

4. Describe Childers' language and rhetorical style. Include textual evidence in your description and comment on the effect of his linguistic approach.
5. What is the effect of the setting and Childers' appearance in the video?
6. Childers mentions that "(...) the album could run the risk of being misinterpreted if not given some sort of accompanying explanation to set it in context." (ll. 7-9, p. 101) If his intention is to give an explanation, what does he aim to explain? He also tries to motivate the people from his region. What does he specifically encourage them to do?
7. Who is the intended audience of Childers' comment?
8. What is Childers' overall claim, grounds and warrant in his comment?

Discussion

In groups, work your way through the questions below, and make sure you elaborate on whether you agree as well as *why* you agree or disagree with Childers.

1. Childers asks, "So what can the rest of us who feel seemingly outside of these issues do? First, we can use our voting power to get rid of the people (...) some folks would deem a food desert." (l. 35, p. 102 - l. 2, p. 103). Comment on what political observations Childers is making.
2. In the last paragraph, Childers gives encouragement to his audience and the people of his region. What attitude towards society does he want them to change? In your answer, you should include thoughts on the following statement: "lazily defending a flag with history steeped in racism and treason" (ll. 6-7, p. 103).
3. Compare Tyler Childers' song and comment to Oliver Anthony's song "Rich Men North of Richmond" (p. 95) in terms of their approaches to solving some of the challenges America faces.
4. Recall section 4.5 "Cultural Divides" and consider what is significant about Childers' song. Comment on the issues of understanding major differences and the sometimes inexplicable lack of empathy for other groups of the population.
5. Discuss what Childers means by "What I believe to be one of the biggest obstacles in pinpointing the cause of this is our inability to empathize with another individual or group's plight. In the midst of our own daily struggles, it's often hard to share an understanding for what another person might be going through." (l. 35, p. 101 - l. 2, p. 102). Do you agree with his view of polarization in America? Why/why not?

CHAPTER 5 ABORTION PUSHING VOTES?

The abortion issue has always divided American voters and political parties, and it is currently high on the political agenda. Supporters of the right to abortion are called **pro-choice**. They argue that women should have the right to choose whether they will go through with a pregnancy and have the right to decide over their own lives. Opponents of abortion are called **pro-life** and their argument against free abortion is that they support the right to life no matter which stage of life. Republicans, of whom many are conservative and religious, are often pro-life and opponents of abortion, while Democrats are to a much higher degree pro-choice and supporters of women's right to abortion.



People march to the White House during the annual National Women's March on January 22nd, 2023 in Washington, DC. The march, also called "Bigger than Roe," was held to mark the 50-year anniversary since the ruling on Roe v. Wade, and to protest the Supreme Court's ruling in the *Dobbs vs Jackson Women's Health* case.

5.1. The Abortion Issue in Elections

Abortion has always been an important issue to many voters, and at the midterm election in 2022 it became one of the most important issues on the political agenda. Female voters, in particular, moved away from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party because of the abortion issue, and it was one of the reasons why the Democrats did not lose the majority in the Senate to the Republicans in 2022.

5.2. Roe v. Wade

The political system in America is based on a separation of powers between the legislative, executive, and judicial powers, and all three branches are empowered to control the other branches, a principle called **checks and balances** (see p. 14). The role of the Supreme Court (judicial power) with regard to the legislative process is to evaluate whether existing and future laws go against the Constitution.

Up until 1973, American women had not had the right to abortion. In 1973, in the case of *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court ruled that individual states were not allowed to forbid the right to abortion within the first three months of a pregnancy.

The case of *Roe v. Wade* had been raised by a pregnant woman, Norma McCorvey, under the pseudonym “Jane Roe”, in Texas. She was pregnant with her third child, and she wanted an abortion. Abortion was not allowed in Texas, which Roe felt was a violation of her constitutional rights.

The basis of the Supreme Court ruling was that according to the Constitution the individual has the right to a private sphere where the state cannot interfere, which is why women had a constitutional right to abortion. The Supreme Court based its ruling on the 14th amendment, which says that “no State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

The Supreme Court ruled in favor of a woman’s right to choose whether she wanted an abortion based on the argument that it was her civic right. On the other hand, it also acknowledged the interest of the state in protecting the “potential of human life”, which meant certain constraints on the right to free abortion. The Constitution therefore helped protect the individual’s rights against the state but at the same time it helped protect unborn life. The case of *Roe v. Wade* therefore meant that the right to free abortion became a reality in the US in 1973.

