

# Great Oracy Exhibition 2025

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## Heard it on the playground: How to build oracy and media literacy skills in your classroom

Maddy Keaveney  
The Economist Educational Foundation



# Who we are

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- We are an independent charity that combines deep education knowhow with *The Economist's* journalistic expertise.
- We enable children aged 10 to 16 to join inspiring discussions about the news, which teach them to think critically, communicate effectively and understand global issues.
- They build essential knowledge and skills for thriving in our changing world.



# Why now?

- In an era of unprecedented global change and digital transformation, equipping young people with the skills to navigate, understand and critically engage with news and current affairs has become vital to their future success.
- Our mission is increasingly urgent. Our vision is to reach a million children by 2026, with 100,000 of these having weekly news discussions and seeing transformative impact.



## Why now?

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85%

**OF PEOPLE**

are worried by the impact of disinformation (UNESCO)

1%

**OF TEACHERS**

feel well-equipped to teach political topics (THE MISSING LINK)

4/10

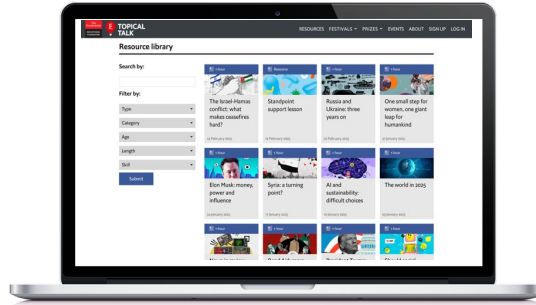
**PEOPLE**

avoid the news. Only ½ of adults in this country voted at the 2024 UK general election, the lowest share of the population to vote since universal suffrage. (REUTERS, INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC POLICY)



# Topical Talk

## TOPICAL TALK HEADLINES



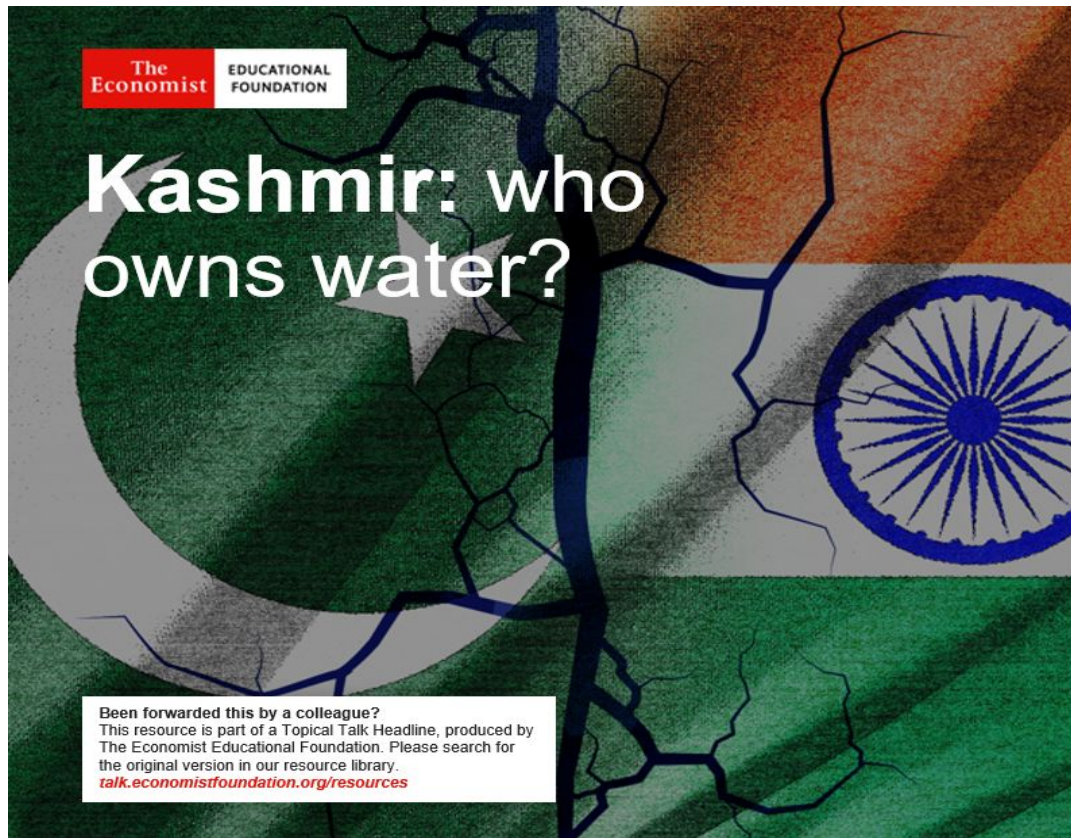
# Top Tip #1

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## Make information accessible

