

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

Torture Fight Rages On, Even After Policy Change, 05/15/09

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/jan-june09/torture_05-15.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. What does torture mean, in your own words?

2. If the government arrests someone suspected of plotting a future attack against the United States, what is it allowed to do to get information from that person?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

1. Why is the debate over the use of torture by American interrogators intensifying?

The torture issue intensified after President Obama released previously secret Bush administration legal memos that justified the use of “enhanced interrogation techniques” on terrorism suspects after the September 11, 2001, attacks in New York and Washington.

2. What has President Obama decided about the use of torture in his administration?

President Barack Obama has called for an end to interrogation techniques of terrorism suspects he considers torture.

3. What are Republicans saying about House Speaker Nancy Pelosi?

In response to criticism of Bush-era policies, Republicans claimed that Democrats such as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, knew about the use of waterboarding and did nothing to stop it.

4. Is torture legal or illegal in the United States?

Torture is against the law in the United States.

5. What has President Obama decided to do about Bush administration officials who authorized torture?

President Obama has not declared publicly whether he wants to see Bush administration officials and their lawyers investigated for authorizing the CIA to torture prisoners.

6. What did former Vice President Dick Cheney say about the effectiveness of torture?

Former Vice President Dick Cheney, whose office was at the center of detainee policy during the Bush administration, claims that the interrogation techniques were vital in protecting America from terrorist attacks.

7. What has President Obama decided to do about additional abuse photos?

Meanwhile, a legal battle is brewing over photos of interrogation that President Obama initially planned to release, but later decided might inflame anti-American anger and endanger troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. Do you think the Obama administration should investigate Bush administration officials for possible illegal use of torture? Why or why not?

2. How does the question of what Nancy Pelosi knew in 2002 affect the current debate?

3. Do you think that politicians' decisions about whether or not there should be an investigation are influenced by whether their party would benefit or not from such an investigation? Explain your answer.

4. Do you think torture is an effective way to get information from prisoners? How could you know for sure?

5. Do you think the abuse photos should be released? Why or why not?

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.