

Lesson 2

Rights and Responsibilities



GUIDING QUESTIONS

❶ What rights and responsibilities do I have in Canada?

PURPOSE

Citizens living in a democracy have guaranteed rights and freedoms, and these rights come with responsibilities.

In this lesson, students discuss the rights they have at school in a 'Placemat Activity'. Together they create a class charter and reflect on the responsibilities that go along with their rights. Students review highlights from the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and then create a 'Mind Map' to link rights and responsibilities to democracy. In the *Consolidation* activity, they reflect on essential values in a democratic society.

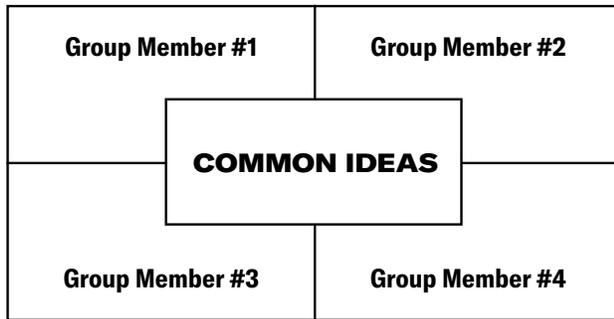
LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- work collaboratively with their peers to discuss and compare perspectives about the rights and responsibilities they have at school;
- describe the rights and freedoms we have in Canada;
- analyze connections between the Charter and democracy, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

Starter

1. Divide students into groups of four and provide each group a piece of chart paper.
2. Review the concept of a 'right' and ask students to take a few minutes to think about their rights and freedoms as members of the school community. Have each group member write a list of rights that should be guaranteed to every student in their section on the chart paper.



3. Have each group list the common ideas in the centre of the chart paper. Afterwards, have the class walk around and read each group's common ideas or review them as a class.
4. Create a class charter by taking the common ideas from amongst all the groups. Ask students to consider the responsibilities that go along with each of these rights.

Activities

1. Using Slide Deck 2 and Handout 2.1, review the rights and freedoms we have in Canada. Guiding questions:
 - What is the Constitution of Canada?
 - What is the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*?
 - What are the seven categories within the Charter?
 - How are responsibilities associated with our rights?
2. Have students construct a 'Mind Map' to display which aspects of the Charter are relevant to democracy (e.g., freedom of opinion, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, the right to vote, the right to be a candidate, equality rights). Each branch should extend to a section of the Charter (e.g., the right to vote) and split into smaller branches for the associated responsibilities (e.g., stay informed about politics, learn about the parties/candidates, cast your ballot).

TEACHER NOTE

A 'Mind Map' exemplar can be found on the project website (studentvote.ca/canada).

3. Give students time to share their 'Mind Map' with a partner and then debrief as a class.

Consolidation

Through a class discussion or learning journal, have students respond to the following questions.

- Why is it important for us to be responsible members of society?
- Why are equality rights essential in a democracy?
- Why is diversity and political tolerance important to democracy?
- Why is citizen participation required in a democracy?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

All citizens living in a democracy have civil and political rights, which are usually articulated in a legal document as part of a constitution, such as a **bill of rights**. This document limits the powers of government, explains the freedoms that are guaranteed to all people and protects people from a government that might abuse its powers.

A **right** is a legal entitlement or something that we are morally or legally allowed to do or have. Rights are often fought for and claimed (in courts or through protests) and less often simply granted.

With all rights come responsibilities. A **responsibility** is a duty or obligation. It is something you should do in order to respect and maintain certain rights.

In Canada, our rights are protected by the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**. Canada's Charter is widely admired around the world and is the constitutional document most emulated by other nations. The Charter has seven distinct categories:

- **Fundamental freedoms** include the freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression including freedom of the press and other media; freedom of peaceful assembly; and freedom of association.
- **Democratic rights** include the right of every Canadian, 18 years of age or older, to vote in an election, to be a candidate in an election, the requirement that governments hold elections at least every five years, and the requirement that elected representatives meet at least once per year.
- **Mobility rights** include the right of every Canadian to choose to live and work in any province or territory in Canada. Canadians also have the right to live in, leave or re-enter Canada whenever they choose.
- **Legal rights** include the guarantee that Canadians, when arrested, must be told of their right to see a lawyer and must be tried within a reasonable amount of time. Canadians are also guaranteed the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.
- **Equality rights** include the right of any Canadian not to be discriminated against on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical ability.
- **Official language rights** include the right of all Canadians to use either English or French in communications with Canada's federal government.
- **Minority language education rights** include the rights for French or English minorities in every province and territory to be educated in their own language under certain conditions.