- Start from where your students are at
- Explore key vocabulary
- Use stories and analogies

# Top Tip #1



The Economist EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

## Kashmir: who owns water?

Been forwarded this by a colleague?  
This resource is part of a Topical Talk Headline, produced by The Economist Educational Foundation. Please search for the original version in our resource library.  
[talk.economistfoundation.org/resources](http://talk.economistfoundation.org/resources)

### TOPICAL TALK HEADLINES

In April 2025, after an attack in Kashmir, India paused an important deal with Pakistan about sharing water from the Indus river. In this lesson you will explore how disagreements and conflict arise over scarce resources. Can someone own something that is shared? And what happens when resources aren't distributed fairly?



#### Listening

- Step 1:** I listen to others without interrupting
- Step 3:** I listen to others and can tell someone else what it was about
- Step 11:** I listen critically and compare different perspectives



#### Knowledge

I know that resources are sometimes scarce, which can lead to conflict like in Kashmir



# Top Tip #1

In groups you are going to act out a story.  
Each person in your group will have a part.

The parts are:



**Narrator one**



**Narrator two**



**Miner**  
(from the Mining  
Village)



**Crafter**  
(from the Crafting  
Village)



**Step 0:** I am  
listening to others  
without interrupting



Is the oil yours?  
What should you do next?

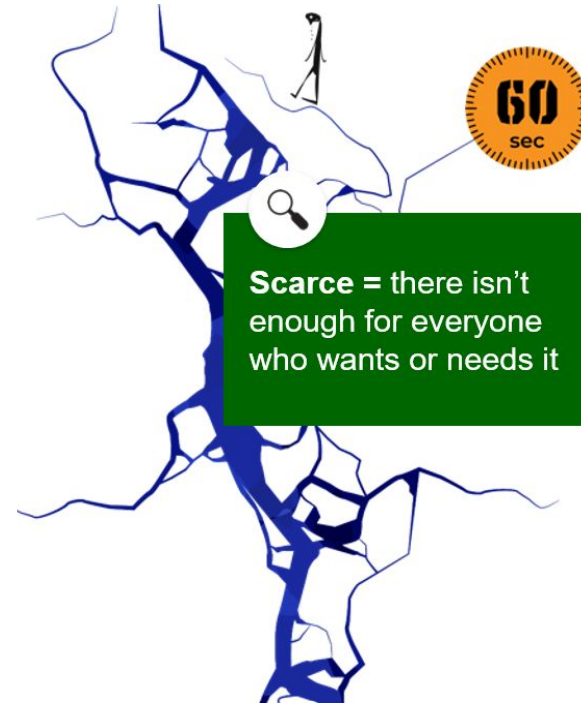


# Top Tip #1

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In the world there are some resources that are scarce, meaning there isn't enough for everyone who wants or needs it. The shortage of resources forces people to make choices about how these resources are used and who gets to use them.

**Can you guess the world's most scarce resources?**

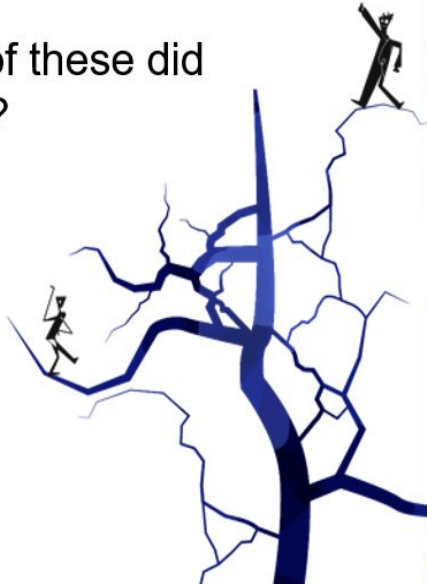


# Top Tip #1

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## Water, land, sand, coal and oil

How many of these did  
you think of?



