

LESSON 1

VALUES, BELIEFS & PERSPECTIVES

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What is the relationship between people's beliefs and values and their positions on civic issues?

SUMMARY

In a democratic society, people have different beliefs, which influence their position and actions with respect to issues of civic importance.

In this lesson, students watch an experiment about how our beliefs shape our perspectives during the 'Minds On' activity. They review the concept of a civic issue and the factors that shape one's political perspective. Afterwards, students participate in a political spectrum activity to develop a sense of their civic self-image and better understand how beliefs and values influence opinions and perspectives. In the 'Consolidation' activity, students reflect on why it is important to respect others' perspectives and opinions.

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Use the *political perspective* to understand how beliefs and values shape perspectives and positions on civic issues;
- Use critical thinking skills to assess their own beliefs, values and perspectives and develop a sense of their civic self-image (Identity – *Citizenship Education Framework*);
- Use the concept of *political significance* to explain how people's beliefs, values, and political ideologies contribute to political change in society;
- Consider and respect others' perspectives (Identity – *Citizenship Education Framework*).

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- I can use the concept of *political perspective* to explain how beliefs and values shape perspectives and positions on civic issues;
- I can evaluate my own beliefs, values and perspectives;
- I can see how beliefs, values and political ideologies, can lead to larger shifts and political change;
- I can demonstrate respect for others' perspectives, even if it differs from my own.

CURRICULUM LINKS

CHV20 – Overall Expectations:

A1. Political Inquiry: use the political inquiry process and the concepts of political thinking when investigating issues, events, and developments of civic importance

A2. Developing Transferable Skills: apply in everyday contexts skills developed through investigations related to civics and citizenship education, and identify some careers in which civics and citizenship education might be an asset

B1. Civic Issues, Democratic Values: describe beliefs and values associated with democratic citizenship in Canada, and explain how they are related to civic action and to one's position on civic issues

CHV20 – Specific Expectations:

A1.1 formulate different types of questions to guide investigations into issues, events, and/or developments of civic importance

A2.2 demonstrate in everyday contexts attributes, skills, and work habits developed in civics and citizenship education

A2.3 apply the concepts of political thinking when analyzing current events and issues involving Canada and the world

B1.1 describe some civic issues of local, national, and/or global significance, and compare the perspectives of different groups on selected issues

B1.4 communicate their own position on some issues of civic importance at the local, national, and/or global level, explaining how their position is influenced by their beliefs/values

MINDS ON

The camera company *Canon* produced a series of videos called 'The Lab - Decoy' to shift one-dimensional creative thinking behind the lens. One of the experiments highlights the power of perspective. Six photographers were told to photograph the same man, but each of them was told a different background story about who he was. The experiment demonstrates that a photograph is shaped more by the person behind the camera than by what is in front of it. It is a helpful reminder to consider how a preconceived thought or belief can impact your judgement on people, events and issues.

LESSON 1: VALUES, BELIEFS & PERSPECTIVES

Watch the video with your students:

www.canon.com.au/explore/the-lab-decoy-a-portrait-session-with-a-twist

Afterwards, have students Turn and Talk to a partner and discuss the following questions:

- What does this story tell you about the impact that personal values and beliefs can have on how we perceive others?
- What people, events or experiences in your life do you think have most shaped your own beliefs and values?

ACTION

1. Use Slide Deck 1A to review the concept of civic issues and the elements that make up one's political perspective.

*Teacher Note: A civic issue is a topic or subject that people speak about because it affects society as a whole and there are often multiple opinions on various sides of any given issue. The thinking concept, **political perspective**, is highlighted in this slide deck.*

The slide deck opens with an image of a glass of water. Is it half-full or half empty? Do some people see the glass half-full and others see the glass as half empty?

Review the difference between a perspective and opinion. A **perspective** is a viewpoint or an outlook, a way of looking at things. Our perspectives are shaped by who we are and our environment. An **opinion** is your belief about a particular issue or topic.

2. Create a class definition for 'civic issue'. Ask students to suggest examples of civic issues and explain why they are issues of public concern. Create class definitions for 'perspective' and 'opinion' and ask students to differentiate by using real examples.

3. Ask students to answer a series of political spectrum questions and analyze the results (Activity 1.1). Alternatively, you could select a few questions for discussion to focus on a smaller number of issues.

