A Level Politics

Bridging the Gap from Year 11

Welcome, Year 11! This is 'Bridging Work' from Y11 to introduce you to A level Politics. The pack is designed to give you a flavour of what A level Politics is all about. Part 1 of the pack will introduce you to some core political concepts and events, to aid your understanding of politics ready for sixth form. Part 2 of the pack will be an independent research project. The work in these packs will take some time, so you can break it up. Don't feel you need to complete it all in one go! You can complete the tasks in this booklet in the spaces provided.

NAME:

PART 1

Task One: What is Politics?

"Politics is the study of how a people, a nation or a state is governed."

When most people think of politics, they think of old, wealthy men (only sometimes women, and only sometimes ethnic minorities) in offices, making deals and agreements that will affect millions of people, just for personal gain. And it's true that some decisions are made that way, but politics is much more than that.

Politics is about power, about people, equality, war, conflict, debate, cooperation, freedom, money, etc. – it's about the relationship between the state (the government) and its citizens, or the state and other states. It governs everything we can and will do in our lives.

One of the reasons politics is so exciting is that it changes every single day based on the actions of individuals. Less than 500 people (in a country of 330 million) decided the result of the 2000 presidential election that made George Bush president. In 2001 he invaded Afghanistan and in 2003 he invaded Iraq. These two things have changed the Middle East and global politics, perhaps forever. Closer to home, if just one out of every 50 people who voted to leave the EU had voted differently, we wouldn't have left. Each individual vote is vital, and yet 28% of all the people who could vote and registered to vote in that referendum didn't turn out on June 23rd. It would take just a small number of them to change the result.

Your first task is to help you garner an understanding of what Politics is really all about. Use the internet to research and understand what the following key terms mean and create a short definition for each *in your own words*.

You are welcome to try to get your families involved in this – they may have some understanding of these concepts already! The most important thing in an A level is *your understanding* – so it's not about having the "right" or "word-perfect" definition, it's about you *understanding* what a concept means.

Term	Explanation
Power	
Authority	
Legitimacy	
Government	
Politics	
Civil society	
The executive	
Prime minister	
Cabinet	
Legislation	

Parliament	
House of Commons	
House of Lords	
Judiciary	
Uncodified Constitution	
Supreme Court (UK – not US!)	
Rule of Law	
Elective dictatorship	
Suffrage	
Direct democracy	
Representative democracy	
Sovereignty	
Parliamentary sovereignty	
Referendum (UK – not US!)	
General election	
By-election	
Manifesto	
Fusion of powers	
Separation of powers	
Devolution	
Pressure group	
Brexit	
First Past The Post	

Proportional Representation	
Frontbench Minister	
Backbench MP	

<u>Task Two:</u> British Politics

Go to these links here for the UK's three major parties:

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50524262

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50501411

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50459123

These links summarise their key manifesto policies in the 2019 general election. I would like you to choose a few policies of your choice and explain below why you support OR do not support that policy. You must choose at least 1 policy from each manifesto to discuss why you agree or disagree with it (you must complete at least 3).

Challenge! If you want to extend yourself and go further, you can do more than 3 by copying and pasting the spaces I have provided.

Party: _____

Manifesto policy:

_____

_____

_____

Agree/disagree & why:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Party: _____

Manifesto policy:

_____

_____

_____

Agree/disagree & why:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Party: _____

Manifesto policy:

_____

_____

_____

Agree/disagree & why:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What has changed since 2019 general election?

Leaders? Party size? Membership?

Write down some key changes that have occurred

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Next I want you to conduct some research into the role of your local MP.

I would like you to find out who your local MP is and the following details about them:

MP's name: _____

Political party: _____

Constituency (the area they represent): _____

Areas they have a particular interest in: _____

And finally, look at their voting record (found here https://www.theyworkforyou.com/ by clicking 'voting record') and jot down some ways in which they've voted in parliament.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Task Three: Making a Case

Politics A Level requires you to have opinions on a range of current political debates. For example, ***should the voting age for General Elections be lowered from 18 years old to 16 years old***.

Bullet-point below your initial thoughts and opinions on this debate. Make sure you explain why you agree or disagree with the voting age being lowered. There is no right or wrong answer just your opinion.

- _____

  _____

- _____

  _____

- _____

  _____

One style of exam question at A Level requires you to read a contemporary source and analyse the competing arguments for and against a particular issue. You need to read the source below and complete tasks 1- 5.

