## DOSSIER

# 2

# US elections: people's choices and voices?

Projects



You are part of a youth organisation. Write a poem and create a video to encourage young people to vote.



You are an activist. Write an opinion article for *The New York Times*.

## How does the US presidential election work?

## A If maps could talk







- 1 Identify the states that voted democrat or republican.
- 2 Spot information on: election years, the candidates, the parties, the electoral votes won. Oppose the number of electoral votes to the popular votes and conclude
- 3 Look at *Let's focus on...* and say which electoral system you like best with a classmate.
- 4 Explain to a friend the difference between electoral and popular elections. Take examples that you studied in class and visit this site: 270towin.com.

## B Citizens denied to vote?

Voter suppression as a tactic – from strict ID laws to closing polling places to purging voter rolls – is deliberately making it hard for minority communities in America to exercise their democratic right.

n an interview last year Barack Obama said, "We're the only advanced democracy that deliberately discourages people from voting." [...]

#### Struggle for the franchise

The struggle for the right to vote in the US has existed as long as the country itself. In 1789, after the ratification of the constitution, suffrage was extended only to white, property-owning men. Following the abolition of slavery in the 19th century, black people were permitted to vote, but after a brief period when black politicians began to win elections, the white majority began to institute restrictions like those that motivated King's march from Selma.

International comparisons show how voting restrictions are a stain on US democracy. In Australia, voting is compulsory. In Sweden, all voters are automatically registered. Both nations rank high on an "electoral integrity index" produced by academics at Harvard University and the University of Sydney.

20 Yet rather than being ranked with other major western democracies, the US falls lower down the list alongside countries like Kosovo and Romania.

Of particular concern in the US, said Sarah Repucci, senior director at Freedom House, a thinktank in Washington DC, "are the techniques that target minority (mostly black) voters, instituted by Republican-controlled state governments. Countries that have targeted minority voters include Cameroon, Kosovo – hardly regimes that Americans would consider to be our peers."

It's no surprise that the US trails behind other democracies in voter turnout – about 55% of eligible Americans voted in the 2016 elections, compared with around 87% in Belgium and 78% in South Korea.

#### 35 Partisan officials

At every stage of the voting process, Americans face hurdles determined by where they live. Election law is set by partisan state lawmakers and administered, in most places, by secretaries of state, who are partisan officials.

In several Republican-leaning states, the difficulties voters face start with the documents they are required to produce in order to exercise their democratic right. Legislators across the country have tightened the requirements for acceptable forms of identification – this in a country where 7% of Americans do not have photo IDs, and the number is higher among black and Hispanic populations.

In 2016, Wisconsin reinstated strict voter ID laws, ostensibly to fight voter fraud, which experts have repeatedly found to be almost non-existent. [...]

#### Voter purge

[...] "Voter purging" is when officials scrub names from the voter rolls ostensibly to ensure people don't vote twice and that people who have died or moved get removed from the rolls. These are perfectly legitimate justifications. Yet it tends to be on the rise, the Brennan Center reported, in areas and states that previously would have been prevented from making such changes by the Voting Rights Act. Places, that is, with a history of voting discrimination. And as the Brennan Center reports, "Problems arise when states remove voters who are still eligible to vote. States rely on faulty data that purport to show that a voter has moved to another state".

The Guardian, Nov. 8th, 2019

- 1 List the obstacles minorities may have to overcome to be able to vote and explain why the right to vote is at the heart of US history.
- 2 Grammar Lines 8 to 10, "Following ...vote", say which nouns are used with no article at all and classify them as follows: singular count nouns, plural count nouns, uncountable nouns.
- 3 Explain what the comparison between the USA and other countries reveals.
- 4 Comment on Barack Obama's quote (l. 1-3) in a tweet expressing your concern.
- 1 Pick out the three requirements to become a presidential candidate and explain them.
- Compare the systems of caucuses and primaries. Identify their role in the nomination of a candidate.
- 3 Indicate what these numbers and date correspond to: 270, 538, January 20th.