# Top Tip #1

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## Make information accessible

- Start from where your students are at
- Explore key vocabulary
- Use stories and analogies

## Top Tip #2

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### Promote critical thinking

- Pose the problem and change the parameters
- Getting stuck is good
- Encourage negotiation and decision-making

# Top Tip #2



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## War and power: the Israel-Iran conflict

Been forwarded this by a colleague?  
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### TOPICAL TALK HEADLINES

The long-standing conflict between Israel and Iran escalated dramatically on June 13th when Israel struck Iran's military and nuclear facilities. Iran retaliated with missile and drone attacks. On June 22nd the United States directly joined the conflict, bombing Iran's nuclear facilities in support of Israel. In this lesson, students will consider how different types of power affect conflict and discuss the big questions related to them.



#### Problem solving

**Step 1:** I complete tasks by finding someone to help if I need them

**Step 5:** I explore problems by thinking about the pros and cons of possible solutions

**Step 9:** I create solutions for complex problems by generating a range of options



#### Knowledge

I know that different forms of power can be used to help a country fight a war, like in Israel and Iran.

# Top Tip #2

## Rank the power cards

What gives a country the most power during a war?



**Most power**  
(1 card)

Diagram showing 6 empty boxes for ranking cards. One box is positioned at the top level, three boxes are in the middle level, and one box is at the bottom level.

**Quite a lot of power**  
(3 cards)

**Not much power**  
(2 cards)

**Least power**  
(1 card)



**Step 5:**  
I'm exploring problems by thinking about the pros and cons of possible solutions

# Top Tip #2

## Place the news story on top of the power card

Read each news story and discuss the question together.

### Nuclear weapon



What if one country has nuclear weapons and the other doesn't?

For example, Israel has nuclear weapons and Iran is building facilities to make nuclear weapons.

### Internet



What if a country loses access to the internet?

For example, Iran was worried about a cyber attack from Israel, so it shut down its own internet.



**Most power**  
(1 card)

**Quite a lot of power**  
(3 cards)

**Not much power**  
(2 cards)

**Least power**  
(1 card)



# Top Tip #2

## Class vote

What gives a country the most power in a war?

**Nuclear weapons**



**Internet**



**Ally Internet**

Is it ever right for a country to stop another country from accessing the internet?



**Media**



**Size of the army**



**Size of the country**

Does being online make us more free, or can it make us easier to control?



## Top Tip #2

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### Promote critical thinking

- Pose the problem and change the parameters
- Getting stuck is good
- Encourage negotiation and decision-making

## Top Tip #3

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### Explore different perspectives

- Present a range of perspectives
- Who, not you



# Top Tip #3

## Scenario 1

### New pandemic

A new, very dangerous pandemic hits. Almost all of the people who are infected have serious life-changing symptoms. A vaccine is developed fast. Scientists know it's safe for a short time but don't know much yet about long-term effects.

#### What should happen?

- Make it mandatory**  
Everyone who can have the vaccine should get it by law. There should be rules or rewards to make sure people do.
- Make it optional**  
The vaccine should be a personal choice. The government should only give information, without forcing or strongly rewarding anyone.
- Something else?**



# Top Tip #3

You had the vaccine but still got the illness



"I got the vaccine, but I still ended up getting sick with the flu.

It wasn't as bad as some people, but it was still frustrating to deal with."

You are a **politician**



"I make the decisions about vaccines in my country and I have a huge responsibility. I studied biology when I was a teenager."

You **know someone** who was very ill from a disease that they didn't want to be vaccinated against



"My friend was healthy, but they didn't get the COVID-19 vaccine. They caught the virus and were very ill.

Now they say if they had had the vaccine, this could have been prevented."

You are a **child** who doesn't want a vaccine but your parents support vaccinations



"My parents keep saying it's important to be vaccinated, but I've seen things online that make me really nervous about it.

A lot of the people I watch aren't having them done, so I don't want to either!"

## Top Tip #3

Who *should* decide who has a vaccine?

**Individual**

**Parent or guardian**

**Government**

**Other**



1 minute  
thinking time



2 minutes  
speaking time

Show the action for the option  
you agree with.



## Top Tip #3

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### Explore different perspectives

- Present a range of perspectives
- Who, not you

# Topical Talk teachers



## Teacher, United States

I just had the best time teaching the first lesson of Topical Talk. This is the first one that I have attempted. The kids loved it! They left so excited. It is not often that I go home feeling like TODAY was one of the best days in my teaching career. Today is one of those days!



## Teacher, Australia

Topical Talk Headlines raise the bar for having tough, important conversations and giving the kids agency in where the discussion goes.



# Sign up for free!

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