

1 Government and Democracy

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the concept of democracy and the different types of government around the world.

KEY WORDS

government, anarchy, autocracy, dictatorship, oligarchy, aristocracy, democracy, representative democracy, right, freedom

QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED DURING THIS LESSON

- What are different ways a decision can be made?
- Why are rules important?
- What is the role of government?
- What types of government exist around the world?
- How do other forms of government compare to democracy?

SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- PowerPoint 1: Government and Democracy
- Video 1: Government and Democracy
- Worksheet 1.1: Survivor Island
- Worksheet 1.2: Let's Eat
- Worksheet 1.3: Who Should Decide?

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Hook: 20-25 min

1. Split the class into groups and have them sit together. Explain that each group will explore the need for leadership, organization and rules within a community through the following scenario.

Your class is going on an end-of-year trip across the ocean. Your flight encounters a bad storm, and you all become stranded together on a remote island. The teacher and other adults have decided to venture off to find help. It will be several weeks until you are rescued and the class must figure out how everyone will try to live together and survive.

2. Distribute copies of Worksheet 1.1. Each group will answer the questions to figure out how they will work together to survive on the island.
3. Bring the class back to the big group and discuss each group's answers. Emphasize differences between community organization (independent vs. team work/self-serving vs. helping others), the selection of the leader (democratic process vs. virtue or desire) and rules (individual rights

vs. common good/freedom vs. control). Offer alternative options for students to consider if groups do not express different answers.

4. Have a final discussion about the decision-making process involved in the group work. How were decisions made for each question? Did everyone agree with the decisions? Were decisions made quickly? Why or why not?

Teacher Note: Alternatively, you could use Extension A as the Hook activity.

Discussion: 10-15 min

Imagine what your classroom would be like if your teacher had no rules regarding behaviour, habits or homework. What would happen? What would happen if there were no rules or authority in your community or country?

Imagine what would happen if your classroom or school made rules that were unfair or harsh. What would happen? What would happen if people in your community or country were under very strict rules (i.e., 6pm nightly curfew for anyone under 18 years of age, no sports or games in the streets)?

Instruction: 10-15 min

Governments are responsible for making rules and decisions and creating rules for people living within its borders (e.g., education/schools, transportation/roads, health care/ hospitals). There are different types of government around the world and they make decisions for their people in different ways. You can compare governments based on how they share power and by the type of rights and freedoms given to their citizens.

Teacher Note: Show Video 1 or use PowerPoint 1 to summarize the different government types to students.

a) An autocracy or dictatorship is a type of government where one person has full control without the permission of the people. They often force their way to power or become leader because they were associated with or related to the previous leader. Citizens have few rights or freedoms, there is usually a large army presence and the media is restricted on what it can report on. Examples include Syria and North Korea.

b) An oligarchy is a type of government system where power is shared among a small number of people, usually the most wealthy and powerful people in the country due to their family relatives. People living under oligarchic rule usually have some rights and freedoms. Examples include Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

c) A democracy is a type of government where power is shared by all the people and citizens are meant to participate equally in making decisions. Citizens choose people through a vote to represent them in government and make decisions on their behalf. This is called a representative democracy. In democratic countries the people have rights and freedoms such as the freedom of speech and religion. Examples include Canada, the United States, Japan and England.

Activity: 10-15 min

Play a game of running dictation using some or all of the key terms in the lesson (e.g., democracy, dictatorship/autocracy, oligarchy, anarchy). Using the glossary or your own definitions, prepare large print definitions of each term (one per page, multiple copies if necessary).

1. Attach a single term to a wall in the classroom or in the hallway (create numerous locations if helpful). Divide students into pairs with one student acting as the “writer” and one student acting as the “runner.”
2. The runner must run to the wall or board where the key term is displayed, read the text, run back to his or her partner and repeat what he or she read.
3. The writer’s job is to listen to the runner and write down what is said. It will likely take a few trips to and from the posting for the runner to dictate the entire definition to the writer.
4. When most groups are done, the writer can check their work against what is displayed, then roles are reversed and the next term is used.