4 Create an infographic to recap what you have learnt about the Presidential election process.

### Want to become president?

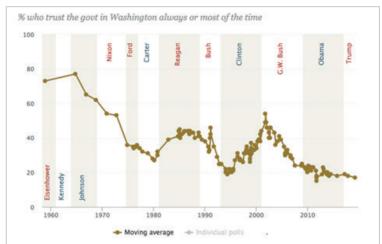


How to become President of the United States

Video www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=2eXCG-hlaql

## A fair representation?

## A Trust in the system?





- 1 Describe the graph and show what it indicates regarding public trust in government. Use the timeline and explain the reasons the trust began eroding in the 1960s and why it rose after 2001.
- 2 Now listen to the recording.

  Spot negative adjectives, nouns,
  expressions as well as numbers and
  figures and explain how they convey
  the lack of trust in government.
- 3 Focus on the commission and comment on the solutions they suggested.
- 4 Phonology Listen and repeat the following words: pandemic, economic. Which syllable carries the main stress? What do these words have in common?
- ON P

5 You are a young member of this commission. Write a story on social media to explain your goals and propositions and encourage your friends to join you.

## B Why is voting so complicated?

s the nation mourns civil rights icon **John Lewis**, a congressman and lifelong advocate of voting rights, the mayhem<sup>1</sup> in his home state's most recent election serves as another egregious<sup>2</sup> example of how a citizen's most sacred act in a democracy – voting – was undermined and even denied after a federal law protecting voters' rights was abandoned by a 2013 Supreme Court ruling.

Georgia's presidential primary election on June 9 was a nightmare mix of inefficiency and discrimination that shows how difficult it is for many Americans – particularly Black Americans – to participate in their democracy.

Hundreds of voters, many in majority Black areas, waited four, five and even seven hours to cast their ballots<sup>3</sup>. Some even faced down police seeking to send them home without having voted. [...]

The state's primary was an example of what should not happen in a democratic country. It is an experience that has implications beyond Georgia, and that carries

warnings for problems with the November presidential election and the legitimacy of the results.

#### Not enough places, ballots or help

Georgia's primary election was postponed<sup>4</sup> (twice from its original March 24 date, because of fears of spreading the coronavirus pandemic through inperson voting.

A million and a half Georgians applied to get absentee ballots that would have let them vote by mail. But an unknown number of them never received their ballots and were forced to vote in person to ensure that their votes would be counted. Ultimately only 943,000 ballots were cast by mail.

Georgians didn't always know where to go to vote: 10% of polling places – including 80 in the state's most populous county alone – were closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The state-run website that let voters look up where they should vote was down for several hours in the morning and worked only intermittently throughout the day. When the site

was up and running, some voters still could not find their correct polling locations and visited precincts<sup>5</sup> where poll workers told them they couldn't vote.

Experienced poll workers were ill or feared getting sick, so the state had to recruit, train and dispatch new ones right before the election. Many poll workers were insufficiently trained and uninformed, especially about when voters were entitled to absentee, emergency and provisional ballots.

50 There weren't enough polling places, either. Several sites that normally serve 2,000 to 3,000 voters had to accommodate as many as 10,000 because of the consolidation.

Some polling places, especially in majority Black 55 areas, had major delays because new voting machines weren't working correctly. Many polling places across

- 1 List at least five obstacles Americans faced when voting or trying to vote.
- 2 Spot the impacts of COVID-19 during Georgia's election.
- Write a post commenting on the difficulties that some Georgians faced and suggest solutions.

the state opened two and three hours late. The new systems, including printers, scanners and tablets, had trouble throughout the day, causing additional delays.

60 Precincts ran out of provisional ballots and envelopes and printer paper. County governments, the NAACP and other civil-rights groups appealed to county courts to get orders extending polling hours beyond the usual 7 p.m. to make up for the delays. One precinct didn't 65 close until 10:10 p.m.

As if that weren't enough, it rained on voters in long lines with no shelter.

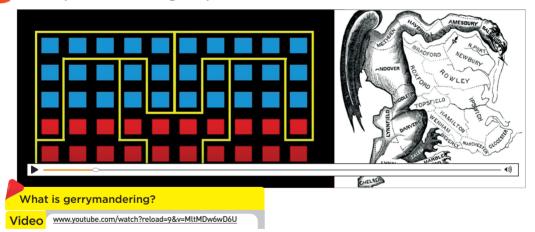
Adrienne Jones, *The Conversation*, July 21st, 2020

1. disorder 2. shocking 3. cast ballots: vote 4. delayed 5. election district

Culture Tip

John Lewis was an American politician and civil rights leader in the 1960s. As an activist, he fought to abolish segregation in the USA and organised the March on Washington in 1963 with Martin Luther King. He was member of the US House of Representatives for Georgia for the Democrats.