Teacher Notes:

- Explain to students that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. They are meant to encourage reflections on your political perspective and civic self-image.
- Due to the complex nature of individuals, the results of the political spectrum questionnaire will not be completely accurate in pinpointing a precise political standing. It is also important to note that people's views may be different depending on the topic. For example, you may be more left-leaning on some issues and right-leaning on others.

4. As a class or in small groups ask students to consider which civic issues from the questionnaire are relevant to them and their communities. Have students discuss which civic issues from the questionnaire they find to be the most important or troubling, or which they agree or disagree with most strongly.

Teacher Notes:

- Ensure a respectful environment remains a focus as students share opinions with which others may disagree.
- Know your learners and be sensitive to triggers. Be aware of the cultural backgrounds of your students and that some issues/discussions may include sensitive topics and could trigger an uncomfortable or unsafe environment.

5. Using Slide Deck 1B, review the idea of the political spectrum. The political spectrum provides a way to characterize different beliefs and ideologies, and distinguish between actions on civic issues. Using Handout 1.2, review the terms and perspectives associated with a linear political spectrum.

6. It is important that students are able to demonstrate an understanding of the different beliefs and ideologies and apply various political statements to the spectrum. Using Activity 1.3, have students place the political statements on the linear spectrum. Students can be assessed on their application of new knowledge.

CONSOLIDATION

Individually or in small groups, have students respond to one or more of the following questions through a written response, poem, image or multi-media work.

- What people, events or experiences in your life do you think have most shaped your views on civic or political issues?
- How would you define your ideology? What political or civic issues are important to you?
- Why is it important to consider and respect others' opinions and perspectives?

LESSON 1: VALUES, BELIEFS & PERSPECTIVES

ASSESSMENT IDEAS

A) Assign students a particular issue in the news or invite them to select one of their own choosing (e.g., increase in minimum wage, homelessness). Have students determine what position a left- or right-leaning person would take. The key for students is to demonstrate an understanding of the different perspectives associated with the political spectrum and applying them to a civic issue by using evidence from Handout 1.2 to support their thinking. This activity could also be assigned as a group activity and performed as a skit.

Examples: Which approach is better to help the homeless in your community? More financial support from the government for a local homeless shelter or a campaign to raise money in your community for a local homeless shelter? What position would a left-leaning person take? What position would a right-leaning person take?

Teacher Note: Some guidance may be needed to prevent students from going to the extremes of left or right.

Left-Leaning Position		Right-Leaning Position		
Position: The government should offer more financial support to homeless shelters.		Position: Citizens in the community can organize a campaign to support the local homeless shelter if they would like.		
Support: The government has a moral obligation to directly take care of needy persons.		Support: Government should not interfere in the lives of individuals. Private charity and self-reliance are better. Government should provide a helping hand, not a handout.		
Criteria	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Makes a connection between a civic issue and different ideologies on the political spectrum	Makes connections with and between various contexts with limited effectiveness	Makes connections with and between various contexts with some effectiveness	Makes connections with and between various contexts with considerable effectiveness	Makes connections with and between various contexts with a high degree of effectiveness

B) Ask students to fill out the 3-2-1 Exit Card (sample provided). Teachers can use this as a as/for learning assessment, to address confusion, as well as to structure future discussions.

LESSON 1: VALUES, BELIEFS & PERSPECTIVES

3-2-1 EXIT CARD

3	Things I learned in the lesson today and I am sure that I understand: 1 2 3
2	Things confused me about this lesson: 1 2
1	Question/wondering I have because of this lesson: 1

3-2-1 EXIT CARD

3	Things I learned in the lesson today and I am sure that I understand: 1 2 3
2	Things confused me about this lesson: 1 2
1	Question/wondering I have because of this lesson: 1

ACTIVITY 1.1: WHERE ARE YOU ON THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM?

This is not a test. This questionnaire will indicate, in general terms, whether you fall on the left, right or centre of the political spectrum.

As honestly as you can, indicate whether you **Strongly Agree (SA)**, **Agree (A)**, **Disagree (D)** or **Strongly Disagree (SD)** in the box next to the statement.

