

Educator Guide

Teaching political ideology with the World's Smallest Political Quiz: how the Quiz works, how to run it fairly, and how to grade the thinking it starts.

GRADES 9–12 AND INTRO COLLEGE · AP U.S. GOVERNMENT UNIT 4 · A 20-MINUTE READ

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1 · WHY THE QUIZ BELONGS IN A CLASSROOM

The World's Smallest Political Quiz, first published by the Advocates for Self-Government in 1987, has ten statements. It gives each person two scores, one for personal issues and one for economic issues, and plots them on the Diamond Chart, the Advocates' five-region adaptation of David Nolan's two-axis chart. That makes it two teaching tools in one.

- **A mirror for students.** In a few minutes every student has a result they can discuss and defend, including the students who find they sort less neatly than the labels they walked in with.
- **A lesson about models.** The left-right line and the two-score chart are competing ways to measure the same thing. Using both with one class shows what a model captures, what it hides, and why political scientists argue about measurement.

The framing that makes a unit work comes from the teacher whose classroom shaped this kit: labels are important for understanding the world, and labels have limits. Students need both halves.

“What [my students] have discovered is that the World's Smallest Political Quiz is pretty darn good at accurately predicting their ideology — [its] results compare favorably to 100 question tests.”

12th-grade AP U.S. Government teacher, Michigan public school

2 · HOW THE QUIZ WORKS

Ten statements. Five are about personal issues and five are about economic issues. For each one, students circle **A** (agree), **M** (maybe or not sure) or **D** (disagree).

Two scores. Each A is worth 20 points, each M 10 and each D 0, so each score runs from 0 to 100. A higher score means the student favors more freedom of choice, and less government control, on that set of issues.

One dot. Students find their personal score on the lower-left edge of the chart and their economic score on the lower-right edge, follow the grid lines until they meet, and mark a dot.

REGION	WHERE IT SITS
Libertarian	Top: high personal and economic scores
Progressive	Left: high personal, low economic
Conservative	Right: low personal, high economic
Authoritarian	Bottom: low personal and economic scores
Moderate	Center: scores in the middle range

A dot near a border shares traits with both neighboring regions.

One question set everywhere. The **H1** Quiz sheet uses the same ten statements as the online Quiz at theadvocates.org/quiz, so paper and live results can share one class chart. The original printed Quiz in **5 Extras** uses an earlier set of statements, and its scores won't line up with the others. Use one edition per class, and keep the statements' wording unchanged, because the scoring depends on it.

3 · LIVE SESSIONS: THE EDUCATOR PORTAL

Live sessions run through **quiz.theadvocates.org**, where you apply once for an educator account and then start a session whenever you need one. Everything on paper in this kit works without an account.

FORMAT	HOW IT WORKS	BEST FOR
Sessions	Share a join code. Students answer on their own devices, the class chart fills in, and you reveal results to the room when you choose.	Everyday classroom use
Booths	A printed QR-code poster that people scan. Booths are run in person, and the conversation with the person running the booth is the point.	Club fairs, civics nights, open houses
Embeds	The Quiz inside your own site, with results sent back to your dashboard.	A course page or district portal

The application offers optional add-ons. Two are useful in schools: bonus questions, which are custom items that don't affect scoring ("What grade are you in?" makes comparing class periods easy), and a custom call to action that points the results screen to your own course page. Before your first session, review every setting, including any that collect information from participants, against your school's policies.

4 • CLASSROOM GROUND RULES

THE RULES THAT KEEP THE QUIZ HONEST

- **No names on results.** Students answer honestly when a result can't be traced back to them, and the pressure to give the expected answer in a classroom is real. A Quiz with names attached measures conformity.
- **The class sees totals; each student sees their own result.** Put the class chart or tally on the projector, and let each student keep their own dot private.
- **Treat it as a survey.** Say it out loud on the first day: there are no right answers, and no position is ever graded. Grade the reflection, the essay and the argument.
- **Take it yourself,** and share your result, or keep it private, on the same terms as your students.
- **Every region is a respectable answer.** The chart has five neighborhoods and no basement. Once students sense a “wrong” region, the Quiz stops giving honest answers for the rest of the year.

If your district requires approval, check the portal's settings and privacy terms against your school's policies before the first live session, and share them with your administrator. **T4** includes a memo for that conversation. The paper handouts collect nothing: a worksheet stays with the student or family unless they bring it back, and the **H6** surveys use a private code in place of a name.

5 • STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

AP U.S. Government and Politics, Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs. The Quiz supports the unit's core: political socialization, ideology as something that can be measured, competing models of the ideological spectrum, and how ideology shapes positions on economic and social policy.

State civics standards. Most states have a standard on political ideologies and the role of government. The Michigan classroom behind this kit maps the unit to Civics 3.5.1 in the Michigan K–12 Social Studies Standards, with three learning targets that work as written:

1. Describe different political ideologies regarding the role of government in regulating the marketplace.
2. Describe different political ideologies regarding the role of government in addressing social issues.
3. Explain how different ideologies impact policy on social issues.

Other frameworks. The kit also supports specific indicators in the C3 Framework (Dimensions 2–4), four of the NCSS themes, and the Common Core literacy standards for history/social studies. **T5** quotes each standard and names the activity that meets it.

