
What Should We Do About Student Debt?

Segment Length: 2:02 minutes; 5:46 minutes

Videos:

“Robert Reich: The Student Debt Crisis”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WILR0IxzcxE>

“Solving Student Debt”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swiCHcdqJ7Y>

Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

Analysis Questions:

1. Robert Reich proposes free tuition to public colleges and universities, but John Stossel says that free college tuition would lead to “welfare for the rich.” What does Stossel mean by this?
2. Both videos propose that loans should take into account a student’s future earnings, but how do their approaches differ in this area?
3. John Stossel’s video suggests Income Share Agreements as a solution to the student debt crisis. Would you consider something like this? Why/Why not?
4. Beth Akers says, “We should think about investing in students the same that we invest in startups.” Do you think this is a good approach to higher education? How would Robert Reich respond?
5. While Beth Akers thinks we should invest in students as if they were businesses, Robert Reich thinks students should be able to refinance their loans and file for bankruptcy like a business. Is this an example of common ground between the two sides? Why/Why not?
6. Robert Reich argues that higher education is a public good, because it benefits everyone and makes the nation stronger. Does this mean it should be paid for by the government? How would John Stossel respond?
7. Both videos offer unique solutions to the student debt crisis. Are the two sides compatible? Why/Why not?