

Lesson 1

Government and Democracy



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the role of government?
- 2 How do different types of government compare to each other?
- 3 Why do I want to live in a democracy?

OVERVIEW

A government is made up of the people and practices put in place to manage the land, resources and people living within its borders.

In this lesson, students experience different types of governance through a tower building activity. Afterwards, students review the purpose of government and different types of government around the world. In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect what they learned and wonder about government and democracy.

LEARNING INTENTIONS

We are learning to:

- describe the role of government;
- compare and contrast different types of government;
- analyze what it means to live in a democracy.

Tips for Teachers

- Please use or adapt the activities in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- The *Starter* activity is longer than usual and may need to be implemented on its own.

Supplies/Needs

- Supplies for building towers (Lego, toothpicks and gumdrops, or marshmallows and dry spaghetti)
- Chart paper
- Slide Deck 1
- “Government and Democracy” video
- Direction cards printed and cut (1.1)
- Access or copies of 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 for all students
- All digital files, videos and slide decks can be found on the project website

Starter

Tallest Tower Activity

1. Create four or more table stations and assign four to six students to each station.
2. Explain the task of building the tallest tower and provide each station with supplies. You can use Lego, toothpicks and gumdrops, or marshmallows and dry spaghetti. (Sample video: [Build a Spaghetti Tower Challenge, Holmes + Holmes](#))
3. Provide each station with one card from Activity 1.1, which details the process for each group. They must build the tallest tower based on the group member involvement described on their card. There are four suggestions:
 - *Team of 1 (dictatorship)* – Only one person is in charge and they make all the decisions without ideas from other group members. They can complete the task by themselves, or direct who they want to help or not help. They can also ask the other group members to leave the table if they want. The person in charge is the oldest person in the group.
 - *Team of 2 (oligarchy)* – Only two people will work together on the task. No one else is involved. The team of two consist of the shortest person in the group, and this person’s choice of another person from the group.
 - *Team of all, with roles (democracy)* – All group members are involved in the task. They must choose a leader and determine different roles for the rest of the group members based on consensus or majority rule.

- *Team of all, no roles (anarchy)* – All group members are involved in the task, but there are no roles or planning in advance of the task.

4. Provide groups with two minutes to plan for the task and three minutes for building.

TEACHER NOTE:

If time allows, rotate students through different stations so they get to experience more than one scenario. Keep in mind that you will need more supplies.

5. Give students time to reflect on the experience in their groups. What are the pros and cons of the style of leadership and group involvement? How did each group member feel during the process?
6. Organize a gallery walk to have students move around to each station to evaluate each tower and understand the style of group involvement. Afterwards, have each group summarize their experience.
 - What made the building process successful or unsuccessful?
 - What feelings developed among group members and why?
7. Through a whole class discussion, review factors that contribute to a positive and negative experience when working in groups. Draw from experiences in tower activity. Consider providing copies of a T-Chart so that students can make notes (Activity 1.2).

Activities

1. Using a Turn-and-Talk strategy, discuss the concept of government and the need for leadership in society (Questions are included in Slide Deck 1).

Guiding questions:

- Why do we have government? What is the role of government?
- What types of services does the government provide (e.g., education/schools, roads and highways, health care/hospitals, public transit)?
- What would happen if there were no government responsible for creating laws and ensuring order in society? (Connect it back to the *Starter* activity).

2. Using the 'Government and Democracy' video and Slide Deck 1, review some basic government types and how they can be compared (e.g., distribution of power, how leaders are chosen, access to power, individual rights).

- Dictatorship
- Oligarchy
- Democracy
- Monarchy
- Constitutional monarchy

3. In pairs, have students compare and contrast different government types across several characteristics (Activity 1.3). Review the answers as a class afterwards.

Consolidation

Ask students to fill out the exit card (Activity 1.4). Use this to structure future discussions.

- Living in a democracy means...
- One question I still have about government or democracy is...

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

LESSON SECTION	GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS
Starter	Can students appreciate the importance of having a voice or being actively involved in a group? Can students identify factors that contribute to a positive process or negative process when working in groups?
Activities	Are students able to understand the role of government? Can students compare and analyze different types of government?
Consolidation	Can students recognize the importance of living in a democracy?