5.3. Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization

The right to abortion was once again brought up in the Supreme Court in 2022 after a case was filed by the State of Mississippi; this case is known as *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution does not say anything directly about abortion and therefore it is up to the individual states to decide whether or not abortion should be legal. With this ruling, the constitutional right to abortion in America was abolished after 49 years. Today, women’s right to free abortion depends on the abortion legislation of the individual state, and the rules vary greatly from state to state.

One of the explanations as to why the Supreme Court changed its interpretation of the Constitution can be found in the constellation of the nine judges of the Supreme Court. It is the President’s right to appoint new judges when a judge either dies or is no longer capable of carrying out their duties. Trump appointed three new Supreme Court Judges during his presidency which means that six out of the current nine judges are conservative, while three are liberal. All three judges appointed by Trump are opponents of abortion and interpret the Constitution from a conservative point of view.

The abolishment of the constitutional right to free abortion means that all the individual states now have their own rules for abortion. Some states, such as Ala-



Anti-abortion right activists celebrate after the announcement of the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* ruling in front of the U.S. Supreme Court on June 24th 2022 in Washington, DC.

bama, Arkansas, and Kentucky, are very restrictive and only allow abortion if the woman's life is in grave danger, while other states like West Virginia, for example, allow abortion for up to eight weeks if the pregnancy is a result of incest or rape. Yet other states like New York still have free abortion.

The majority of Americans support the right to abortion, but among Republican voters there is a majority who oppose abortion, especially among the very conservative voters. Following the ruling of the Supreme Court, votes on whether abortion should be a right have been held in individual states. Strong Republican states have ruled against abortion while Democratic states have ruled in favor of abortion. There are, however, also exceptions where even Republican states have voted for the right to abortion.

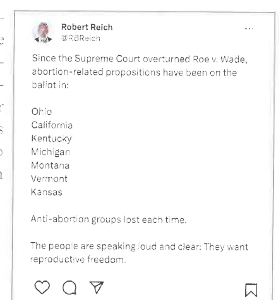
5.4. Abortion and the 2022 Midterm Election

The Supreme Court ruling came just before the midterm election in 2022 and had a big impact on the outcome of the election. After the 2022 ruling women all over America reacted strongly to the limitations of their rights. Pro-choice demonstrations and protests took place in several cities alongside pro-life supporters celebrating their victory.

The dissatisfaction with the ruling also became apparent in how Americans viewed the Supreme Court. A record-high number of Democratic voters viewed the court negatively, and an increasing number of Americans believed that the court holds too much political power.

In the opinion polls leading up to the 2022 Midterm Election, the Democrats stood to lose their majority in the Senate and to be decimated in the House of Representatives, but that is not how it turned out. The Democrats won by a small majority – 51 against 49 seats in the Senate. The Republicans won the majority in the House of Representatives although their victory was not as large as expected. According to polls, the relatively positive outcome of the election for the Democrats may for a large part be put down to the fact that the abolishment of the right to abortion motivated a lot of young people to vote. When looking at voter turnouts for American elections, the midterm election had a high voter turnout of 46%. At the same time, the issue of abortion meant so much to many women that they decided to vote for the Democrats even though they would normally have voted for the Republicans.

Ever since the Supreme Court's decision to let the individual states legislate on abortion, several states have held elections where this issue has been on the ballot. The vote has often turned out in favor of pro-choice – even in Republican states such as Ohio. The issue of the right to abortion has been reactivated in American politics and it pushes votes.



Robert Reich was Secretary of Labor in the Clinton administration, and he has worked as a political advisor for other Democratic presidents.

Pre-reading to the chapter

Getting started

1. On a sticky note, write down one word or phrase that springs to mind when you hear the word "Abortion".
2. Collect all the notes and put them on the blackboard.
3. Read the responses aloud in class and group them into different categories.

Draw a timeline

1. In groups, do your own research and draw a timeline with key historical events related to abortion rights in the US.
2. One group presents its timeline in class and the remaining groups help fill out any blanks in the timeline.
3. In class, discuss the significance of each event.