## **C** Gerrymandering explained



- 1 Give the definition of gerrymandering with the help of the video and the picture. Use these words: redistricting • lines • state • monster • shape • benefit • political.
- 2 Look at the first still from the video and say which colour wins (blue or red) and why.
- 3 Explain the conclusion of the voice-over and why some politicians need gerrymandering.
- 4 With a classmate, decide how you can use gerrymandering to win an election.



## Standing up for a better political representation

## A Representing the people



- 1 Read the captions and analyse the different portraits (colours and symbols).
- 2 Comment on the name of the foundation and explain the goal of the artists.
- 3 Write an interview between a journalist and the artist.

## B A common goal



- 1 Pay attention to the diversity of the participants and identify the common goal the different participants share.
- 2 Spot at least 4 reasons why citizens are no longer interested in their democracy and give at least 4 solutions.
- Read Let's focus on... and choose what's the most democratic electoral system for the participants in the video.
- 4 As a future voter, react to what you saw and heard and give other recommendations in your blog.

## C Poem for the Republic

In this poem Amanda Gorman refers to several fundamental texts and symbols in the history of the USA, such as the Declaration of Independence, Lincoln's Gettysburgh address or the American motto: E Pluribus Unum.

#### Believer's Hymn for the Republic

12 score and 3 years ago, to be exact, Our founders dared to declare The world's most revolutionary act:

- A pact sworn for liberty and equality.
   Out of many, was born one people;
   A teeming nation made of nations,
   At its very foundation a dream
   For life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- Today, we gather so that our Founders' words do not go diminished.
   But also so that the work does not go unfinished.
   For it's not just in a declaration of independence
   But the everyday declaration of its descendants
- 15 That make a people equal.

It is our right and our role To remember these words scratched on a scroll, So we may live them and heal our nation whole. We roll up our sleeves, we believe in the dream,

20 And these American stories, in the glory of the struggle,

For it is from our struggle that comes our nation's

For the lengths that we fight for what is right 25 Is the fullest measure of our country's might.

And while we cannot shake or cast aside our past, Every day we write the future. Together we sign it, Together we declare it, we share it, For this truth marches on inside each of us:

30 Americans know one another by our love of liberty. When in fact, we are liberated by our love for one

We understand that a house divided cannot stand. So let us make a pact to be the country that acts

35 As compassionate as we are courageous.

In the declaration's pages, we write a new order for the ages,

Where out of many, we are one, Bright as a sun, and bold as an eagle,

40 A nation of all people, by all people, For all people.

Let this fourth of July Move forth our cry to redeem the dream. As we remember those words forever ignited

That we the people have so long heard and recited. That we are right to stand But are revolutionary when we stand united.

> Amanda Gorman © 2019 CBS Interactive Inc. All Rights Reserved.



#### GROUP WORK

Group 1 will work on the first three stanzas, Group 2 on the last three.

- 1 Compare to the reference of the founding of the USA to today's situation with nouns and adjectives referring to American values.
- [2] Focus on repetitions and find words and metaphors showing the poet's call for a collective response to the country's current crisis.
- 3 Listen to the poem and describe the effects of prosody (rhythm, rhymes, alliterations and assonances).

#### **} } } PAIR WORK**

4) Write another stanza of this poem focusing on the power of people's voices. Use recent historic and political events and poetic devices (prosody, repetitions, metaphors etc.).





https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFbjq1c5X\_4

Kamala Harris, speach of Vice President elect, 7 nov. 2020: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DS1\_6HL07Rg

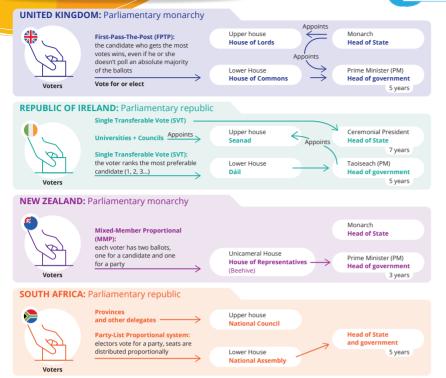
**TEXTS** 

Kamala Harris

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/13/opinion/padma-lakshmi-kamalaharris.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage

## Let's focus on

#### Anglo-Saxon electoral systems



Electoral systems vary in English-speaking democracies. Votes may be cast for candidates or for political parties. People may vote by checking marks, crossing out names, writing in names, or ranking candidates in order of choice. Winners may be required to win a majority of the votes or more votes than the other candidates (but not a majority).