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Individual Education Plans	<p>Modifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use terminology that students can easily understand. • Provide videos and vocabulary early for review (government, dictatorship, oligarchy, democracy, constitutional monarchy). • Link learning to prior knowledge and interests. <p>Enrichment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to think globally and make connections to their learning. • Modify terms and tasks to include more challenging and interest-based terminology.
Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with terms and definitions in advance (government, dictatorship, oligarchy, democracy, constitutional monarchy). • Provide advance access to the videos, and ensure that subtitles are on during the video. Pause video after each type of government is explained. • Encourage students to make connections to their other languages.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present a variety of examples from countries around the world during discussions. • Ensure that you include countries and cultures that have meaning for your students. • Ensure that you are open and encouraging of diverse viewpoints your students may share.
Accessibility & Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are teaching virtually, consider changing the <i>Starter</i> activity to a decision-making exercise (e.g., class trip, themed day). • Consider using digital activity templates.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

A **government** is made up of the people and institutions put in place to manage the land, resources and people living within its borders. Various types of government exist in the world.

Governments can be compared by their governance model, the number of people who have access to power, the rights and freedoms granted to citizens, and the existence of rule of law (laws are enforced equally, fairly and consistently).

An **autocracy** is a type of government where political power is concentrated in the hands of one person who rules without restriction. There is no rule of law and citizens are not consulted on the decisions and affairs of the country. An autocracy can be a dictatorship or an absolute monarchy.

In a **dictatorship**, the dictator or ruling group exercises power through control of a mass movement, a political party or the military. Dictatorships often come to power through a military takeover (also known as a coup d'état). Power is then maintained without the consent of the people through a one-party state where political opposition is forbidden. Dictatorships generally restrict individual civil and political rights and there is no independent media.

The term **authoritarianism** is sometimes used to describe dictatorships. Authoritarian governments exercise forceful control over the population with no particular concern for their preferences or for public opinion.

An **oligarchy** is a type of government where power rests within a small number of people, generally individuals who are rich and powerful, often due to family lines, wealth or prominent

political or military connections (e.g., China, Venezuela). People living under oligarchic rule usually have some rights and freedoms. Similarly, an aristocracy is a form of governance where administration or power is in the hands of a special class of people. Aristocrats are connected to royal families through blood or ennoblement, whereas an oligarchy is not.

A **monarchy** is a form of government where a monarch (king or queen) is the head of state. The role of the monarch is inherited and usually lasts until death or abdication. The power of ruling monarchs can vary; in an **absolute monarchy**, a monarch retains full political power over a state and its people whereas in a **constitutional monarchy**, the role of the monarch is more symbolic. In a constitutional monarchy, the authority of the monarch is limited by a constitution, which includes the principles and laws of a nation or state, defines the powers and duties of the government and guarantees certain rights to the people living within it. A constitutional monarchy has a democratically elected government with a government leader, and a monarch who remains the head of state and performs ceremonial duties.

A **democracy** is a type of government where a majority of the people are included in political decision-making. In a direct democracy, citizens themselves vote for or against specific proposals or laws. In an indirect or representative democracy, citizens elect political representatives to make decisions on their behalf. In democratic countries, citizens have protected civil and political rights such as freedom of speech and religion, freedom of association, and the right to participate in free and fair elections, and run for political office. There are many different types of representative democracies around the world.

A **republic** is a sovereign state, country or government without a monarch where all members of government are elected (including the head of state), and the democratically elected government holds all political power. Similar to a constitutional monarchy, the government in a republic exercises power according to the rule of law and often has a constitution.

A **consensus democracy** uses a consensus decision-making model while developing legislation and aims to be more collaborative and inclusive by taking into account a broad range of opinions, as opposed to decisions made by majority rule. The Northwest Territories and Nunavut both have consensus governments where a group of individuals without any political party affiliation share political power.

Canada's system of government is a **parliamentary democracy** and a **constitutional monarchy**. We elect members to represent us in our federal parliament and our provincial and territorial legislatures, and the political party with the most elected representatives, usually forms government. The British monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, is our head of state, represented by the Governor General at the federal level. Every act of government is done in the name of the Queen, but the authority for every act comes from the Canadian people through the Constitution. The Constitution of Canada is the highest legal ruling in the country and includes laws, decisions by judges, agreements between federal and provincial governments, traditions and our civil and political rights (the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*).