

Should the government rate music?

Some people say that the government should rate music. Others say ratings hurt free speech. What do you think?

Picture this: Your favorite music group comes out with a new record. You've heard that some of the lyrics might not be **suitable** for kids, and your parents are pretty strict about that kind of stuff. After talking it over with them, however, they decide you can get the album. But when you go to the store to buy it, the store manager won't sell it to you. He says it's illegal for you to buy it because you're too young. Your parents say it's okay. But the government says it isn't. Who's right?

Right now, there are no laws **regulating** the

sale of music to kids. Only music companies rate albums. And music stores decide for themselves who to sell them to. But some people want the government to start rating records. And they want the government to make it illegal for young people to buy certain kinds of music.

What do you think? Should the government rate the music you listen to?

Yes

If record companies rate their own music, who knows what they're going to say? They're only interested in making a sale. There is no way they are going to give an honest review. Anyway, what difference does a label make if it doesn't stop a kid from buying a record? Without government regulations, record stores will sell whatever they can to whoever wants to buy.

No

If the government starts rating music, they're saying what people can and can't listen to. That's **censorship** and a violation of the First Amendment! And if they get away with censoring music, it's just a matter of time before they censor television and books. Kids and their parents should have the right to decide what music kids listen to. The government should stay out of it!

Your Turn!

Talk About It: Poll other students in your class. Have they ever bought CDs that their parents might not have wanted them to buy? What happened?

Are teen juries a good idea?

In courts around the country, kids are judging other kids. Is this a good idea?

Picture this: You're on a field trip to the town courthouse. While you're there you get to meet many important people: a judge, lawyers, and even the mayor. Then your teacher says you're going to watch a real trial. But when the trial begins, and the jury walks into the **jury box**, you discover that the jury is made up of kids your own age! Surprised? Believe it or not, these trials are happening all across the country.

Right now, there are more than 200 youth courts in 25 states. In youth courts, young

people are tried by juries of other young people. The juries can give sentences of community service. They can also recommend that the **accused** go to counseling. But there is one thing that the teen juries can't do—they can't send kids to jail.

Many people think youth courts are a great way to involve kids in the **justice** system. Others say kids are too young to hand out fair sentences.

What do you think? Are youth courts a good idea?

Yes

Youth courts work! The statistics speak for themselves: Only 25 percent of kids sentenced in youth court commit crimes again. That's much less than in regular court. Plus, youth courts may prevent kids from committing crimes in the first place. Why? No one wants to go on trial in front of their friends. Youth court also lets kids see how courts work. By serving on juries, they get a firsthand understanding of American justice.

No

What? These kids are still in school. How could they know enough to be on a jury? This has nothing to do with rights. You need experience and wisdom to be in a courtroom. Anyway, what kid is going to take a youth court seriously? Being sentenced by other kids isn't scary. This is just another way of letting people who commit crimes off easy. If they do a real crime, put them in front of a real jury.

Your Turn!

Talk About It: If you were a juror on a teen jury, do you think you would be easier or harder on the defendant than a regular judge? Why?

Is space exploration worth the money we spend on it?

Some say space exploration costs too much. Others say it's worth it. What do you think?

Your best friend wants to be an **astronaut**. She's really smart and she talks about space all the time. One day she tells you that **NASA** is sending a robot to Mars. She says it costs a lot of money. But she also says it's worth it because of the ways it will help science. You agree. Your friend makes it all sound so exciting. But the very next day your school announces that, due to government budget cuts, it is dropping the school orchestra and football team. The principal says the school can't afford them. How do you feel now?

Every year, NASA spends about 14 billion dollars on space **exploration**. Many people feel this is a waste. They say this money should be spent on things here on Earth, like hospitals and schools.

Other people think space exploration is worth the money because it creates jobs and contributes to science.

What do you think? Is space exploration worth the money?

Yes

Space exploration is worth every penny. It's not just a question of learning about the universe. Space exploration creates jobs and improves lives. Many of today's new products are a direct result of space exploration. Space exploration has even led to important medical discoveries. Who knows what else we will find out there? We have to keep exploring space!

No

Put first things first! There are too many problems here on Earth to worry about what's in space. Science is important. And everyone wants to know more about the universe. But what do you tell people who don't have enough food? When everyone has enough to eat and can afford to see a doctor, then we can go into space. Until then, we should wait.

Your Turn!

Consider Both Sides: Think of all the things that the government spends money on. List three things that are more important than space exploration. List three things that are less important.