

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

New Grads Increasingly Turning to AmeriCorps, Teach for America, 03/17/09

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/jan-june09/service_03-17-2.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

[Student Worksheet](#) (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. Do you think it is easy or difficult to find a job after graduating college? Why?

2. Why do people volunteer?

3. What is unemployment? How do you think young people cope with difficulty finding a job?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

1. What is the unemployment situation in the United States?

The nation's unemployment level rose to a 25-year high this month.

2. What has happened to the number of applications for volunteer and service programs in America?

Many recent graduates are turning to service-oriented job programs like Teach for America and Peace Corps. While the economy is down, volunteer and service program applications are up. Way up.

3. What is Teach for America? How many more people have applied to the program this year?

Teach for America, a training program that hires recent college graduates and professionals with no formal teaching experience to work in the nation's neediest school districts, has received more than 35,000 applications for this year's teaching corps -- a 42 percent increase over last year's record numbers.

4. What does one study say about the rise in volunteerism in America?

Volunteerism by older teens has doubled since the 1980s and service participation in college has risen sharply since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 according to the Corporation for National and Community Service Report, "Volunteer Growth in America."

5. What is a possible reason for the increased interest in service?

Steven Greenhouse, a jobs and labor reporter for the New York Times, notes that the spike in service oriented organizations appears to be a "logical response to not enough paying jobs" in the current employment climate.

6. What is the Peace Corps? Who started it?

Another beneficiary of the current situation is the Peace Corps, part of President John F. Kennedy's vision of cross-cultural communication and call to service. Although the Peace Corps is open to all adults, the median age of participation is 25, with many members joining soon after college.

7. What is the Serve America Act?

A current bill in the Senate, the Serve America Act, would expand AmeriCorps from 75,000 to 250,000 positions.

Sponsored by Sens. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, the law would provide \$5 billion over five years for minimal living expenses and an educational stipend for people of all ages to volunteer in the fields of health care, energy, education and the environment.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

- 1. Are you and your peers interested in service? Why or why not?**
- 2. What does "service" mean, according to this article?**
- 3. Are service jobs important? Why or why not?**
- 4. What factors are most important when considering a job or career? What about pay, hours, location, working conditions, personal fulfillment?**
- 5. Why do you think applications to service organizations are up?**

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.