

# Making the Future

*A routine for constructing and reflecting on civic perspectives.*

Before you begin the routine, take a minute or so to recall your thoughts and ideas about the civic topic\* chosen for this activity. You may want to jot them down on paper or type them into your device to remind yourself about your thoughts and ideas before starting the routine.

## 1. IMAGINE

Suppose what is happening today with the civic topic continues to be the way it is. What do you think you would see more of? What less of?

What do you want to see more and less of in the future? Who might that future benefit? Who might it not benefit? Does it matter?

## 2. MAKE

Make something that symbolizes or represents the future you want to see. You don't need to be clear about exactly what you think before you start. Feel free to plunge in, experiment with your materials, and let the process of making help you think of ideas.

## 3. SHARE

How does what you made express the future that you want to see?

In what ways did the process of making help you to think about that future? What were some key decisions you made in the process of making? How is thinking through making different from the usual ways that you express ideas in the classroom?

*\*A civic topic relates to how we live together and how we aspire to live together. Civic topics may include issues such as climate/environmental change, migration, economic and other inequalities, gender and sexuality, race/racism, or any theme that addresses values, social conventions, power dynamics, institutions and systems that shape every level of community life, from the local to the global.*

Share your experience with this thinking routine on social media using the hashtags [#PZThinkingRoutines](#) and [#MakingTheFuture](#).

# Making the Future, cont'd

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## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Choose a civic topic that relates to how we live together and how we aspire to live together. Civic topics may include issues such as climate /environmental change, migration, economic and other inequalities, gender and sexuality, race/racism, or any theme that addresses values, social conventions, power dynamics, institutions and systems that shape every level of community life, from the local to the global.

- The civic topic could be one that you had used in one of your lessons, or one that you want to bring to your students' attention. It could also be a question or puzzle that your students raised in class discussions that you think would be important to spend time on.
- If this civic topic is something that your students have not had time to think about in your class, create opportunities for them to think about and discuss it before using the routine. When students have had some time to think about the civic topic, their engagement with the routine will be richer.
- Consider using 1 or 2 Dialogue Moves for this. Some civic topics may challenge students' worldviews, disrupt how they relate to others in their community, or heighten emotional stress for them, so it's important that students have time to sit with and discuss the complexity of the civic topic they are going to work with.

Gather some materials for students to use for the MAKE step of the routine. This step is not about creating works of art; it is about providing an opportunity for students to express their ideas through making. Process matters more than product here!

- You do not have to provide tons of different materials, or even art materials for this. Instead, reach for materials that are readily available: paper, pen, string, etc. Other materials that work well are tinfoil, tape, magazines, and found objects like twigs, bottles, cardboard, etc.
- Go for fewer rather than more materials. With ample materials, students tend to try to use a lot more than they need in order to make something visually dramatic. This step is about their ideas, so we do want to focus them on those.

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This thinking routine was developed as part of the Arts as Civic Commons project at Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education with generous support from Independent Schools Victoria.  
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## FACILITATING THE ROUTINE

**IMAGINE.** This step invites students to imagine possible scenarios about the future (which could be utopian or dystopian) as well as their preferred future. In both cases, they need to be able to explain the thinking. If your students have already discussed this, a quick reminder might be enough. If not, spend a few minutes of orientation to the topic and then students can progress through the questions under Imagine.

If the civic topic feels too big (e.g. imagining the consequences of global climate change), feel free to make it more manageable, e.g. "What might you see more and less of in your community if things continue the way they are?" Or, "What do you want to see more and less of for young people in the future?"

**MAKE.** The purpose of this step is to offer students an alternative way to express their ideas. It's about how what they make expresses their thinking, not how good or beautiful the product is. Consider giving students a limited amount of time for making. A limited amount of time (e.g. 10-15 minutes) can push students to bring abstract ideas into what they are making. It would also avoid students focusing on bells and whistles that detract rather than add to their ideas. If it helps, explain that what they are making is a prototype or preliminary symbol or representation of an idea or process. It is not a finished product.

Offer students the option of making collaborative visual pieces, but keep an eye on potential disagreements that may arise, and diffuse any destructive conflicts. Not all disagreements are destructive though; conflicts can prevent groupthink, encourage open-mindedness, catalyze problem-solving, and spark insight. So be sure to watch carefully to draw out the positive aspects of disagreements.

Offer students ideas for what the thing that they are making could look like: a collage / montage; a sculpture; a set of photographs; a drawing or sketch; a painting; digital Instagram; a proposal for an artwork; etc.

**SHARE.** Organize students into small groups to share what they've made and the process of making them, or you could bring the class together and have them share some insights that they have about making as a way of expressing ideas. To close the session, ask students for 1-2 headlines that they will take away from the session. Make sure to share your own headlines too.

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