In the UK, the minimum voting age is 18, except in Scotland, where 16- and 17-year-olds have been given the right to vote in local and Scottish parliamentary elections. By and large, 16-year-olds haven't yet entered the world of home ownership, employment, tax or pensions but these economic issues are often at the forefront of election campaigns. The main argument against lowering the voting age is that a lack of experience in these matters prevents young people from making a considered judgement at the ballot box.

Opponents also point to the fact that 18- to 24-year-olds have the lowest turnout of any age group in elections, reflecting an apparent lack of interest in politics. These critics question whether an even younger generation would be any different. And there are concerns that teenagers who do want to cast their votes would be impressionable and easily influenced by radical politics, or would not fully think things through and would blindly vote for the same party as their parents.

But calls to lower the voting age come from a range of sources – adults as well as teenagers themselves, backed up by youth organisations, pressure groups and politicians. 16 and 17 year olds in the Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey, Brazil and Austria already have the vote. They can also vote in some elections in Germany, Malta and Norway. Evidence from the Scottish independence referendum, substantiated by research from Austria and Norway, shows – aided by the encouragement of families and schools – 16 and 17 year-olds have higher rates of turnout than 18 to 24 year-olds.

For supporters, it's about giving young people a say in matters that directly affect them, such as tuition fees. It's also thought that lowering the limit will encourage civic-mindedness at an earlier age and establish an interest in the political system, which will be continued throughout a person's life. Scotland's positive experience of including 16- and 17-year- olds in the 2014 independence referendum led to the lowering of the voting age for local and Holyrood elections.

A study by the University of Edinburgh during the referendum found that some teenagers were initially doubtful of their own abilities to make the right decision, but that this led them to actively seek out information to help inform their judgement. In some cases, teenagers even influenced their parents' voting intentions with their new-found knowledge.

But as there are no immediate plans for the UK government to debate lowering the voting age for general elections, it is unlikely that all 16-year-olds will get the chance to put that to the test any time soon.

Sources: http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zsbtbk7 and https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/ campaigns/votes-at-16/

1. Define the following political and non-political words from the source.

Parliamentary elections	
Forefront	
Ballot box	
Turnout	
Impressionable	
Radical politics	
Blindly	
Pressure groups Substantiated	
Tuition fees	
Civic-mindedness	
Referendum	
Holyrood	
Voting intentions	

2. Using two different coloured highlighters, indicate:

a.) The arguments in the source that support the view that 16 to 18 year olds should be given the vote

b.) The arguments in the source that support the view that the voting age should remain at 18

3. You are now going to practice analysing one of these arguments. You are going to use evidence to back-up your analysis. You need to do some additional research to answer these questions.

The source states that **the 18-24 age group has the lowest turnout in UK elections so therefore even younger voters are likely to have an even lower turnout**.	
What is turnout?	
For example, what was the turnout for 18-24 year olds in the recent 2019 general election?	

How does this compare with turnout for this age group in the 2017 and 2015 general elections?	
Why therefore is it perhaps not a good idea to extend the vote to 16 and 17 year olds?	
In the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum (the first UK election to give 16 year olds the vote) what was the turnout for 16-18 years old? Which age group had the lowest turnout in this referendum?	
Therefore, how does this argument prove that the voting age should not be reduced to 16 years old?	

4. In the example above, you will see that the counter-argument links to the initial argument. Go back to the arguments you highlighted in the source and match up 2 more arguments that support the view that 16 to18 year olds should be given the vote with 2 counter-arguments that support the view that they should not.

Arguments that support the view that 16 to 18 year olds should get the vote.	Counter-arguments that support the view that the voting age should remain at 18
In the Scottish referendum on independence turnout among young people was very high showing that 16-17 year olds are interested in politics.	Opponents point to the fact that 18- to 24-year-olds have the lowest turnout of any age group in elections, reflecting an apparent lack of interest in politics

5. Now have a go at writing one paragraph that could appear in an essay answering the exam question:
Evaluate the view that the UK should lower the voting age from 18 to 16 General Elections?

There is an example paragraph below – notice how there should be a counter argument included in your response.

