

1

Lesson 1: Governance

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn that there are different types of government around the world and appreciate the democratic form of governance.

KEY WORDS

government, autocracy, oligarchy, totalitarianism, democracy, constitutional monarchy, representative democracy, anarchy

QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED DURING THIS LESSON

- What types of decision-making models exist?
- What is the role of government?
- What types of government exist around the world?
- How do other forms of government compare to democracy?
- Why is democracy important?

PREPARATION

- Collect some of the video footage or primary resources showing past or present governments around the world (see *Resources*).
- Make copies of Worksheet 1.1: Types of Government.
- Make copies of Worksheet 1.2 if applicable (Extension Activity).

TEACHING STRATEGIES**Hook: 15 min**

1. Split the class into three groups and have them sit together. Assign an actual or hypothetical decision (e.g., gym activities, desk arrangements, theme for a school dance, charity fundraiser) and ask each group to brainstorm ideas for a few minutes. Provide enough time to allow all students to share their opinion.
2. Now assign each group one of the following decision-making models and ask them to make a final decision based on the rules given. These decision-making models are based on real types of government found throughout the world.

Group A – Only one person (i.e., the tallest person) will make the decision (Autocratic/Totalitarian)

Group B – Only a select few (i.e., only boys or only girls) may be involved in the decision-making process (Oligarchic/Democratic Limited)

Group C – All group members will have an opportunity to have a say in the decision-making process (Democratic Universal)

3. While groups are making their decision, observe how each group is functioning and make notes (e.g., level

of engagement among those with power versus those without, interactions among members, length of time to make the decision). Alternatively, you can ask one student to be the observer in each group and take notes.

Teacher note: Group A may become unruly as most members of the group will lack a voice — but this will make for a productive discussion afterwards.

4. Bring the class back to the big group and discuss each group's experience. Ask the following discussion questions to each group.
 - How quickly was a decision made?
 - Did everyone agree with the decision?
 - How happy were you with the decision made? Why?
 - What kind of feeling developed within the group? Explain.
 - How engaged were all members in the activity?

Discussion: 5 min

Who makes decisions for people living in a country, province or city? What is the role of government? What would happen if there was no government? What would your classroom be like if your teacher had no rules regarding behaviour, habits or homework?

Instruction: 5-10 min

1. Different types of government exist in the world and they make decisions for their people in different ways. The type of government is distinguished by the allocation of power and the types of rights and freedoms afforded to the citizens.
2. Totalitarianism is a type of government where one person (or a privileged few) has full control, through the use of a party or military, without the participation or consent of the people. Totalitarian countries are generally socialist, communist or fascist societies with restrictive individual rights, freedoms and civil liberties, with a high level of security and restricted media (e.g., China, North Korea). Human rights abuses are common. These countries are usually one-party states where there is little or no political opposition.
3. Democracy is a type of government where power is held by all the people, exercised either directly or indirectly through elected representatives. For example, Canada elects Members of Parliament (MPs). These countries are generally free societies where citizens have individual rights and freedoms, such as freedom of speech, expression and

mobility (e.g., Canada, United States, Germany, Japan, England). These countries exercise the rule of law, have constitutional limits on the power of government, have universal suffrage (where all citizens can vote), and hold free and fair multi-party elections.

Activity: 15-20 min

1. As a class, compare Canada's system of government to other past and present examples around the world. Use video footage or primary sources (diaries, letters) to compare Canada to North Korea, China, Nazi Germany, and/or Stalinist Russia.
2. Individually or as a class, have students create a list or chart of advantages and disadvantages (Worksheet 1.1: Types of Government) for democracy and totalitarianism. Relate it back to the Hook activity and discuss the pros and cons of each decision-making model.

Debrief: 5-10 min

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

- Why is democracy important?
- What does democracy mean to you?
- How can democracy fail? Does it fail if people do not participate? Does it fail if elected representatives do not effectively represent the people?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

A. To further explore the advantages and disadvantages of decision-making models in a range of scenarios, assign students Worksheet 1.2: Who Should Decide?

B. Use media and news stories to discuss global fights for democracy (e.g., 2011 Egyptian revolution, Arab Spring across the Middle East). In pairs or groups, have students choose a topic, search for a clip and present it to the class. Key discussion questions: What does the movement signify? What is the impact?

C. Have students research famous quotes about democracy and governance. Ask students to write an essay, a poem or create a poster based on their favourite quote.

For example:

"I understand democracy as something that gives the weak the same chance as the strong." – Mohandas Gandhi

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

What is government?

The people and institutions put in place to run or govern a country, state, province or community. The role of government is to make decisions and regulations for the people for whom it is responsible. The purpose of government is to protect its citizens and provide services.

How are governments distinguished?

There are different government systems around the world. They are distinguished by how they are formed,

the allocation of power and the types of rights and freedoms afforded to citizens.

Totalitarianism: A system of government run by a ruler with total power and authority over all aspects of life. This ruler is called a dictator and often has the support of the military. People living under totalitarian rule do not have individual rights and freedoms.

Democracy: A system of government in which power is retained by all the people. 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 usually selected by the people to make decisions on their behalf. This is called a representative democracy.

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 totalitarian state.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/WEB LINKS

- Worksheet 1.1: Types of Government
- Worksheet 1.2: Who Should Decide?
- Life in North Korea (BBC *State of Mind* Documentary) – Part One: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSrcLC6Zz54>
- Life in North Korea (BBC *State of Mind* Documentary) – Part Two: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kb8wlToRyUY>
- The March of *TIME*: Nazi Germany - http://www.time.com/time/video/player/0,32068,30862130001_1915520,00.html
- Ordinary Life in the USSR (1961) - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExHCAjRsZhA>
- Video: *How the Arab Spring began*, BBC News (December 16, 2011) - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16212447>
- Video: *The evolution of Arab revolutions*, Al Jazeera (April 22, 2011) - <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/empire/2011/04/2011421104111964650.html>
- *Arab spring: an interactive timeline of Middle East protests*, The Guardian (January 5, 2012) - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>
- *Arab uprising: Country by country*, BBC News (August 31, 2012) - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12482315>
- *The Arab Spring: Disorder may be good?*, Al Jazeera (December 12, 2012) - <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/12/201212121483949704.html>
- *The Promise of the Arab Spring*, Foreign Affairs (January/February 2013) - <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138479/sheri-berman/the-promise-of-the-arab-spring>