

LESSON 9:

Post-Election Analysis

OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze the results of the general election and Student Vote election, and reflect on the outcome and their participation.

KEY WORDS

analyze, seat count, popular vote percentage, voter turnout, minority government, majority government, official opposition, opposition party, speech from the throne

QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED DURING THIS LESSON

- What was the outcome of the Student Vote locally and nationally?
- What was the outcome of the general election locally and nationally?
- What is the difference between a majority and minority government?
- Who will form the next government? What type of government will it be?
- How did campaign events influence the outcome of the election?

SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- Handout 4.4: 2011 Election Results

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Hook: 15-20 min

1. Announce the results of your school's Student Vote election. Who won the most number of votes? Was it a close race?

2. Compare the results of your school's election with the results of other schools in your riding. Are the results similar or different? Is this surprising? Why or why not? (All individual school results can be found at www.studentvote.ca).

3. Share the national results of the Student Vote. Which party attracted the greatest support? Which party won the most seats and formed the government? Are you surprised with the Student Vote results?

Teacher Note: Remember you must wait until the official polls close in your riding (or province/territory) to share the Student Vote results. Student election workers at your school should be sworn to secrecy.

Instruction: 10 min

1. Seat count is the term used to reflect the number of representatives that each party will have in parliament (or the legislature). It represents the number of local election races won by each party.

2. Popular vote is the term used to show the total support a political party received across the country, or within a province/territory. It is shown as a percentage and is calculated by dividing the number of votes a party received by the total number of votes in the election. Under our electoral system (FPTP), the seat count is not based on popular vote count.

3. The party that has the most seats (usually) forms government. The party that has the second-highest number of seats becomes the official opposition. Any other party is called an opposition party.

4. If the governing party has more than half of all the seats (170), they will have a majority government. If they have half or less (169 or fewer), they will have a minority government.

5. In order to pass any legislation (laws) or budgets, the bills must have support from more than half of the members of parliament. If the governing party has a minority government, they will need to gain the support of the opposition parties or

independent candidates in order to pass any laws or legislation.

Discussion: 5-10 min

Which local candidate was elected in the general election? Which party formed the government? Which party will be the official opposition? Is it a minority or a majority government? What are the benefits and challenges of each type of government?

Activity: 25-40 min

In groups, have students analyze the results of the general election and Student Vote. Assign each group a different comparison task and ask them to make a short presentation or report. Tasks can include analysis, commentary, and creating graphs or charts.

Use the following comparisons for group discussion:

- Federal seat count comparison (General election vs. Student Vote)
- Federal popular vote comparison (General election vs. Student Vote)
- Federal seat count comparison (2011 vs. current election)
- Federal popular vote comparison (2011 vs. current election)
- Local riding results comparison (General election vs. Student Vote)

Teacher Note: Use Handout 4.4 to compare the 2011 results with those of the current election.

Compare news stories from several different media websites and regional and/or local newspapers. Analyze the portrayal of the election outcome and results. Did the sources report the results in a similar way? Can you detect any bias? What groups seem the most happy or unhappy with the results?

Have a class conversation after analyzing the results and media reports. Consider posing some of the following questions:

- Which parties gained or lost seats? Why?
- Does the popular vote reflect the seat count? If not, should it?
- Were there any big surprises or upsets in the election results?
- Did certain regions change drastically? If so, why?
- Did the Student Vote results reflect the general election results? Why or why not?
- Which type of graph works best for displaying election results (e.g., pie chart, line graph, bar chart)?

Debrief: 5 min

Have a brief closing discussion about the outcome of the election and participation in the Student Vote program. Alternatively, ask students to write a reflection for their election scrapbook (see *Assessment Opportunities*).

- Were the pollsters correct in their election predictions?
- Were you pleased with the results? Why or why not?
- What did you learn about politics and the election process from your participation in the Student Vote program? Will you vote in the future?
- Did your participation in Student Vote influence anyone in your family to vote? Did it influence the choice they made about who to vote for?
- What ways can you influence government during and between elections?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

A. Once an electoral candidate is elected to the House of Commons, they must make decisions about how to pursue issues on behalf of their constituency. Have students write to their newly elected or re-elected MP regarding an issue they believe should be considered a priority for the MP and his or her party (if applicable).

B. After the election, the prime minister must confirm the organization of government departments and also select the cabinet. What criteria should the prime minister use for selecting the cabinet (e.g., geography, gender, age, experience)? Follow the news and analyze the decisions made by the prime minister.

C. Canada is made up of a very diverse population. Do you feel that the make up of the House of Commons represents all Canadians? Explain the reasons for your answer.

D. Choose a local candidate in your riding who received a significant proportion of the votes in Student Vote but did not secure a seat in the House of Commons. Invite the candidate into your class for a post-election debrief to discuss their experience and future plans.

E. Create a pledge-to-vote activity for all Student Vote participants. This could include a ceremony or an official “I am a Voter” agreement, whereby students pledge to vote when they become eligible.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

How do I analyze election results?

Under our electoral system (First-Past-The-Post), election results are analyzed by the number of seats each political party will have in the House of Commons. The 338 seats will be divided among registered political parties and independent candidates.

The number of votes cast for each political party can also be examined. This analysis provides an indication of the level of support across the country and is expressed by a percentage (popular vote percentage). The seat count is not based on popular vote percentage under FPTP.

Who will form government? What kind of government will it be?

The political party with the most seats (usually) forms government and their leader becomes the prime minister.

A minority government is a government in which the governing party has the most seats but less than half the total.

A majority government is a government in which the governing party has an absolute majority of the seats (more than half). In Canada, a political party has to win at least 170 seats to win a majority government.

Which party will form the official opposition?

The political party that receives the second-highest number of seats takes on the role of the official opposition. It is their responsibility to hold the government to account and to question its actions. The official opposition organizes a shadow cabinet to act as expert critics on the files managed by each cabinet minister (which generally correspond to government departments).

Which issues will be forefront on the agenda for the new government?

The Speech from the Throne (also known as the Throne Speech) outlines the government's plans and initiatives. The speech is delivered by the governor general at the beginning of each new session of the House of Commons.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- General election results — www.elections.ca
- Student Vote results — www.studentvote.ca
- Newspaper and media websites