



# SCHOOL SHOOTINGS



A TALKING POINTS LESSON PLAN FOR  
ENGLISH READING, SPEAKING,  
VOCABULARY AND WRITING

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# Introduction

what is a school shooting?

Have you ever heard of one before?

Do these happen in your country?

# School Shootings

*Read Philip's account below.*

As a parent, of course, I worry about it.

Every time I see on the news that there has been a new shooting in a school, my heart jumps. It is just terrifying for any parent.

And I just don't know what to think about it. On the one hand, I think we should ban all guns — just make them all illegal. But what good would that do? Sure, all the law-abiding citizens would hand in their firearms. They would do it because the law says so.

But the criminals? Would they hand in their guns? I think not.

And for any person — someone with mental health issues — if they wanted to buy a gun to use that day and take innocent lives, well, they would.

So I think it doesn't really matter whether we ban them or not.

In some schools, I hear that teachers are now armed with guns. This just seems like a stupid idea to me. If there are guns in the school, that means that there is the risk of them being used in the wrong way. Criminals could break into the school and steal them.

Or a student might be able to access them.

It just sounds like a terrible idea to me.

And the shooters — who are they? What kind of people are they?

They usually seem to be young white guys — teenagers a lot of the time. Has anyone considered why it is nearly always young white men that carry out these school shootings?

What possesses them to do such a violent and heinous act?

If these young men are troubled in some way, then we need to find out what is troubling them. Taking away guns doesn't really take away the problem. The problem is still there.

I often think that instead of school teachers arming themselves in the classroom, the school might be better in hiring counsellors to talk to the students.

That would be a very productive and valuable thing to do for the students.

If they ever felt the need to talk to someone, they could. We all have times when we need to talk to someone and tell someone else how we are feeling. Maybe the students are having trouble at home and cannot talk to their parents. If so, then they could talk to a professional in the school.

By doing that, we might be able to save future lives.

But it is so worrying to see these shootings in the news.

I count myself lucky that we live in a small city, and I tell my wife that there is much less chance of anything happening here. But secretly, I have no real idea about this. It could happen anytime and in any city.

When I was a student at school, we never heard of such things. And I think the students generally were happy and content with their lives. Of course, we all had our off days, but we never had a moment of complete insanity and wanted to kill other people.

I just think something has happened in society and made young people much less happy than in past generations.

# Reading Comprehension Questions

What is Philip's reaction every time he sees a shooting on the news?

What does Philip think should happen to guns and the law?

Does Philip think anyone can buy a gun where he lives?

Do teachers carry guns in Philip's hometown?

What does he think about this?

What does he think could happen to these guns held by teachers?

According to Philip, who are the shooters usually? What kind of people are they?

What does Philip say should happen with these shooters?

Who does Philip think the school should hire as staff in the schools? Why does he suggest this?

What does Philip say to his wife about shooters and where they live?

Were there shooters when Philip was at school?

What does Philip blame the shooters on?

# Essential Vocabulary

shooting	my heart jumps	terrifying
ban	illegal	law-abiding
citizens	firearms	criminals
mental health issues	innocent	armed with
risk	break into	steal
access	terrible idea	teenagers
considered	carry out	possesses
violent	heinous	troubled
counsellor	productive	valuable
professional	secretly	content
off days	insanity	past generations

## Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

**Notebook**—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

***“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”***

## Discussion Questions

How do you think Philip feels about school shootings? What is going through his mind?

Which country does Philip live in? Why do you think this?

Do you think banning guns would stop school shootings?

What methods can we take to stop school shootings?

Are there school shootings in your country? Why/why not?

Are there any other dangers to the public in your country? Give examples.

Can people carry guns in your country? What is your opinion about this?

Can people carry guns in the countryside for hunting in your country? What do you think about this?

Why are the school shooters in Philip's story always young white men? What is the reasoning behind this?

Do you think school students need counsellors and counselling? Why/why not?

Do people need guns? Why/why not?

What checks should be made on a person before they are allowed to own a gun?

Do you think violent movies encourage school shootings? What about computer games?

Guns don't kill people, people do. What do you think of this statement?

Would you like to own a gun? Why/why not?

# Brainstorming Exercise

Work as one large group in your class.

Try to think of all the possible solutions to school shootings.

- What can we do to stop school shootings?
- Which ideas are the most effective?
- Which ideas are the least effective?

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **BAN ALL GUNS**
- **PROVIDE SCHOOL COUNSELLOR FOR THE STUDENTS**
- **LET TEACHERS CARRY GUNS**

Think of more ideas. Try to come up with as many ideas as you can as one group.

***One student should write all the ideas on the board.***

## Small Group Exercise

Divide the class into small groups of three or four students.

Each group chooses one of the ideas from the brainstorming session above.

In your group, you should create a presentation about the idea and say why it would work very well. Or maybe it is a terrible idea, so you say why you think this would not work at all.

Your presentation needs to have THREE points that you can bring up to explain why the idea works or does not work. You need to show clear reasons for and understanding of the idea.

So, for example, maybe one idea is to close schools. Your group might think this is a terrible idea. You could come up with the following reasons why:

- **Closing schools does not solve the problem of school shooters—it just avoids the issue completely.**
- **If we close schools, many people will lose their jobs and the students will not be able to study. This is not good for anyone and will create bigger problems in the future.**
- **Schools teach students strong social skills—which could prevent more school shootings in the future.**

Once you have your presentation ready, you can show the class.

# In The Event of a School Shooting

This is a group exercise.

