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SHOULD DRUGS BE LEGALIZED?

Word Generation - Unit 1.18

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?

TEACHER
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?

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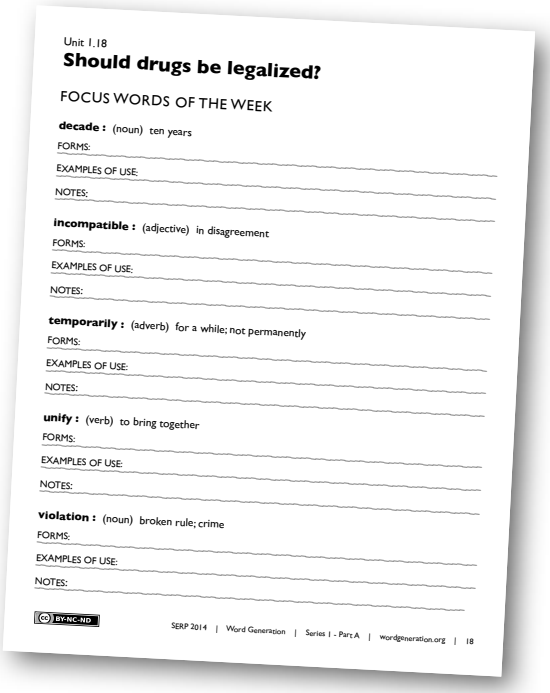
PLEASE NOTE:
THE STUDENT VERSION OF THIS PAGE IS FORMATTED DIFFERENTLY



Unit 1.18

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FOCUS WORDS OF THE WEEK

decade : (noun) ten years
FORMS:
EXAMPLES OF USE:
NOTES:

incompatible : (adjective) in disagreement
FORMS:
EXAMPLES OF USE:
NOTES:

temporarily : (adverb) for a while; not permanently
FORMS:
EXAMPLES OF USE:
NOTES:

unify : (verb) to bring together
FORMS:
EXAMPLES OF USE:
NOTES:

violation : (noun) broken rule; crime
FORMS:
EXAMPLES OF USE:
NOTES:

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WORD CHART FOR TEACHERS

This chart is not in the student book. It is a resource for teachers to support students in the use of the focus words each week. Students are provided one page in each unit immediately following the weekly passage with a basic definition printed and space for taking notes.

Word	Meaning	Forms			Related Words
		Inflectional	Basic Word Classes	Prefixes/ Suffixes	
decade	(n.) – ten years	decades (pl.)			decathlon
incompatible	(adj.) – in disagreement, inconsistent		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

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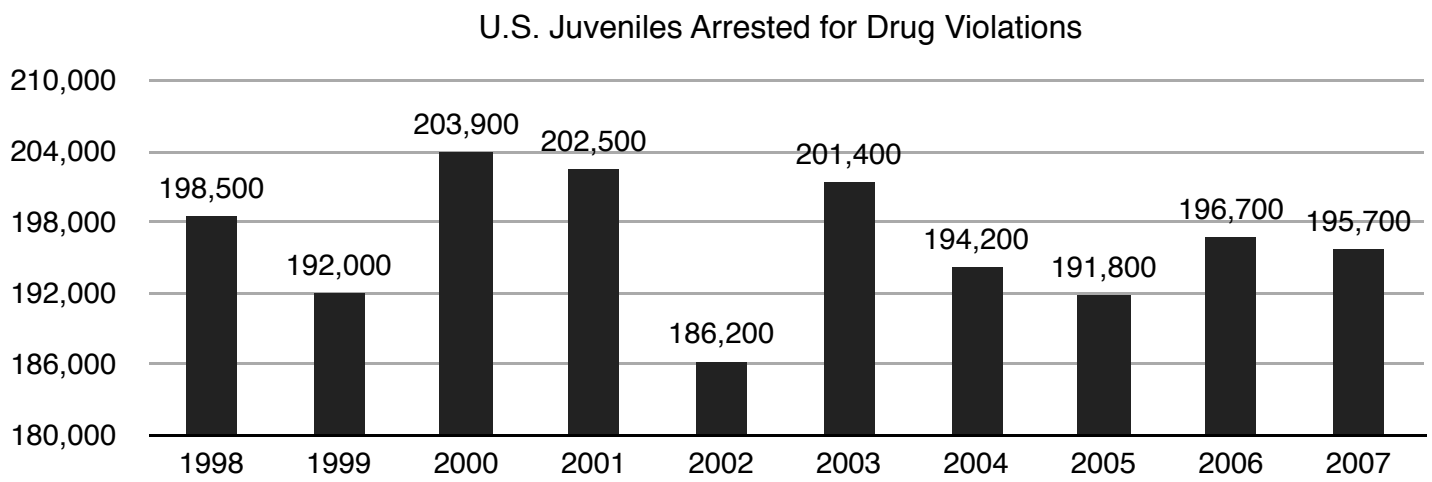
PROBLEM OF THE WEEK



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?

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 x .456 = 89,239.2)

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?

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THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY

After a class discussion about drugs in Mr. Seemy's class, Kyra and Victor look into the history of drinking laws and find out that **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.

Kyra and Victor report that 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. Perhaps these lawbreakers wanted to **violate** the rule because it seemed too strict to them, or because they found breaking the rule exciting. Victor wonders if laws against drugs might have the same effect: Would legalizing drugs make the number of users go down? Kyra thinks not.

→ Mr. Seemy told Ms. Kahn about Kyra and Victor's question about the unintended effect of rules. Mr. Seemy and Ms. Kahn decided to test the idea in the classroom by **temporarily** "legalizing" a behavior that is against the rules: For five weeks Mr. Seemy allowed *cursing* in the classroom and Ms. Kahn prohibited it. They kept track of how many incidents of cursing there were in each class over time.

Number of "Cursing in Class" Incidents

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Mr. Seemy's Class **(cursing allowed)**	56	2	5	5	5
Ms. Kahn's Class **(cursing prohibited)**	8	11	10	9	11

Did Mr. Seemy's and Ms. Kahn's "experiment" show any differences between the two classes? Explain.

Yes, there was a difference. In Mr. Seemy's class, where cursing was allowed, there was a sudden rise in cursing for one week, and then a drop below the fairly steady level of cursing in Ms. Kahn's class.

The data above is not enough to prove anything, but which of these claims do these data support more? How?

Claim 1:
Prohibiting a behavior causes it to happen more.

Claim 2:
Prohibiting a behavior causes it to happen less.

The data for just the first week seem to support Claim 2. Allowing cursing led to a lot more cursing than prohibiting it. But after the first week the amount of cursing in the class where it was allowed dropped dramatically. So in the longer run, Mr. Seemy and Ms. Kahn's data might support Claim 1.

It would be useful to know how much cursing there had been in the weeks leading up to the rule change in Mr. Seemy's class. Did his class used to have about the same amount of cursing as Ms. Kahn's class? Or did his class used to have the same low rate of cursing as in weeks 2-5? Having that additional data might affect our interpretation of the experiment.

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DEBATING THE ISSUE

TEACHER
Whatever the debate format, ask students to use academically productive talk when arguing their positions. In particular, students should provide reasons and evidence to back up their assertions. It may be helpful to read these sample positions to illustrate some possibilities, but students should be encouraged to take their own positions about the issue at hand.

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 _____
_____
_____

Get set...

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

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
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_____
_____

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

...because...

I disagree with part of that...

What part of the passage makes you think that?

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

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WRITE ABOUT IT

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

Focus Words

decade | incompatible | temporarily | unify | violation

TEACHER

Ask students to write a response in which they argue a position on the weekly topic.

Put the writing prompt on a 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.

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