#### The U.S. Supreme Court

The Supreme Court is the highest Court of Justice in the USA. Its greatest power is judicial review: it can strike down laws passed by federal and state courts if the Supreme Court considers that they violate basic principles in the Constitution. It is composed of nine judges (called 'justices'), appointed for

life, who are nominated by the president, then confirmed by the Senate. Nearly all of the most controversial issues of American politics end up before the Court. With the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the Court is politically unbalanced.



The Supreme Court in 2019.

Front row, left to right: Stephen Breyer, Clarence Thomas, John Roberts (Chief justice), Ruth Bader Ginsburg (deceased 9/18/2020, replaced by Amy Coney Barrett), Samuel Alito. Back row, left to right: Neil Gorsuch, Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan, Brett Kavanaugh.

#### **Landmark Supreme Court cases**

**1896 Plessy v. Ferguson (7-1 decision)** Upheld "separate but equal" segregation laws in states.

#### 1967 Loving v. Virginia (9-0 decision)

Invalidated state laws prohibiting interracial marriage.

1857 Dred Scott v. Sandford (7-2 decision)

Denied citizenship to African American slaves.

1954

Brown v. Board of Education (9-0 decision)

Separating black and white students in public schools is unconstitutional.





Amy Coney Barrett, born in 1972 in Louisiana, is the fifth woman to serve as an associate Justice of

the Supreme Court of the USA, where she replaced Ruth Bader Ginsburg who died on September 18, 2020. Barrett's nomination by President Donald Trump only a few days before the new presidential election sparked heated debates. Indeed, her conservative views on death penalty, abortion or LGBTQ+ rights come in stark contrast with Ruth Bader Ginsburg's liberal stance.



Ruth Bader Ginsburg. After brilliantly completing law school, RBG became a professor and a lawyer, fighting for gender equality and women's rights. In 1993, she was appointed an associate justice of the Supreme Court, where she voted to protect minorities

and the environment until her death in September 2020. Her courageous and liberal views made her a pioneer and an icon of the fight against discriminations.

Her last request before her death was not to be replaced on the Supreme Court until "a new president [was] installed," but her replacement was chosen by President Trump in October 2020: Amy Coney Barrett, whose conservative views come in stark contrast with her predecessor's liberal stance.

#### Is the Supreme Court democratic?

There has always been a debate on whether the Court itself was a democratic body. Some argue that it is not democratically elected, and therefore should not be able to impose its judgements nationally. They accuse the justices of delivering their own interpretation of the Constitution and they argue that the Supreme Court is a super-legislature whose power is largely uncontrolled. On the other hand, its proponents believe the Court to serve democracy rather than thwart it, to defend fundamental principles of freedom and equality in the face of popular opposition, in short to settle major civil right issues and protect individual liberty.

#### The ideology of the US Supreme Court









#### 2000 Bush v. Gore (5-4 decision)

No recount of the 2000 presidential election was feasible in a reasonable time period.

#### 2015 Obergefell v. Hodges (5-4 decision)

Same-sex marriage is legalised across all 50 states.

#### 1973 Roe v. Wade (7-2 decision)

Women have a constitutional right to an abortion during the first two trimesters.

#### 2008

#### District of Columbia v. Heller (5-4 decision)

Citizens have a right to possess firearms at home for self-defense.

#### 2020

#### **Bostock v. Clayton County,**

Prohibits an employer from discriminating against an individual on the basis of sexual orientation



### **Practice your Grammar**

#### L'article Ø

- L'article Ø (c'est-à-dire l'absence d'article) est souvent utilisé pour désigner une généralité :
  - avec des **noms au singulier** qui désignent **des concepts et des idées** :

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees Ø freedom of Ø speech and Ø religion.

