

LESSON 3

GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY

GUIDING QUESTION

What does it mean to live in a democracy?

SUMMARY

Governments are made up of the people and institutions put in place to manage a country, nation or community and make decisions on behalf of citizens.

In this lesson, students analyze leadership styles and decision-making processes by participating in a space survival exercise. In groups, students communicate their opinions and consider others' opinions, while reflecting on the collaborative process and power dynamics. Afterwards, students discuss government types around the world and how they differ with respect to decision-making processes and citizen rights and freedoms.

LEARNING GOALS

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

- Use the inquiry process to analyze information and make judgements (in order to rank a list of items for survival);
- Communicate their opinions and listen to the views of others by collaborating with others in a team-building exercise;
- Use the concept of *political significance*, to analyze power dynamics and different governance systems in societies (Citizenship Education Framework – Structures);
- Understand the form of governance used in Canada;
- Use the concept of *political significance*, to describe fundamental principles and values associated with democratic governance.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- I can analyze information and make judgements in order to rank items of importance;
- I can work effectively with my peers by communicating my opinions and listening to the views of others;
- I can distinguish between different governance systems and the impact on power dynamics and the lives of citizens;
- I can assess what it means to live in a democracy.

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

B2. Governance in Canada: explain, with reference to a range of issues of civic importance, the roles and responsibilities of various institutions, structures, and figures in Canadian governance

B3. Rights and Responsibilities: analyse key rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship, in both the Canadian and global context, and some ways in which these rights are protected

CHV20 – Specific Expectations:

A1.5 use the concepts of political thinking when analyzing and evaluating evidence, data, and information and formulating conclusions and/or judgments about issues, events, and/or developments of civic importance

A2.1 describe some ways in which political inquiry can help them develop skills, including the essential skills in the Ontario Skills Passport and those related to the Citizen Education Framework that can be transferred to the world of work and/or to everyday life

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

B1.2 describe fundamental beliefs and values associated with democratic citizenship in Canada, and explain ways in which they are reflected in citizen actions

B2.5 identify Canada's form of government and demonstrate an understanding of the process of electing governments in Canada

B3.2 analyse key responsibilities associated with Canadian citizenship

LESSON 3: GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY

MINDS ON

Space Survival

The following activity aims to reveal various leadership styles and decision-making processes.

Guiding questions:

- What is the best way for people to make important decisions together?
- What are the benefits and challenges of working in groups?

1. Read the following paragraph out loud to your students.

Space Survival

You are a member of a lunar exploration crew originally scheduled to rendezvous on the light side of the moon. Due to mechanical difficulties, your ship was forced to land at a spot some 320 km from the rendezvous point. During re-entry and landing, much of the equipment aboard was damaged and since survival depends on reaching the mother ship, the most critical items available must be chosen for the long journey. Your task is to rank these items according to their importance in aiding you, starting with “1” for the most important, to “15” for the least important. You should assume that your crew is your class, you have agreed to stick together and that all 15 items are in good condition.
(modified from “Exploration: Then and Now, NASA and Jamestown Education Module”)

2. Ask each student to take a few minutes to create criteria for interpreting and analyzing the information and then ask them to rank the items. Using Activity 3.1, students will record their choices in the left-hand column.

3. Divide students into groups and ask them to share their ranking criteria and individual choices with their group members. Afterwards, have each group collaborate on a set of criteria and rankings as a group. They should record the group rankings in the second column (group rankings).

Teacher Note: Alternatively, you could assign each group a particular governance model (autocratic, democratic or consensus) and evaluate the process, outcomes and feelings developed within the group.

4. Display a list of ‘expert’ rankings compiled by a team of scientists and engineers at NASA (Handout 3.2) on a slide deck or photocopy. Have students compare their individual and group answers and determine a score. For each item, have students mark the number of points that their score differs from the NASA ranking and then add up all the points. Disregard plus or minus differences. The lower the total, the better the score.

5. Have a follow-up discussion: How did your group determine the rankings? Was it consensus, majority-rule or did some group members take greater control? Did a clear leader emerge? Did you ensure all group members had a voice? How did your individual score compare to your group score? What are the strengths and limitations of working alone versus with a group?

ACTION

1. Explain to students that the work of any government is to make decisions on behalf of citizens. The degree to which citizens have access to power, the rights and freedoms they have and whether their opinions are heard, depends on the type of governance system used.

2. Using Slide Deck 3 and/or the ‘[Government and Democracy](#)’ video review the role of government and different governance systems. Questions to guide discussion and instruction:

- What words come to mind when you think of the word ‘government’?
- What is the role of government? How does it affect you?
- What types of governments exist around the world and how do they differ?
- What type of government does Canada have?

