A State in Class

Teacher's guide

Who Pays for Us All?
A session of 60 to 75 minutes

The game does the maths; your job is to set the pace, encourage the debate and, above all, lead the final discussion, which is where the learning happens. This guide suggests timings and phrases; adapt them to your group.

Before the lesson

- **Choose the mode. Table Mode:** one computer or tablet per table, passed round to vote; no phones, works offline. **Classroom Mode:** if phones are allowed, the board on the projector and the whole class at once.
- **Tables of 6 to 8.** Numbers don't fit (9-11, 17)? Two play together with one role.
- **Print** the player sheets and role cards (list under Materials).
- **Test** the devices (in Classroom Mode, also the connection and projector).
- **Privacy:** ask them to join with a **nickname** (initials, a made-up name), never their full name. Everything is deleted once the room is closed; only an anonymous tally of the game is kept, with no nicknames or votes.

Getting started (5-10 min)

1. **Open the app** at each table ('Play at a table') or, in Classroom Mode, create a room and open the projector view. Choose the debate length (2 minutes works well) and, if they know the game, the hidden layer.
2. **Classroom Mode:** they join with the QR code on the projector or the code; when everyone is in, choose the tables and 'Start'.
3. **Introduce the game in one minute:**

> 'You are a country. Each of you has a life: what you earn, what it costs you to live and what you want to save. Each round you will vote in secret on how much tax is paid and what services it is spent on. Each of you defends your own life; but if nobody defends everyone's, the country breaks down and you all lose.'

4. **The opening pact.** Before knowing their role, everyone decides how many of their 3 coins to put in: 'What you put in buys calm; what you don't is yours and nobody will know... until the end.'
5. **Each player takes their role card.** Their **money is secret.** 'Who has it hardest?'

Suggested timings

Part	Minutes
Joining, introduction and opening pact	8-12
Round 1, explaining each stage	8-10
Rounds 2 and 3	5 + 5
Round 4: Midlife Crossroads	5-8
Rounds 5 to 8	4 × 5
Final count	3
Final discussion	**10-15**

If you are short of time, cut the debate to 1 minute from round 3 onwards, but don't cut the final discussion.

In each round

Event

Read it aloud and ask who it affects. Many events depend on the level of a service: it is the first hint that public services matter.

Debate (2 min)

Don't give your opinion. Get the quieter ones talking: 'What suits you, Delivery rider?' Let them make promises, strike deals and accuse each other. You can pause or extend the time from your panel.

Tax vote

Secret. Your panel shows who has yet to vote, never what they voted. It closes by itself when everyone has voted; if someone is distracted, you can close it.

Pay day

If someone gets an Exclusion token, stop for a moment: 'What happened to them? Could we have prevented it?' By default, who it is isn't shown; you can turn that on if the group can handle it.

Budget and split

Point out on the board how each service goes up (or doesn't) and what each level gives. Before going on, ask: 'What will happen at the Midlife Crossroads with Health at 1?'

Key moments

Round 1: explain slowly

This is the round where they learn how it works. When the tax result appears, show how much each class paid and how much was raised. When the split appears, explain the 3-2-1 and the funds.

Rounds 3 and 6: obsolescence

The services go down one level. 'Public services need looking after: building them once is not enough.'

Round 4: the Midlife Crossroads

The most intense moment. Each student reveals their card in turn. Read each one and ask: 'Which service saved you (or sank you)?' Anyone who changes class changes role: talk about it.

Round 7: Social peace

If Tension is low, the country gets 15 extra coins. It is the reward for having kept the peace together.

If the Failed State happens

It is not the class's failure; it is the clearest lesson of all. Go straight to the discussion: 'At what point did the country break down? Who could have prevented it?'

Questions to fuel the debate

- Which tax suits you? And the country?
- If A wins, who will struggle on pay day?
- Which service is in danger? What will happen if we reach the Midlife Crossroads like this?
- Is anyone promising to vote a certain way? Do you trust them?
- (From round 5) Can you reach the Legacy? What would it take?

Final count

If there is a Legacy, the app announces it first: **the table has won as a country**. Everyone's money and what each put into the pact are revealed: a good way into the discussion.

The final discussion (10-15 min)

The most important part. The app shows a summary and these questions:

- How much did you put into the pact without knowing your role? And knowing it?
- What did you vote in each round and why? Did you do what you said in the debate?
- Who paid the most tax in total? Who got the most out of the services?
- Would you have voted the same with another role?
- Which service saved you at the Midlife Crossroads? Which one did you miss?
- Who benefited from the inheritance? Is it fair?
- How similar was your table to the real tax debate?

Linking to theory

- **Economic capacity and progressivity** (art. 31.1 of the Spanish Constitution): 'Everyone shall contribute to sustain public expenditure according to their economic capacity…' Which option comes closest to that?
- **Public expenditure** (art. 31.2): an equitable allocation of public resources. Was the budget shared out well?
- **The free rider**: someone who votes for low taxes, hoping others will keep the services going.
- **The veil of ignorance**: which tax would you have voted for not knowing your role?
- **The social contract**: what we give up to live together and what we get in return.

With the hidden layer

Ideologies are revealed before the count. Add:

- Could you tell what each player stood for? Who passed off their own interest as the common good?
- Did you vote for your class or for your ideology? When did they clash?
- Which power mattered most? Is it like real politics?

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