

# 3

# RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES IN A DEMOCRACY



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, 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 protected freedom. 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 and the requirement that governments hold elections at least every five years and 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 and some of Canada's provincial governments.

**Minority language education rights** include the right of French or English minorities in every province and territory to be educated in their own language.

## UNIT 3: RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES IN A DEMOCRACY

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

What rights do I have as a Canadian? What responsibilities go along with my rights?

### OVERVIEW

To be active and effective citizens, Canadians need to understand their rights and responsibilities.

In this unit, students explore the rights they have at school as an entry point to a discussion about rights and freedoms in a democracy. Students review the seven categories of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Through a scavenger hunt activity, students navigate the Charter itself and improve their understanding of its application. In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect on the responsibilities that go along with their rights.

### LEARNING GOALS

We are learning to:

- think critically about the rights and responsibilities we have at school (Concepts of Thinking – Significance);
- interpret the political and civil rights articulated in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Concepts of Thinking – Significance);

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

	<i>Overall Expectations</i>	<i>Specific Expectations</i>
<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>Grade 5 – B3. Understanding Context:</b> demonstrate an understanding of the roles and key responsibilities of citizens and of the different levels of government in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments (FOCUS ON: <i>Significance</i> )	<b>Grade 5 – B3.1</b> describe the major rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship in Canada (e.g., rights: equal protection under the law, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to vote; responsibilities: to respect the rights of others, to participate in the electoral process and political decision making, to improve their communities)
<b>Writing</b>	1. generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience	1.6 determine whether the ideas and information they have gathered are relevant, appropriate, and adequate for the purpose, and do more research if necessary
<b>Reading</b>	1. read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic, and informational texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning  4. reflect on and identify their strengths as readers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after reading	1.4 demonstrate understanding of a variety of texts by summarizing important ideas and citing supporting details  1.8 make judgements and draw conclusions about the ideas and information in texts and cite stated or implied evidence from the text to support their views  4.1 identify the strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after reading and explain, in conversation with the teacher and/or peers or in a reader’s notebook, how they can use these and other strategies to improve as readers

- understand the responsibilities that we have as Canadian citizens;
- recognize discrimination and promote the principles of equity, human rights and democratic participation.

### SUCCESS CRITERIA

I CAN...

- describe the rights and responsibilities I have at school and why they are important;
- explain why the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* has different meaning for different people and groups;
- describe how the Charter impacts my life;
- explain the responsibilities that go along with my rights and freedoms;
- analyze the importance of equality, human rights and democratic participation and the need for equity.

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### MINDS ON

#### *Rights vs Responsibilities*

1. Discuss the idea of a 'right' and ask students to brainstorm a list of rights they have at school. A right is a freedom that is protected. Some examples include:

- The right to learn and receive an education
- The right to express yourself
- The right to a clean and safe space
- The right to be treated fairly and respectfully
- The right to make your own friends

2. Explain the concept that rights come with responsibilities. A responsibility is a duty, obligation or an expectation of how you should act.

Review your school's code of conduct (this can often be found on your school or school board's website, or within student agendas). Connect the specific student responsibilities back to the list of rights created by the class, making additions where necessary.

3. In small groups, ask students to brainstorm a list of expectations for both students and teachers that could be added to your school's code of conduct.

4. Debrief through a whole class discussion. Guiding questions:

- Why is it important to know your rights?
- Why is it important to know your responsibilities?
- Why should you be a responsible student? How does it contribute to the school community?
- Do you think students are aware of their rights and responsibilities at school? How could this be improved?

### ACTION

1. Distribute copies of the Anticipation Guide (Activity 3.1) to assess current knowledge about rights in Canada.

2. As a class, review the seven categories of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. You can use either Handout 3.2 and/or the accompanying slide deck to support this review, or access the original version.

3. Ask students to complete a scavenger hunt using the summary of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Activity 3.3). The purpose is to help students interpret the Charter and understand what it means for different groups. Give students time to complete it independently and then share their responses in pairs or small groups.

#### **Alternative Activity:**

Individually, in pairs or groups, ask students to create a pamphlet or poster (their choice) aimed at informing new immigrants to Canada about their rights.

Sample criteria:

- Choose three rights you think would be most important for newcomers to Canada to be aware of
- Create an eye-catching title that will attract the attention of your intended audience
- Use symbols that will help explain the rights for people who are English Language Learners
- Select headings that are meaningful and appropriate for the chosen rights

### CONSOLIDATION

1. In pairs or small groups, ask students to consider the responsibilities that go along with each right using Activity 3.4. Afterwards, review as a class.

2. Have a closing discussion about rights and responsibilities, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions:

- Which rights do you think are most important and why?
- Why are equality and diversity important? How are they reflected in the Charter?
- What is the difference between equity and equality? (Activity 3.5).

### TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Consider inviting your principal or vice-principal into your class to listen to suggestions for additional student expectations/responsibilities for your code of conduct or ways to improve awareness of student rights and responsibilities.
- Do your classroom rules need an update? Work with your class to re-write them in the "I have the right to... and I have the responsibility to..." format.

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### ASSESSMENT

<i>Type of Assessment</i>	<i>Unit Area</i>	<i>Guiding Questions for Teachers</i>
FOR LEARNING	MINDS ON	<p>Can students differentiate between rights and responsibilities?</p> <p>Are students able to transfer their understanding from a school-based discussion to one of their broader community and country?</p>
AS LEARNING	ACTION	<p>Can students understand the language and concepts?</p> <p>Are students using headings and key words to find relevant sections?</p>
OF LEARNING	<p>ACTION: Scavenger Hunt</p> <p>CONSOLIDATION</p>	<p>Are students using examples from the Charter as evidence?</p> <p>Can students explain their responsibilities as citizens of Canada?</p> <p>Can students link the Charter to the importance of equality and diversity?</p> <p>Can students explain the difference between equity and equality?</p>

### LEARNING FOR ALL

Individual Education Plans	<p><b>Modifications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support students' understanding of rights with real world examples.</li> </ul> <p><b>Enrichment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow students to research the original Charter document in order to familiarize themselves with the advanced language.</li> <li>Students could prepare case studies that demonstrate a violation of rights and freedoms in Canada. Classmates can then decide if the issue is one that is solved by using the Charter.</li> </ul>
English Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide definitions of key terms.</li> </ul>
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will come from different backgrounds and have different opinions on the rights of many compared to the rights of the individual. Not all students will agree with the rights in the Charter. Ensuring a safe place for respectful discussion is encouraged.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indigenous Focus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Charter includes many concepts that are present in Indigenous governance. Comparing such concepts is a great starting point to deepen understanding and connections.</li> </ul>