1. The death penalty is wrong and should not be allowed under any circumstances.	
2. The government should use tax money to help pay for the cost of daycare for all parents.	
3. Presidents and CEOs of big companies that pollute our air and water should be fined and held personally responsible.	
4. The government should welcome any person who wants to immigrate to Canada.	
5. Canada's Indigenous Peoples should be given the land they were promised in treaties signed with governments.	
6. If a factory is polluting the air and water, the government should close it down, even if it means that its workers would lose their jobs.	
7. The government should spend less money on our armed forces.	
8. Laws should be passed and enforced to ensure that women receive the same pay as men when they do work of equal value.	
9. The United States should not be allowed to test weapons in Canada, even if this means that some Canadian workers would lose their jobs.	
10. High school students should be allowed to take any course they want; there should be no compulsory subjects.	
11. If a person is poor, the government should support them by providing adequate financial aid.	
12. The government should control the amount of rent that a landlord can charge tenants.	
13. The tax laws should be changed to make rich people and big companies pay more than those who are less wealthy.	
14. The government should provide financial support to parents to allow them to stay at home after they have had a baby.	
15. Change is more important than tradition in our society.	
16. No person or government should be allowed to censor any book, movie or piece of music.	
17. Artists, writers and musicians are more important in society than business executives.	
18. Going on strike is a justifiable way of communicating strong dissatisfaction in the workplace.	
19. The government should give more money to universities and community colleges in order to keep student fees low, even if this means raising taxes.	
20. Canada should give financial aid to poorer countries.	

SCORING SHEET: WHERE ARE YOU ON THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM?

Write down the number of responses in each category, then multiply each by the number indicated below and calculate your total.

Number of **Strongly Agree** _____ x 5 = _____

Number of **Agree** _____ x 3 = _____

Number of **Disagree** _____ x 2 = _____

Number of **Strongly Disagree** _____ x 0 = _____

TOTAL: _____

Indicate where you are on the political spectrum:

100	75	50	25	0
Left Wing	Moderate Left Wing	Centre	Moderate Right Wing	Right Wing

HANDOUT 1.2: THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Please note: These terms are very broad and are meant to serve only as an outline of historically understood political positions on a single axis.

	LEFT	CENTRE	RIGHT
Social Conditions	Social conditions need to change as quickly as possible.	Change of social conditions should take place, but at a cautious pace.	The present system should be maintained. Change should only occur when absolutely necessary, and it should be slow and careful.
Tradition	Society is not bound by tradition.	Tradition is important, but change must be accepted if it is the will of the majority.	Traditions must be respected. They provide society with stability and security.
Government Intervention	Government has a moral obligation to take care of people in need.	There are many different approaches to caring for people in need.	Government should not interfere in the lives of individuals. Private charity and self-reliance are better. Government should provide a helping hand, not a handout.
Equality	Everyone should have equality of condition (wealth or income).	Everyone should have equality of opportunity and condition.	Everyone should have equal opportunity, but working hard is the best way to get ahead.
Rights vs Law and Order	The rights of individuals have the highest priority.	Law and order is important, but the rights of the individual come first.	Law and order should always be the highest priority.
Business and the Economy	The government should own key industries, banks, transportation facilities and natural resources.	Some form of government management of the economy is necessary.	Business and industry should be kept in the hands of private individuals.
Ideology	Left is generally associated with being socialist.	Centre is generally associated with being liberal.	Right is generally associated with being conservative.

ACTIVITY 1.3: POSITIONING STATEMENTS ON THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Indicate where each statement falls on the political spectrum by writing the numbers under the line at the bottom of the page. Create two of your own statements and add them to line as well.

1. Government should increase taxes to expand health care and social services.
2. Harsher penalties for drug crimes will reduce drug abuse.
3. Canadians should have the right to bear arms (possess weapons), like Americans.
4. Health care should be privatized in Canada.
5. The benefits of oil pipelines outweigh the environmental concerns of spills and other environmental damages.
6. First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples should have the right to govern themselves.
7. Books that contain dangerous ideas should be banned from public libraries.
8. Same-sex marriage should be legal throughout the world.
9. People that are unemployed just don't work hard enough to find a job.
10. Using overwhelming military force is the best way to defeat terrorism in the world.
11. The government does not do enough to protect our environment.
12. Canadian immigrants enrich the cultural fabric of society.
13. Capital punishment should be reintroduced to Canadian law.
14. _____
15. _____

Left

Centre

Right