

2025-26 STOSSEL IN THE CLASSROOM ESSAY & VIDEO CONTEST TOPICS & PROMPTS

TOPIC 1: The Truth About Tariffs: Who Really Pays?

Tariffs—taxes on imported goods—are often used by governments to protect domestic industries or as leverage in international negotiations. Supporters argue that tariffs protect local jobs and businesses from foreign competition. Critics say they raise prices for consumers, invite retaliation, and hurt economic growth.

In your entry, choose one specific tariff policy (from the past or present) and analyze its impact on individuals, businesses, and the economy. Discuss how the tariff policy you chose affected prices, jobs, consumer choice, and trade relationships, and explain who benefitted from the policy and who paid the price. Reflect on how tariff policies might affect your own life, family, or community today.

Recommended Videos:

- [The Trouble with Tariffs](#)
 - [Will Tariffs Hurt America?](#)
 - [Both Sides: The Impact of Tariffs](#)
 - [Both Sides: Tariffs Revisited](#)
 - [Both Sides: Digging Deeper on Tariffs](#)
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TOPIC 2: The Birthright Citizenship Debate

Under the current interpretation of the 14th Amendment, anyone born on U.S. soil is automatically a U.S. citizen, regardless of their parents' immigration status. Known as birthright citizenship, this principle has been widely accepted in the U.S. for over a century. A new legal challenge may soon bring this issue before the Supreme Court.

In your entry, explain what the authors of the 14th Amendment intended when they proposed the amendment, and evaluate whether birthright citizenship reflects those goals. Should the interpretation continue unchanged or should the amendment be reinterpreted? What are the possible positive and negative consequences? Support your argument with historical context, constitutional reasoning, and evidence from recent court cases and/or public debates. If applicable, connect the issue to your own life or your community.

Recommended Videos:

- [Both Sides: Birthright Citizenship](#)
- [Both Sides: Birthright Citizenship Revisited](#)

TOPIC 3: America at 250: Why It Matters to Me

In 2026, the United States will turn 250 years old—a major milestone for a country built on the bold ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But as we look ahead, some people wonder: Do those founding ideals still guide us today? Do they mean the same as they meant in 1776? Have we lived up to them?

Some worry that government power has grown too large and intrusive. Others say our founding values must evolve to meet modern challenges.

In your entry, reflect on America’s anniversary from a personal perspective:

- Why does America’s 250th birthday matter to you?
- What do its founding ideals mean in your life, your family, or your future?
- How have we lived up to those ideals? How have we strayed from them?
- What should our country stand for?

Support your reflections with research and examples from history, current events, and/or personal experience.

Note to Students: This topic invites personal reflection. Focus on your own views, experiences, and understanding of America’s principles today.

Recommended Videos:

- [Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness](#)
 - [How Free Are You?](#)
 - [Bankrupting America](#)
 - [Does the Constitution Need to Be Amended?](#)
 - [Both Sides: Free Speech](#)
 - [Both Sides: Free Speech and Political Correctness](#)
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TOPIC 4: Time’s Up? Should Congress Have Term Limits?

Members of Congress can be re-elected to an unlimited number of terms. Should that continue or should there be limits? Supporters of term limits argue that the lack of term limits leads to career politicians who lose touch with voters and become too influenced by lobbyists and special interests. Opponents argue that elections already act as term limits—voters can remove anyone they don’t like.

In your entry, take a position on whether term limits should be enacted for members of Congress, and explain why you took that position. Have you ever felt like leaders stayed too long? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of term limits? How might term limits affect the balance of power in government, and the way laws get made?

Support your argument with historical examples, constitutional principles, and current events. You may also reflect on your personal experiences with government.

Recommended Videos:

- [Both Sides: Term Limits](#)
- [U.S. Term Limits](#)