Key terms: autocracy, dictatorship, oligarchy, democracy, monarchy, constitutional monarchy, republic, consensus, parliamentary democracy.

While reviewing government types, have students organize the information in a graphic organizer (Activity 3.4). Students can select their own categories or you can provide guidance.

For example:

- How many people have access to power?
- How are leaders chosen?
- Are citizens involved in decision-making?
- Is there rule of law?
- Is there a constitution?
- What rights and freedoms do citizens have?

See Exemplar 3.5: Comparing Government Types.

2. Introduce Handout 3.3 and explain that there are several guiding principles that act as the foundation of a democracy.

3. Divide students into groups and assign each one of the democratic principles. Each group will create a scenario for when the principle is being upheld and one for when the principle is being denied and present it to the class through a skit or verbal presentation.

LESSON 3: GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY

CONSOLIDATION

Have a brief closing discussion about governance and democracy, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions.

- Which democratic principle do you think is the most important and why?
- While reflecting on the list of democratic principles, which principle do you experience most personally? Which seems most evident or most applicable to your life?
- What does it mean to you to live in a democracy?

ASSESSMENT IDEAS


A) Self-assessment: Have students evaluate how they worked within their groups. What strengths did they bring to the group task? What areas could they improve upon?

B) Exit Card: What questions about governments or democracy do you have that were not answered in this lesson? What more do you want to know? What more would you inquire about?

C) Formative assessment: Ask students to find one example of a current event in the news that shows that democratic principle being upheld and one example where a principle is being denied.

ACTIVITY 3.1:

SPACE SURVIVAL – RANKING CHART

ITEMS	STEP 1 Individual Ranking	STEP 2 Group Ranking	STEP 3 Expert Ranking	STEP 4 Difference Ranking [1-3]	STEP 5 Difference Ranking [2-3]
Compass					
First aid kit					
Flares					
FM receiver					
Food concentrate					
Heat					
Map					
Matches					
Milk					
Oxygen					
Parachute					
Pistols					
Raft					
Rope					
Water					
Total the absolute differences of Steps 4 and 5 (the lower the score the better) 					Your Score
					Group Score

HANDOUT 3.2: SPACE SURVIVAL – RANKING OF ITEMS BY EXPERTS

Review the list of items and how they have been ranked by an expert team of scientists and engineers at NASA.

Oxygen	1	Fills respiration requirements
Water	2	Replenishes fluid lost by sweating, etc.
Map	3	One of principal means of finding directions
Food	4	Supply daily food required
FM receiver	5	Distress signal transmitter, possible communication with another ship
Rope	6	Useful in tying injured together, help in climbing
First aid kit	7	Oral pills or injection medicine available
Parachute	8	Shelter against sun's rays
Raft	9	CO bottles for self-propulsion across chasms, etc.
Flares	10	Distress call when line of sight possible
Pistols	11	Could be used to create self-propulsion devices
Milk	12	Food mixed with water for drinking
Heating unit	13	Useful only if party landed on dark side
Compass	14	Probably no magnetized poles, therefore useless
Matches	15	Little or no use on moon (no oxygen)

SCORE EVALUATION:

0 – 25	Excellent. You and your crew demonstrate great survival skills!
26 – 32	Good. Above average results. Yes, you made it!
33 – 45	Average. It was a struggle, but you made it in the end!
46 – 55	Fair. At least you're still alive, but only just!
56 – 70	Poor. Sadly not everyone made it back to the mother ship!
71 – 112	Very poor. Oh dear, your bodies lie lifeless on the surface of the moon!

HANDOUT 3.3: PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY



All individuals are valued equally and have equal opportunities. Individuals may not be discriminated against because of their race, religion, ethnicity, language, gender or sexual orientation. The human rights of all citizens are protected. For example:

- Everyone has the right to freedom to live and move within their own country.
- Everyone has the right to leave and return to their own country.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- Everyone has the right to organize and take part in peaceful protests.



The government allows some private ownership of property and businesses. People are allowed to choose their own work and join labour unions. It is generally accepted that a free market should exist in a democracy and that government should not control the economy.



An established list of citizens' rights and freedoms. This document explains the freedoms that are guaranteed to all people and protects people from a government that might abuse its powers. Canada's Bill of Rights, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, is entrenched in the Constitution of Canada and can be enforced by the courts.



All are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law without discrimination. No one is above the law – this includes elected officials, the police and members of the military. Laws are enforced equally, fairly and consistently.