Debrief: 10-15 min

Have a brief closing discussion about government and democracy. Alternatively, ask students to write a reflection in their election scrapbook or learning log (see *Assessment Opportunities*).

- What is the role of government?
- What are the pros and cons of different types of government?
- Would you prefer to live in a dictatorship or a democracy? Why?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

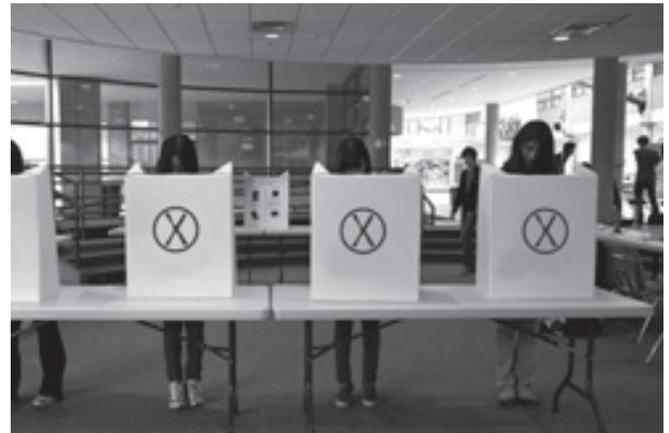
A. Divide students into groups and tell them to imagine they are on a field trip and will be eating lunch at a fast-food chain or restaurant (provide a specific name). To save on costs, they are asked to come up with one order that everyone can agree on. They need to ensure they have one main course, one side, one drink and one dessert. Ask students to fill out Worksheet 1.2.

Afterwards, have a class discussion and consider the following questions: How was a final decision made? Did everyone agree with the decision? Was the decision made quickly? Why or why not?

B. Using Worksheet 1.3, explore the benefits and challenges of decision-making models in various scenarios. Have students form groups and act out one of the scenarios. After each dramatic presentation, discuss which type of decision-making model makes the most sense and why. Alternatively, the groups could act out the decision-making model under both scenarios. Debrief as a class afterwards. Which decision-making process was the best choice in the situation and why?

C. Ask students to imagine what would happen if they were a dictator in their lives for a day or a week. Individually students can create a comic strip or in groups create a short skit about what would happen.

D. Ask students to write a story about a country without a government. What would happen if there were no leaders to decide on laws or to create programs to support citizens? Imagine no schools, hospitals or community centres, no traffic laws or police to enforce any rules. What would life be like?



BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

What is government?

Government is made up of the people and institutions put in place to run or govern a country, state, province/territory or community. The purpose of government is to protect its citizens and provide services. The role of government is to make decisions and laws (rules) for the good of all the people. Without government, there would be confusion and conflict, and little would be accomplished.

How are governments distinguished?

Different government systems exist around the world. They are distinguished by how they are formed, the allocation of power and by the types of rights and freedoms given to their citizens.

A dictatorship (or an autocracy): Rule by one. A system of government run by a ruler with total power and authority over all aspects of life. This ruler is called a dictator. Autocratic countries generally have limited individual rights, freedoms and civil liberties. There is usually a heavy military presence and the media is limited on what it can report on. People living under a dictatorship do not have individual rights and freedoms. Examples include Syria and North Korea.

An oligarchy (or an aristocracy): Rule by a few or the privileged. A form of government system in which power rests with a small number of people, generally the people who are rich and powerful (due to family lines or wealth). People living under oligarchic rule have some rights and freedoms. Examples include Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

A democracy: Rule by many. A system of government in which power is held by all the people and all citizens are equal under the law. Citizens have access to power and they also have guaranteed rights and freedoms. Since it is not practical to have every citizen contribute to every decision that needs to be made, representatives are elected by the people to make decisions on their behalf. This is called a representative democracy. Citizens also have access to power and can run for political office. In democratic countries the people have rights and freedoms such as the freedom of speech and religion, and free and fair elections. Examples include Canada, the United States, Japan and England.

What type of government do we have in Canada?

Canada is a parliamentary democracy, which is a type of representative democracy. It is also a constitutional monarchy; the Queen, our head of state, holds symbolic power. A constitutional monarchy can be either a democracy or dictatorship.