

Lesson 1: Democracy



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 **How should we live together?**
- 2 **What does it mean to live in a democracy?**
- 3 **How are community and democracy related?**

OVERVIEW

In a democracy, individuals have the opportunity to participate in decisions that shape how their community is governed.

In Part One, students participate in a thought experiment in which they must decide how to live together and make decisions while living in the jungle without any adults. Afterward, they debrief on the activity and discuss the dynamics of making decisions in groups.

In Part Two, students learn about democracy and elections. Afterward, they use a 'Carousel' brainstorming protocol to help synthesize their understanding of democracy and identify differences and similarities between their own insights and those of their classmates.

LEARNING GOALS

We are learning to:

- analyze the opportunities and challenges when collaborating with others on a shared goal;
- describe the characteristics of a democracy; and
- explain the value of listening to the perspectives of others.

Tips for Teachers

- Please use and combine the activities in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- The lesson has been divided into two parts (35–40 min each), should you choose to deliver the activities over multiple periods/days.
- Recognize and acknowledge barriers that inhibit individuals or groups from voting (e.g., historical exclusions, socio-economic class, language, newcomers).

Supplies/Needs

- “[Voting in a Democracy](#)” video
- Slide Deck 1
- Copies or access to Activity 1.1 (one for each group)
- Chart paper
- Coloured markers
- All digital files, videos and slide decks can be found at: studentvote.ca/canada (Classroom Resources)

PART ONE

Starter

1. Divide students into larger groups of 6–8 students.
2. Share the following scenario with your students verbally or using Slide Deck 1.

It’s the last day of school and your class is watching “Jumanji: The Next Level”. Twenty minutes into the movie, the screen starts flickering. Suddenly, a black hole appears from within the projector screen and your class is sucked into the hole and transported to the jungle in Jumanji.

Since your teacher was out of the classroom, only students were transported to the jungle. There are no adults. Your challenge is to decide how to live together as a community.

3. Distribute copies of Activity 1.1. Ask each group to respond to the questions and decide how they will live together. Each group must reach a consensus on the decisions. Provide 20 minutes to complete the task.
4. Afterward, debrief on the activity and have students share their decisions. Questions to guide the discussion:
 - Was there a focus on collaboration and working together? Why or why not?
 - Who was responsible for making decisions for the community? Who held the power? Did you discuss ways to keep leaders accountable?
 - Did everyone have a chance to contribute to the decisions that were made? Why or why not?
 - Were rules established? Is it important to have rules in a community? Why or why not?
5. Reflect on the activity through a whole class discussion.
 - Did discussing these questions in a group lead to more thoughtful answers? Was it helpful to hear different perspectives? Share examples.
 - What challenges did you face in ensuring everyone’s voice was heard?
 - Was it hard to reach consensus for the decisions?

PART TWO

Essential Learning

1. Watch the “[Voting in a Democracy](#)” video and review the concept of democracy.
 - Democracy is about working collaboratively to solve problems, respecting different perspectives, and taking collective action.
 - In a democracy, power is shared by all the people.
 - Since it’s not possible for 40 million Canadians to be involved in making decisions, we collectively choose individuals to represent us and make decisions for our community or country. These people are called elected representatives.
 - Elections are the process for choosing representatives to make decisions on our behalf. Voting is one way to influence our future.

2. Reinforce students' understanding of democracy and reflect on the *Starter* activity. Democracy is about building community, cooperation, shared responsibility, and the inclusion of all voices in decision-making.
 - How are the terms 'community' and 'democracy' related?
 - Did you incorporate the ideas of democracy into your decision-making process in the Jumanji activity? Why or why not?
4. Rotate the groups through the stations. Give students 3–4 minutes to write down responses at each station. A bell or timer can be used to signal when it is time to move to the next station. Continue until each group has responded to each prompt.
5. Reconvene as a class to debrief the activity. Ask students to reflect on their answers, and the process of looking at other students' responses. Reference the chart paper with recorded student responses to help pull out similarities and differences to aid discussion and promote further reflection.

Discussion

1. Set up four or eight stations (for larger classes) with a piece of chart paper at each. Add numbers for easy identification and write one of the following questions at each station.
 - **Definition:** What it means
 - **Characteristics:** What it's like
 - **Examples:** What it looks like
 - **Non-examples:** What it's not
2. Divide students into four or eight groups. Give each group a distinct coloured marker to code their responses and assign each group to a different station.
3. Explain to students that they will be rotating through four stations, responding to the prompts at each one based on what they know about 'democracy.' They can add text and/or pictures. Encourage them to read through the other responses before adding their own with their group's coloured marker.

Consolidation

Select one of the following:

- a) Ask students to design a photo collage demonstrating their understanding of democracy.
- b) Ask students to write a reflection about the two-part lesson. After learning about democracy, would they have answered the questions differently in the Jumanji activity? Is democracy the most effective way to manage a community today?

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.

A **democracy** is a type of government where most 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.

Canada's system of government is a **parliamentary democracy**. 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 the government.

Questions to Help Guide Assessment

| LESSON SECTION | GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS |
|---------------------------|---|
| Starter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are students able to come to consensus in their groups? • Are they listening to the opinions of other group members? • Can they identify the opportunities and challenges of collaborating with others? |
| Essential Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are students asking questions about democracy? • Can students make connections between community and democracy? Can they identify examples of democracy they incorporated into the Jumanji activity? |
| Discussion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can they explain democracy in their own words and identify characteristics, examples and non-examples? • Do they notice differences and similarities between their insights and those of their classmates? |
| Consolidation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can students demonstrate their understanding of democracy? Can they think critically about the benefits and challenges of democracy? |

Adaptations and Supports

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|---|---|
| Individual Education Plans | <p>Modifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide key terms and definitions in advance (democracy, government, elections, elected representative). • Present examples of how you can make decisions (autocratic/dictatorship, democracy). • Use additional CIVIX video resources on democracy to help students develop prior knowledge before class discussions and activities (i.e., the “Government and Democracy” video). <p>Enrichment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to research different government types around the world. Have them compare and contrast the different types. |
| Language Learners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with terms and definitions in advance (democracy, government, elections, elected representative). |
| Culturally Responsive Pedagogy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sensitive to circumstances at home that may challenge perspectives around voting and democratic participation, such as religion or traditions. • Remind students that new immigrants, adults who have difficulty reading, Language Learners, persons who are homeless and other specific groups may face challenges understanding or accessing the electoral process. Keep the focus on ideas to increase access and the benefits our society gets from hearing different voices, not only on the disadvantages these groups face. |
| Accessibility & Accommodations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If students are working remotely, use digital templates or online tools for brainstorming. • If it is challenging for students to move around to different stations, move the papers from group to group. |