Interactivity
FOUNDATION

ORGANIZE YOUR OWN DISCUSSION RESOURCE

DISCUSSION SERIES:

What is the Future of the Arts in Society?

These conversations explore broadly about what "the arts" might be, and we will explore a range of factors that might impact the role they play in society. We will think about different concepts and visions of what the arts might be and what they can do for us. What are the various dimensions of the arts in society, and how can we encourage and educate ourselves and others about them? What is the future of the arts in a democratic society?

FACILITATION PLANS:

DISCUSSION 1: PAGE 2-3
DISCUSSION 2: PAGE 4-5
DISCUSSION 3: PAGE 6-7

Please share your feedback on the discussion you organized with us at this link: https://forms.gle/LNWBT6zw544PRA2v8

Topics: arts, society, democracy, creativity, innovation, diplomacy, culture, education, human flourishing

Discussion 1: What is Art?

INTRODUCTION (1–2 mins.)

Welcome to this discussion series. This is a group activity where we will talk about some big questions facing our society today. First, we will provide some context and quick guidelines. Then, you will have a chance to introduce yourselves and discuss several questions on the topic. The guides for these discussions have been provided by the Interactivity Foundation, a nonprofit that brings people together in meaningful discussions that expand imagination, build social trust, and improve discussion skills necessary for everyday democracy.

CONTEXT SETTING

Introducing the Discussion (2-3 mins.)

On a 1998 visit to the White House, Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel described how jazz helped him imagine freedom in the darkest days of Communist oppression. "Music," the poet-president said, "is the enemy of totalitarianism." Although the arts can be underfunded in societies, they serve to shape culture and public awareness of important topics. Cultural diplomacy is much less costly than war and artists are often diplomats for important, emergent ideas on the vanguard of public thought. Today it is important to explore the public significance of the arts. What are the various dimensions of the arts in society, and how can we encourage and educate about them? What is the future of the arts in a democratic society?

DISCUSSION AGREEMENTS (2–3 mins.)

It helps to have some group agreements about how we'll engage in this conversation. Our suggestions are:

- **Be generous**: Be helpful in speaking up with perspectives, listening to each other as equals, and building on each other's ideas and insights.
- **Be bold**: Let's help challenge each other with compassion to understand new and different perspectives.
- **Be connected:** We're all in this together. We're here to make connections rather than to win an argument.

For Rounds One and Two, we suggest breaking into small groups of 6-8 people.

ROUND ONE: ROUND ROBIN

Introductions and Personal Connections to the Topic (5-10 mins.)

Take a minute or so to introduce yourself and tell us about what "the arts" mean to you.

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After hearing the responses to introductions, choose a few questions to guide the discussion that will resonate with your specific group.

ROUND TWO: OPEN DISCUSSION
Expanding Our Sense of the Topic (40-60 mins.)

- ☐ What else comes to mind when you think about the arts?
- ☐ Based on your understanding of the arts, what types of value do the arts bring to society?
- ☐ In what ways are the arts the "public good"?
- ☐ What are the benefits to the public of fostering excellence in the arts?
- ☐ How do the arts help us understand or explain ideas, both individually and as a society?
- ☐ Who is art intended for? The artist, the public, or other groups? Who benefits from art?
- ☐ Who gets included in the arts? Who gets excluded?
- ☐ Is art created merely for the moment, or can it serve a greater purpose? What might those greater purposes be?
- ☐ What is artistic integrity? Can you give examples of it and examples where it is missing?
- ☐ What does the value of the arts say about our society?
- ☐ Your question:

ROUND THREE: Looking Ahead and Wrapping Up (10 mins.)

- ☐ As we wrap up, what are some of the key insights or questions that you will take away from this conversation?

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Discussion 2: How Do the Arts Shape Democracy?

INTRODUCTION (1–2 mins.)

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CONTEXT SETTING

Introducing the Discussion (2-3 mins.)

In these conversations, we'll explore broadly what "the arts" might be and a range of factors that might impact the role they play in society. Let's explore different concepts and visions of what the arts might be and what they can do for us. What are the various dimensions of the arts in society, and how can we encourage and educate ourselves and others about them? What is the future of the arts in a democratic society? Let's discuss.

DISCUSSION AGREEMENTS (2–3 mins.)

It helps to have some group agreements about how we'll engage in this conversation. Our suggestions are:

- **Be generous**: Be helpful in speaking up with perspectives, listening to each other as equals, and building on each other's ideas and insights.
- **Be bold**: Let's help challenge each other with compassion to understand new and different perspectives.
- **Be connected:** We're all in this together. We're here to make connections rather than to win an argument.