- avec des **noms pluriels** pour désigner toute une classe d'individus :

#### Do you trust Ø politicians?

L'article Ø est également utilisé avec des noms pluriels pour traduire l'article indéfini pluriel **des**. On peut alors le remplacer par **some**:

The president has been interviewed by Ø / some European journalists.

Ø est également utilisé devant un titre suivi d'un nom propre : Ø President Obama, Ø Queen Elizabeth.

En revanche, on dit: the President of the United States, the Queen of England.

Les **noms de pays** ne sont pas précédés d'article : Ø France, Ø Canada. Il existe quelques exceptions : the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands.

## 1 Complétez avec l'article qui convient : the ou Ø.

a. ... President of ... United States of ... America is elected every four years, in November. ... new President takes ... office in January, two months after ... election.

b. In 1920 ... American women went to the polls for ... first time.
c. ... President Roosevelt was elected four times but died during his fourth term in 1945. After Roosevelt's presidency, a law was passed allowing ... presidents to serve a maximum of two terms.
d. Nationwide, almost 60 % of ... Cuban voters say they affiliate with or lean toward.

Cuban voters say they affiliate with or lean toward ... Republican Party. ... Cubans are ... only people who can become ... U.S. residents after one year in ... country. After five years, they can get ... citizenship, making them eligible to vote.

#### Les comparatifs des quantifieurs

▶ Pour traduire moins, autant ou plus + nom, il faut être attentif au type de nom (dénombrable ou indénombrable) :

	Dénombrable pluriel	Indénombrable (ex : money)	
supériorité	more + nom		
(plus de)	more voter <b>s</b> / money		
égalité	as many + nom	as much + nom	
(autant de)	as many voter <b>s</b>	as much money	
infériorité	fewer + nom	less + nom	
(moins de)	fewer voters	less money	

Les compléments du comparatif de supériorité et d'infériorité sont introduits par **than** /ðən/ :

Fewer / More than 30% of people under the age of 40 consider it essential to live in a democracy.

Les compléments du comparatif d'égalité sont introduits par

Trump raised nearly as much money as Joe Biden.

▶ Pour exprimer une évolution dans le temps (de plus en plus de / de moins en moins de), on utilise more and more, fewer and fewer ou less and less :

Fewer and fewer Americans trust the mainstream media.

À partir des données suivantes, produisez des phrases contenant les structures comparatives cicontre.

#### Produisez deux phrases chaque fois.

**Exemple :** More people said they would vote in person than by mail.

a. According to a survey conducted in October, 54% of respondents said they would vote in person on Election Day, while 13% said they planned to vote early in person. Another 13% said they would vote by mail.

**b.** During the campaign, the Republican candidate spent \$4 million on TV ads. The Democrat candidate and the independent candidate both spent \$2 million. **c.** A new poll finds that, nationally, the Democrat candidate leads the Republican incumbent by a 52% to 42% margin.

3 Décrivez la courbe d'opinion en utilisant les structures comparatives ci-contre. Produisez quatre phrases.

## Improve your pronunciation

#### L'accentuation des mots en -ic(s), -ical et -ity

Les mots se terminant par le suffixe -ic(s), -ical ou -ity portent leur accent principal sur la syllabe qui précède immédiatement le suffixe :

republic 000 minority 0000

- Il existe quelques exceptions:
   rhetoric (mais rhetorical est régulier),
   Arabic, politics (mais political est régulier),
   Catholic (mais Catholicism est régulier),
   lunatic, heretic, arsenic...
- La terminaison d'un mot a donc parfois une incidence sur la place de son accent principal. Des mots de la même famille peuvent ainsi porter leur accent primaire sur des syllabes différentes :

democrat /'deməkræt/ ○○○



democratic / deməˈkrætık/ ○○○

- 1 Recopiez ces mots. Encadrez chaque fois le suffixe, puis soulignez la syllabe qui porte l'accent principal du mot. polemical popularity political priority politics reality community Hispanic academics pandemic
- Recopiez ces mots puis soulignez la syllabe qui porte l'accent principal du mot.
  - a. economy → economic
  - **b.**  $diplomat \rightarrow diplomatic$
  - **c.** history → historical
  - **d.** stupid  $\rightarrow$  stupidity
  - e. major → majority