Corruption occurs when government officials use public funds for their own benefit or they exercise power in an illegal way. To protect against corruption, democratic governments are often structured to limit the powers of government offices and those who work for them.



Elected officials are chosen by the people in a free and fair manner. Elections are held regularly, usually every few years. Adult citizens have the right to vote and run for office regardless of gender, background or economic status. There are no obstacles to voting and no intimidation or threats to citizens before or during an election.

HANDOUT 3.3: PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY



Multi-Party Systems

More than one political party participates in elections and plays a role in government. Multiple-party systems provide the government with different viewpoints on issues and voters are given a choice of candidates, parties and policies. Countries with only one party are usually dictatorships/autocracies.



Citizen Participation

Citizen participation in government is more than just a right – it is a responsibility. Participation can take the form of running for office, voting in elections, being an informed citizen, debating issues, attending community meetings, paying taxes, serving on a jury and protesting. Citizen participation builds a stronger democracy.



Accountability and Transparency

Elected and appointed officials are responsible for their actions and are accountable to the people. Officials must make decisions and perform their duties according to the wishes of those they represent, not for themselves. For government to be accountable, people must be aware of the actions their government is taking. A transparent government holds public meetings and allows citizens to attend. The press and the public are kept informed regarding decisions being made.



Independent Judiciary

Courts and the judicial system are impartial. Judges and the judicial branch are free to act without influence or control from the executive and legislative branches of government. They should also not be corrupted or influenced by other individuals, businesses or political groups.



Political Tolerance

Society is comprised of people with different cultural backgrounds, who practice different religions, form part of different races, have different gender identities or sexual orientations. The voices of these different groups are valued. Democratic societies strive to be politically tolerant and the rights of minorities are protected. Those who are not in power must be allowed to organize and share their opinions.



Accepting the Results of Elections

Free and fair elections have both winners and losers. The losers and their supporters must accept that they have lost an election. Democracy depends on the peaceful transfer of power from one party to the next.

Adapted from: *Deliberating in a Democracy in the Americas* (2011). Originally excerpted and adapted from *Democracy for All* (Street Law, Inc. 1994).

EXEMPLAR 3.4: COMPARING DIFFERENT GOVERNMENT TYPES

Fill out the graphic organizer below to compare different government types. Select your own categories for comparison.

EXEMPLAR 3.4: COMPARING DIFFERENT GOVERNMENT TYPES

	Dictatorship	Oligarchy	Absolute Monarchy	Constitutional Monarchy	Republic
Political power/ authority	A single dictator or ruling group has complete power.	The rule of the few; power rests with a small number of privileged people.	A monarch (or dictator) retains full political power over a state and its people.	Power is shared by all the people. Citizens have access to power and can run for office. The monarch is head of state but authority is limited by the constitution.	Power is shared by all the people. Citizens have access to power and can run for office.
Leadership process	Dictator/ruling group often comes to power through a military takeover (or coup d'état) or control of a mass movement.	Rulers often determined based on family lines or wealth.	Leaders often inherit their role through their family line.	Free and fair elections; democratically elected government with a government leader. The monarch is head of state and not elected.	Free and fair elections; all members of government are elected including the head of state).
Citizens involvement in decisions	No concern for public opinion or for their preferences. Citizens not involved in political decision-making.	No concern for public opinion or for their preferences. Citizens not involved in political decision-making.	No concern for public opinion or for their preferences. Citizens not involved in political decision-making.	Citizens concerns valued and taken into consideration through various democratic processes and practices.	Citizens concerns are valued and taken into consideration through various democratic processes and practices.
Rule of law	Rulers are held above the rule of law. Usually do not have a constitution; authority is not restricted by any constitution.	Rulers are held above the rule of law.	Monarchs are held above the rule of law; citizens must obey.	Existence of rule of law; all people and institutions are subject to and accountable to laws that are fairly applied.	Existence of rule of law; all people and institutions are subject to and accountable to laws that are fairly applied.
Constitution	Individual and civil rights are restricted.	Usually do not have a constitution, authority is not restricted by any constitution.	Usually do not have a constitution; authority is not restricted by any constitution.	Existence of a constitution, which includes basic principles and laws, defines the duties of the government and guarantees certain rights to the people.	Existence of a constitution, which includes basic principles and laws, defines the duties of the government and guarantees certain rights to the people.
Rights and freedoms	Rulers are held above the rule of law.	Citizens have some rights and freedoms.	Citizens are not guaranteed rights and freedoms.	Individual and civil rights are protected.	Individual and civil rights are protected.