For Rounds One and Two, we suggest breaking into small groups of 6-8 people.

ROUND ONE: ROUND ROBIN

Introductions and Personal Connections to the Topic (5-10 mins.)

Briefly introduce yourself and tell us about a time that you noticed art influencing the way you think about an important idea or society in general.

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After hearing the responses to introductions, choose a few questions to guide the discussion that will resonate with your specific group.

ROUND TWO: OPEN DISCUSSION

Expanding Our Sense of the Topic (40-60 mins.)

Let's move deeper into our understanding, and talk about the arts and democracy.

- ☐ In what ways have the arts contributed to telling the story of American democracy?
- ☐ How do the arts help us understand and explain concepts, ideas, values, and our society better?
- ☐ How has American art contributed to the culture of other nations? How has art helped export democracy around the world?
- ☐ How has art contributed to international exchanges, diplomacy, and peace efforts?
- ☐ How has art from other nations affected the American story?
- ☐ In what ways can art be dangerous or harmful to society or individuals? What has been done in such cases, and what should be done?
- ☐ How is technology changing the impact of the arts on society? Does it promote democracy? (For example, open-source art)
- ☐ What do you think about the idea that art can and should support and promote democracy? How might it do so?
- ☐ What is the future of the arts in American society as we experience it today?
- ☐ Your question:

ROUND THREE

Looking Ahead and Wrapping Up (10 mins.)

- ☐ As we wrap up, what are some of the key insights or questions that you will take away from this conversation?

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Discussion 3: Who Should Support the Arts?

INTRODUCTION (1-2 mins.)

Welcome to this discussion series. This is a group activity where we will talk about some big questions facing our society today. First, we will provide some context and quick guidelines. Then, you will have a chance to introduce yourselves and discuss several questions on the topic. The guides for these discussions have been provided by the Interactivity Foundation, a nonprofit that brings people together in meaningful discussions that expand imagination, build social trust, and improve discussion skills necessary for everyday democracy.

CONTEXT SETTING

Introducing the Discussion (2-3 mins.)

The arts can be woefully underfunded in societies, yet they serve as vital engines driving culture and the future of the U.S. economy and democracy. It is important to explore the public decisions being made about the arts and to consider more broadly what "the arts" might be, how to educate about them, and what the future might hold.

DISCUSSION AGREEMENTS (2-3 mins.)

It helps to have some group agreements about how we'll engage in this conversation. Our suggestions are:

- **Be generous**: Be helpful in speaking up with perspectives, listening to each other as equals, and building on each other's ideas and insights.
- **Be bold**: Let's help challenge each other with compassion to understand new and different perspectives.
- **Be connected:** We're all in this together. We're here to make connections rather than to win an argument.

For Rounds One and Two, we suggest breaking into small groups of 6-8 people

ROUND ONE: ROUND ROBIN

Introductions and Personal Connections to the Topic (5-10 mins.)

Briefly introduce yourself and share a time when you had to think creatively or artistically, either in your personal or professional life.

After hearing the responses to introductions, choose a few questions to guide the discussion that will resonate with your specific group.

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ROUND TWO: OPEN DISCUSSION

Expanding Our Sense of the Topic (40-60 mins.)

Let's explore a few questions that resonate with this group:

- ☐ How can the arts help develop creative thinkers for our economy and society?
- ☐ How does education in, or knowledge of, the arts change the way we think?
- ☐ How should we learn about the arts? How should the arts be taught in schools?
- ☐ In what ways do the arts and arts education promote human flourishing? Why is this important? How is this message communicated in our society and culture?
- ☐ What does supporting the arts look like locally, at the state level, and federally? Who supports the arts, and why? How is it done? What should it look like in the future?
- ☐ How should we approach public funding for art? What guidelines, if any, should exist for the types and topics of art that receive funding?
- ☐ Who, besides the government, has historically funded the arts? How has this affected who gets to experience art and what kinds of art are considered valuable? Would you change this in the future, and how?
- ☐ How do government-funded cultural exchanges affect our relationships with other countries?
- ☐ What impact can the arts have on local communities? On a world stage?
- ☐ What is the future of the arts in a democratic society?
- ☐ Your question:

ROUND THREE

Looking Ahead and Wrapping Up (10 mins.)

- ☐ As we wrap up, what are some of the key insights or questions that you will take away from this conversation?

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