
Free Trade vs. Protectionism

Videos:

“Protectionism | The American Ideal”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmR2EVOmJuY> (3:15 minutes)

“Free Trade vs. Protectionism”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7njllZ2xYq0> (3:12 minutes)

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. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
3. What is free trade?
4. What is protectionism?
5. According to Monsieur Z, what combination of traits makes the United States unique?
6. Don Boudreaux said: “Free trade is simply a policy of treating foreign goods and services no differently than domestic goods and services are treated.” What did he mean by this?
7. Monsieur Z said: “America had become so financially prosperous a state that it could afford to export that prosperity and project its power over other countries.” What did he mean by this?
8. Don Boudreaux said the main tool of protectionism is a tariff. What is a tariff?
9. Monsieur Z said that 78% of U.S. jobs are service based, while agricultural and manufacturing jobs have gone down. Is this a bad thing? Why/Why not?
10. Don Boudreaux said that in practice, tariffs are imposed on companies that import goods. How does this affect consumers?
11. Monsieur Z said that when we rely on other countries for manufacturing and agriculture, we “send our money abroad.” What does it mean to “send our money abroad” in this context? Does it make the U.S. poorer? Why/Why not?

12. What two examples did Don Boudreaux give for areas that practice free trade? Were you surprised by these examples? Why/Why not?
13. Monsieur Z said that in the past, the U.S. government would promote and incentivize domestic manufacturing and agriculture “for the sake of its own betterment.” What policies could the U.S. engage in to promote these industries domestically?
14. Don Boudreaux pointed out that there is free trade within the United States: citizens of one state are able to trade with citizens of another state without being subject to tariffs or restrictions. Should other countries be treated the same way we treat other states? Why/Why not?
15. Monsieur Z said: “We can no longer depend on foreign countries to supply us vital resources, especially when we are more than capable of producing them ourselves and in fact will grow stronger and richer from producing them ourselves.” Do you agree with this statement? If so, why do you think the U.S. isn’t currently focused more on manufacturing and agriculture?
16. Don Boudreaux said free trade in the U.S. is “a major reason for Americans’ high standard of living and continued economic growth.” How does free trade improve standard of living?
17. Monsieur Z said: “Eager students fresh out of school looking to find a path for themselves should not be condemned to work a dismal service occupation in perpetuity because all other options are few and far between.” Are service jobs inherently worse than manufacturing and agricultural jobs? Why/Why not?
18. What products and services do you use that originate outside of your country? Do you think there should be restrictions on these products and services to help domestic companies compete? Why/Why not?
19. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from either video that affects your views of this topic?
20. What could you learn about this topic that might affect your view of this debate?
21. What else would you like to learn about this topic?