6 • TEACHING EVERY OUTLOOK AT FULL STRENGTH

The sharpest observation from the source classroom: students learn each ideology from its opponents' descriptions. They can recite “libertarians want lower taxes” without ever hearing “...and voluntary charity doing the work that mandated programs do now.” The same flattening happens to every region, and it is worst for the outlooks students hear least about.

The discipline that fixes it: before any outlook is critiqued, it is stated the way its supporters would state it. A starting table:

REGION	THE CARICATURE STUDENTS ARRIVE WITH	AS ITS SUPPORTERS DESCRIBE IT
Conservative	“Old-fashioned; against everything new.”	Tested institutions embody accumulated wisdom; change should prove itself before it’s imposed; family, faith and community do work the state can’t.
Progressive	“Wants the government to run everything.”	Markets left alone produce power imbalances real people can’t opt out of; collective action through government is how a society guarantees dignity to everyone, including people who start with less.
Libertarian	“Less taxes, legal pot, no military. Basically chaos.”	“Lower taxes” pairs with voluntary charity replacing mandated programs; “legalize” pairs with personal responsibility for the consequences; “less military” means less empire-building abroad and a defense focused on home. Peaceful people should be governed by consent.
Authoritarian	“People who hate freedom.”	Order, security and shared purpose are the preconditions of every other good; a strong state is how a society protects itself from chaos, exploitation and enemies.
Moderate	“Can’t make up their minds.”	Judging each question on its merits is a position; skepticism of package-deal ideologies is itself a considered stance about how certain anyone should be.

Assign it. Each student drafts the right-hand column for the region farthest from their own dot, using **H4 Steelman Worksheet**. A supporter of that outlook, or the teacher, checks it for accuracy. Arguing the other side is an AP skill, and here it doubles as the lesson in tolerance.

7 • DISCUSSION QUESTION BANK

Where views come from

- Where did your three strongest political opinions come from? Can you trace each one to a person, a platform or an experience?
- If your result landed near your family member’s, is that evidence your views are borrowed, or evidence you were raised with good ones? How would you tell the difference?
- What would it take for your dot to move? Has anyone here changed their mind on a political question, and what did it?

The five outlooks

- Describe your own region the way its harshest critic would. What does the critic get right?
- Pick the region farthest from your dot. What is its strongest argument that your region struggles to answer?
- Which answers carried the most weight in moving your dot? Does that match the issues you think matter most?
- Why might someone’s economic views and personal-freedom views differ? Is consistency across both scores a virtue, or a matter of temperament?

Models and measurement

- Name a real public figure the left–right line describes badly. What does the second score add?
- What does the shape of our class results say, and what can't it say, given who is in the room?
- A teacher who has used the Quiz for years found its results compared well with much longer ideology tests. How could our class test that claim? If it holds, what does it suggest about how structured political beliefs are?
- If you could add an eleventh statement, what would it be, and which score would it count toward?

After any video or reading

- What did the source emphasize that our discussion didn't, and what did it leave out?
- Whose self-description did the source present fairly? Whose came out as a caricature? Be specific.
- Every source in this unit has a point of view. What separates a source with a perspective from a source you can't use?

8 • ASSESSMENT THAT GRADES THINKING

Every assessment below grades reasoning. **T3** Rubric scores all of them on the same five criteria.

ASSESSMENT	WHAT STUDENTS DO	KIT SUPPORT
Predict and reflect	Predict a region before the Quiz, then explain the match or the gap afterward.	H2
The steelman	Make the strongest case for the region farthest from their result, in its own vocabulary, then answer the best objection to it.	H4 , section 6
Instrument-comparison lab	Take the Quiz and one long-form ideology test, then compare results, question count and question types. Which items did the work? Write up what makes a measurement instrument good: validity, reliability or brevity.	Section 2
Socialization audit	Keep a week-long media diary and compare it with their result: if a stranger read only their feed, where would they predict the student lands, and would they be right?	L2 day 1
AP free-response practice	Argue how a libertarian, a progressive and a conservative would each approach one current policy question, naming the score that drives each answer.	Back of H1
Film essays	Definition, pattern, verification, chart and steelman essays on "Beyond Labels."	T2 , H5

Never graded: where a student's dot lands, whether it moves, and whether a student shares a result at all.

9 · CHOOSING MATERIALS FROM THIS KIT

IF YOU HAVE	USE	COPY FOR EACH STUDENT
One class period	L1 One Class Period	H1, H2
Three class periods	L2 Three-Day Unit	H1, H2, H3, H4
A film day, or homework time	L3 Film Day	H5
A whole term	L4 Pre/Post Comparison, plus any of the above	H6

Slides follow the lessons in four sections: A (take the Quiz), B (where views come from), C (models, regions and the steelman) and D (film day). **T4** has a letter for families and a memo for administrators. Editable Word versions of the lesson plans, worksheets, rubric and letters are in folder 6.

Questions, or a classroom story to share? Write to classroom@theadvocates.org. This kit was built from the classroom practice of a 12th-grade AP U.S. Government teacher in Michigan, shared with the Advocates for Self-Government in 2025–26.

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