Example Paragraph:

Some who think we should extend the vote to 16- and 17-year-olds say that it may lead them to understand political issues more if they have to research them. If under 18s have to make choices on issues like taxes, the NHS and the size of the army, they would have to research them, so this will improve their understanding and they will make good choices. However, this argument doesn't hold water because over-18s as it is rarely research political issues – if we don't have adults researching taxes, the NHS or the size of the army before elections why would we expect children to? Therefore, this is not a good argument for extending the vote to 16- and 17-year-olds.

Write your paragraphs below.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Part 2:
Research Project

Task 1: UK Research Task

Your research task is to choose one of the following parties: Conservative Party or Labour Party.

You need to research the history of the party, their ideology and policy beliefs (including their most recent election manifesto), their electoral performance (are they currently in government? How well did they do at the last election (Dec 2019)?) and finally key figures in that party (include photos and descriptions of who they are). This should be about one A4 page of typed work. You need to turn this into some sort of leaflet/flyer about that party including pictures, not just a set of notes.

You should use more than one source to complete this work on next page

Task 2: Political diary

What is going on currently?

Over next 4 weeks add in 3 stories that are happening in politics e.g. Boris Johnson resigning. Summarise what has happened. It is essential for your exams to keep update.

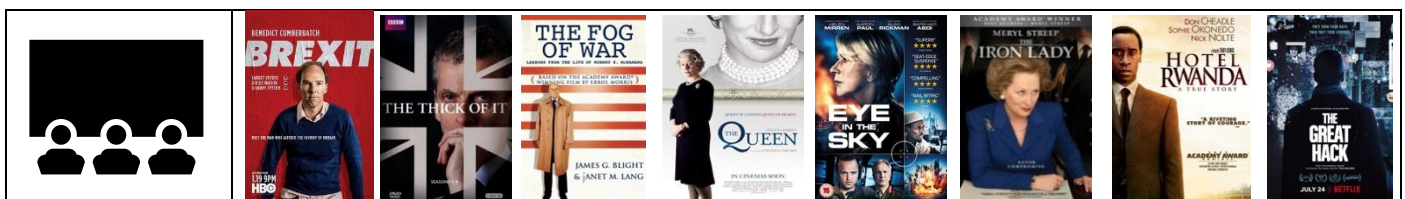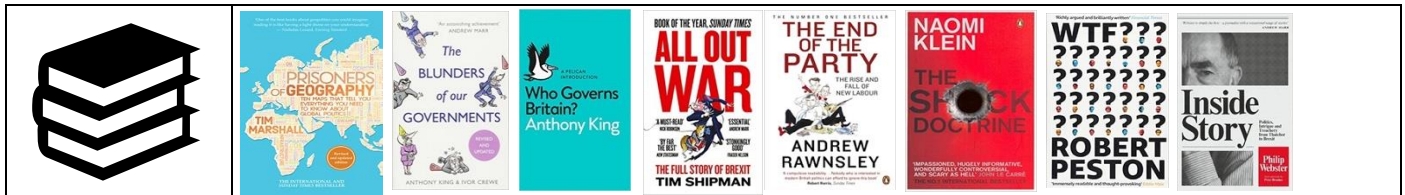|	Political story 1	Political story 2	Political story 3
Week 1			
Week 2			
Week 3			
Week 4			

Digging deeper

Want to learn more?

Start to develop your interest in the subject and build your general political knowledge. The following are suggestions, they are not compulsory, but we would love for you to engage in any that you find interesting.

Prisoners of Geography – Tim Marshall	The Blunders of our Governments	Who Governs Britain? – Anthony King	All Out War – Tim Shipman	The End of the Party – Andrew Rawnsley	The Shock Doctrine – Naomi Klein	WTF??? – Robert Peston	Inside Story – Philip Webster

Politics Review	Total Politics	The Spectator	The Economist	Global Politics	The Week	Prospect	

Brexit	The Thick of It	The Fog of War	The Queen	Eye in the Sky	The Iron Lady	Hotel Rwanda	The Great Hack

Rest is politics	Guardian 'politics weekly' podcasts
The News Agents	Talking Politics
Beyond Westminster	Parliament Explained
BBC politics podcasts	Takes from the lobby
The Westminster Hour	Learn out loud podcasts
Politics.co.uk podcasts	

Hypernormalisation	Question Time
The Cameron Years	BBC Parliament
Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg	Cabinet Confidential
The Politics Show	Globalisation if Good – Johan Norberg
The Crown	Taking Liberties