recording systems, and other potential explanations for the outcome. Students should understand that these simple experiments represent the beginning of an exploration, not the end. If time permits, have students suggest how the experiment could be strengthened, emphasizing the use of the target words in the discussion.



Writing Prompt

Should drugs be legalized?

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

Focus Words

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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.

A tool to help you think about your own writing!

Remember you can use focus words from any of the WG Units.

Check off what you accomplished:

Good Start

- ☐ Stated my own position
- ☐ Included 1 focus word

Pretty Good

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1-2 focus words

Exemplary

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1 counterargument
- ☐ Used 2-5 focus words

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