Get into groups of around SIX students. In your group, you have to devise a safety plan in the event that a shooting takes place in your school or college.

Think very carefully about all the events and procedures that should take place.

Think about the following questions to help you:

Do you need anyone to perform certain tasks?

- Is there a safe place to go in the school or college?
- Who can call the police? Is there a procedure for this?
- People will obviously be terrified. How to deal with this?
- Should students have access to their smartphones to call for help? Why/why not?
- Should anyone act as heroes? Why/why not?
- Should each class take care of their own safety? Or should the school work together? Why/why not?

Once you are ready, make a presentation of your safety plan to the class. Ideally, you should have around TEN steps in your safety plan.

# Should We Ban Guns?

This is a class debate/discussion. You can select one of the students to chair the debate and make sure there is order.

Everyone has the right to share their opinions, so please allow every student to speak. If you disagree with what the person is saying, wait until they finish speaking then raise your hand to offer your thoughts.

Here are some statements that you can read out in class to start the discussion:

- **Thousands of people are killed every year due to firearms-related incidents. If we banned guns, we could save lives.**
- **Guns don't kill people—people kill people. It is a waste of time banning guns. You may as well ban all knives as there are now many knife attacks in the world today. Or ban cricket bats and baseball bats as these could also be used to kill people.**
- **There are no heroes in a mass shooting. No one can save lives in the event of a school shooting. In fact, if anyone tries to 'save people' by shooting at the shooter, they will make things much worse.**
- **People need guns to protect themselves. We live in a world where crime is at an all-time high. If someone breaks into a person's home, the people in the house have the right to protect themselves with guns.**
- **Guns are very rarely used in self-defence. They are usually used to attack.**
- **Gun laws will not stop criminals from owning and using guns. So law-abiding citizens should have the right to carry one too.**
- **Certain countries are more prone to gun violence than others. It has nothing to do with guns, but the society of that country.**
- **If we ban guns, it should be a global banning. And how can we know that all countries will follow this rule?**
- **Gun violence in movies encourages gun violence in society.**

The whole class should discuss all of these points and any other points raised.

At the end of the session, you could have a vote to decide whether you should ban guns or not. What is the verdict?

# Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

Write a short story of around 500—1000 words. It can be any style of story you want—it is your short story after all!—but you must base it on the title.

The title of the story is: **The Gun**

When you have finished your story, you can read it out loud in class. Or you can give it to your teacher for feedback.

# Teacher's Notes

This lesson plan is of a highly sensitive nature. It is not suitable for younger students. It may be acceptable for high school age students, but that depends on the culture of the country you are teaching in. I will leave this to your own discretion.

## Introduction

Go through all the questions and ask the students. Elicit as many responses as you can. If you are a foreign teacher working abroad, you might want to add one or two comments of your own about school shootings in your culture to try to get more responses from the students.

## School Shootings

Pick a few students to read through all the text. You might need to read through twice, but hopefully, the students are at the right level where they can pick up most of the meaning.

## Reading Comprehension Questions

You can do this by going through all the questions as one group with all the class. Or you could put the students in small groups. Or let them do the whole exercise individually.

## Essential Vocabulary

This is a list of vocabulary that may be very useful to your students.

You can do this for homework or as an in-class activity.

For either purpose, I would suggest doing the following:

- Look the word or phrase up in a dictionary
- Write down the meaning of the new word in the students' vocabulary notebook
- Think of a sentence using the new word

You could do this as a class activity for the first four or five words, then assign the rest as homework. Students often need to practice using a dictionary, so this could be a useful exercise for them.

## Discussion Questions

This is a class activity.

Go round the class and ask the students all the discussion questions one by one. Their answers and responses may encourage further or follow-up questions.

The point is for the students to become active in discussing what they have read and the vocabulary they have gained.

### **Brainstorming Exercise**

This is an exercise for all the students to work as one group in the class.

The students need to come up with solutions to prevent school shootings. They need to brainstorm all possible ideas.

As the teacher, you should encourage students to share their ideas. There is no such thing as a bad idea, just ideas that need more thought added.

Go through the examples and then get the students to add their own ideas.

If the students are having difficulty, then you could separate them into smaller groups and get them to write down three or four ideas. They can then share them when everyone is ready.

You should choose one student to write down all the ideas on the board.

### **Small Group Exercise**

This is a small group exercise.

Divide the students into smaller groups and assign one of the ideas from the above exercise to each group. They then have to make a plan for this idea and point out if it is a good idea or not.

They need to think of at least three reasons why the idea could work or not work.

Once all the groups are ready, they stand in front of the class and make a presentation of their thoughts and ideas.

### **In The Event of a School Shooting**

Divide the class into smaller groups. Each group must devise a plan of what to do in the event of a school shooting.

This could present something of a problem for students who have no idea about this, so you may have to go around to each group and assist.

When all the groups are ready, each one stands up and makes a presentation of their safety plan.

### **Should We Ban Guns?**

This is a class discussion/debate about whether to ban guns or not.

Many people in the world would like to ban guns, of course, but you should try to encourage all views and opinions, no matter what they may be. This is an exercise in expressing ideas after all.

You can go through all the statements in the exercise and ask the students their opinions—but feel free to ask them anything else about gun ownership.

If you come from a country where guns are legal, then you could offer your own stories and ideas for more debate/discussion.

### **Writing**

This is a creative writing exercise.

The students can do this as a class exercise, but it is probably better as homework.

When the students have finished writing their short stories they can read them out in class or submit to the teacher for review.

# Credits

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