#### La diphtongue /əʊ/

- ► La diphtongue /əʊ/ est le son qu'on trouve dans g**o** ou sl**ow**.
- ► Elle est représentée par des graphies qui contiennent toutes la voyelle o dans les contextes suivants :

o en fin de mot	e mot tomato, go, no			
dans oll, old, oul	old, poll, shoulder			
dans ost	most, ghost, post Exceptions : lost, cost /ɒ/			
ow	show, slow, know			
οα	road, boat, goal Exception : abroad /ɔ:/			
des auxiliaires	won't, don't			

- La graphie ow se prononce parfois /aʊ/ (comme dans **out**): **down, now, how**...
- La voyelle o se prononce également /əʊ/ quand elle est suivie d'une consonne unique suivie d'un e en position accentuée : note, bone, hope...

Il existe quelques exceptions:

- love, glove, done, some, come, none /n/ (prononcés comme dans but)
- gone /p/ (prononcé comme dans hot)
- move, prove /u:/ (prononcés comme dans food)

- 3 Les mots suivants contiennent tous la diphtongue /əʊ/. Répétez. vote only roll photo toast home close unknown so Joe Biden
- 4 Dans ces suites de mots, chassez l'intrus qui ne contient pas la diphtongue /əʊ/.
  - a. hotel note wrote lot
  - **b.** how low own show
  - c. bone done alone phone
- 5 Dans les phrases suivantes, relevez les mots qui contiennent la diphtongue /əʊ/. Répétez les phrases.
  - **a.** All those aged 18 or over are eligible to vote.
  - **b.** The United States goes to the polls in November.

# Build up your vocabulary

## Presidential election

run for president
a ticket
Vice President (VP)
running mate
incumbent
primary, caucus
electoral college
popular vote
platform

front-runner
exit poll
October surprise
be sworn in
launch a
programme
a lame duck
a hardliner
fundraising

## Political institutions

federal
government
State government
House of
representatives
Congress
Senate
Governor

GOP (Grand
old Party) =
Republican party
Democratic party
legislative branch
executive branch
judicial branch
enforce

## **US** elections

## ▶ Voting

cast your ballot
a vote
a polling station
a ballot box
polls
voter turnout
robocall

recount
constituency
early voting
precinct
runoff
tally
underdog

#### **▶** Politics

swing state
red state,
purple state
blue state
gerrymandering
air war
rhetoric

lobby
mid-term election
floating voters
joined-up
government
achieve collective
goals

ก	Complete the	following	paragraph	with v	vords from	the unit.
_	compices eme		baraa.ab	******		

a. The American consists of two chambers: the and the
b. In the USA, to become president, winning the
d. In 2020, the Democratic presidential
e. The voting process in the USA is rather simple: to, you can send your vote by post or go to the nearest

2 Write an email to a friend explaining how people vote and elect their president in the USA.

## Projects



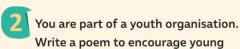


You are an activist member of Democracy Matters.



Write an opinion article for *The New York Times* entitled "Elections Not Auctions."

- 1 Read document **B** "Citizen denied to vote" to see how you can structure an opinion article.
- 2 Find information about *Democracy Matters* to decide what will be your point of view.
- 3 Explain carefully why elections are not auctions.
- 4 Don't just try to teach your readers, touch them emotionally: make it personal.
- 5 Use interesting details and examples and show why the readers should care. You may use a quote from any document in the unit. That can be a good start for your article.
- 6 Give a solution to the problem.





people to vote and create a video of your performance.

- 1 Read document **C** "Poem for the republic" to see how you could write your poem. Use the examples in this unit and do some research on the web if necessary.
- 2 Think about the message you want to convey. Decide which youth organisation you'd like to be part of.
- 3 Choose the structure of your poem (acrostic, sonnet, free verse...) Try to use poetic devices such as metaphors, alliterations... to insist on key points.
- 4 Use concrete imagery to convey your message: you must be inspired, and inspiring!
- 5 Read your poem out loud. Use your voice to catch your viewer's attention.
- 6 Prepare a storyboard with meaningful camera shots (examples: close-ups, medium or full shots). Customise your video by adding filters or texts, and background music.

