



THE DEMOCRACY PROJECT

II. ABORTION

“The truth is that the best argument on each side is a damn good one, and until you acknowledge that fact, you aren’t speaking or even thinking honestly about the issue. You certainly aren’t going to convince anybody. Only the truth has the power to move.” – Caitlin Flanagan

“Nothing is more hopeless or courageous in politics than seeking an authentic middle ground on the abortion issue.” – E.J. Dionne, Jr.

Topic Overview: The Abortion Debate in America

Abortion has been one of the most polarizing issues in America over the past few decades. But it has not always been this way. Indeed, in 1973 (the year of *Roe v. Wade*) Republican and Democratic voters were equally likely to say that abortion should be legal—and neither party viewed the issue as central to its political platform. Republican First Lady, Betty Ford, called *Roe v. Wade* “a great, great, decision,” while newly elected Democratic Senator, Joe Biden, said that *Roe* went “too far” ([Reuters](#)).

Not unlike our country’s [gun laws](#), public opinion and policy are often misaligned when it comes to abortion, with the majority of Americans holding more moderate positions than what is increasingly reflected in the law. And while there are certainly sincere advocates on both sides of the

issue, each serves as a proxy for larger cultural battles, making thoughtful, good-faith conversation both challenging—and necessary.

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Teachers may wish to use the frames below to build an abortion unit or select a few key activities and sources to complement an existing lesson plan. Others may simply want to use a specific article or set of quotations for inspiration as they design new lessons. (Note that frames are organized by increasing sophistication of ideas and resources.)

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