



EDUCATION GUIDE

SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

A MESSAGE TO TEACHERS

Canada's Democracy Week provides a non-partisan, central platform to showcase how democracy works, who maintains it and the kind of work they do, and why it matters in the lives of Canadians and their communities. It encourages and highlights democracy-related events and initiatives, and provides an opportunity for youth to explore the different facets of democracy.

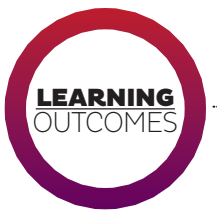
While voter turnout rates have gone down in Canada and other Western democracies, research shows that civic education is linked to increased political knowledge and intention to vote – two important predictors of voter turnout. Research also shows that open classroom discussions on issues related to democracy help build political knowledge, support for democratic values and civic engagement. Political discussion at home is also linked to increased voter turnout, and students themselves can play a key role in generating discussions with their parents. The purpose of this Canada's Democracy Week Education Guide is to engage your students in the democratic process by giving them the tools to talk about democracy in Canada, the importance of voting, how they are already contributing to democracy, and how they can continue to do so in the future. Your role as an educator is more crucial than ever in bringing relevance and awareness of our democratic and parliamentary institutions to students – the voters of tomorrow.

Civic education is linked to **increased political knowledge and intention to vote** – two important predictors of voter turnout.

DEMOCRACY AROUND THE WORLD

The following learning tool and activities have been designed for students at the high school level. The activities will allow students to explore Canadian democracy by comparing our system of democratic representation with that of other countries. Students will be encouraged to think critically about the concept of democracy, Canadian democracy, and the variations of democracy around the world. This will lead students to a deeper understanding and appreciation of Canadian democracy, the role that they play today and in the future in it, as well as what it takes to ensure a healthy democracy.

The activities outlined are intended to be scalable; they can be expanded or condensed, as your classroom needs require.



- To increase students' knowledge of Canadian democracy.
- To improve the students' comprehension of the term "democracy" and its variations.
- To allow students to use research, critical thinking and presentation (oral and written) skills in discussing democracy and civic engagement.

LEARNING ACTIVITY: AROUND THE WORLD IN 193 COUNTRIES

The United Nations has 193 recognized member states; in this activity, students will research a handful of these member states to discover how their political systems and civic values compare to Canada's. Be sure to select a variety of nation states that represent the full spectrum of democratic/non-democratic societies. You may want to use some of the suggested sources in **HANDOUT 3** to help in your selection.

Please note that the online sources provided in **HANDOUT 3** are not affiliated with Elections Canada and should be considered only as suggestions for resources that students may wish to consider for their project.

Options in delivering the lesson: The time it takes to complete this activity with your class will depend on the presentation choices you make and the level of research you are looking for. Ideally, you will be able to dedicate one or two classes to the final presentations. If your time is more limited, consider spending a class with your students answering the questions in **HANDOUT 2** together, based on a country, or two, that you have selected. Otherwise, you should assign different nation states to individuals, partners or groups of students.

Note: Teachers, you may want to use this opportunity to review and discuss research techniques that are appropriate to your grade level, as well as what you will consider to be appropriate sources, note-taking techniques, and strategies for narrowing and defining the topics assigned.

Have students plan their research based on the questions in **HANDOUT 2**.

Students should complete their research using the library's resources as well as online sources. **HANDOUT 3** provides a list of suggested sources that will be a good place for students to begin their research. Work can be completed at home or in class, depending on your timeline.

Completed projects should be presented/shared following a discussion of what was learned about Canada's democracy. Students might present their project as an essay, an oral presentation, in an electronic format such as a class wiki, as a dynamic presentation using www.prezi.com, or as a PowerPoint presentation.

INTRODUCTION/ PRE-ACTIVITY: A DEFINITION OF DEMOCRACY

To introduce students to the term "democracy", have students brainstorm, individually or in small groups, what they think democracy means before looking at an actual definition. Students can create spider charts with their ideas on a piece of notebook paper. Bring all the ideas together as a class by:

- Building a word wall. Have all the students use a thick marker and write out one or two of their definitions or component parts of democracy and then tape it to an empty wall or chalkboard space.

OR

- Having students call out some of their ideas and create a classroom-wide spider chart where everyone can see and refer to it.

OR

- Collecting the students' spider charts and using their answers to create a word cloud on the classroom smartboard. Websites such as www.wordle.net and www.tagxedo.com can help with this.

Note: This may need to be done after class with time allotted another day for the discussion of the two definitions provided in **HANDOUT 1**.

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Once the projects have been completed, ask the students to reflect on the process. The reflection could be in the form of an in-class or take-home writing assignment, a blog post, a letter to the editor, a report for the school newspaper/website or simply an in-class discussion. If time permits, Extension Activity #2 could also be considered as a closing activity.

Consider:

- Looking at all the countries presented, in your opinion, what are some of the positive and negative attributes of the different political systems?
- Based on the information you have discovered, what do you see as your role in Canada's democracy, today and in the future?
- Through this process, what new information have you gained about Canada's system of democracy, about your role as a Canadian citizen, and your rights and responsibilities attached to your role in Canada's democracy and as a Canadian citizen?

POSSIBLE EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- ① Invite a speaker from *Passages to Canada* to discuss his or her views on Canadian democracy and how it compares to the system of government in his or her country of origin. You can book a visit online using www.passagestocanada.com.
- ② Plan an educational day for the school where the class presents its findings on democracy by creating country displays.

SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Content assessment suggestions:

- ① How well did the student answer the questions in **HANDOUT 2** to demonstrate understanding of the distinctive nature of the country system of government that was researched?
- ② To what extent did the student convey an understanding of democracy as more than simply a system of government?
- ③ To what extent did the student convey an understanding of the distinctive nature of Canadian democracy and democratic institutions?

Effective assessment criteria:

- ① Did the student present his or her findings in a clear, organized manner?
- ② To what extent did the student demonstrate a capacity to collect data (research), analyze it and apply critical thinking in his or her work, as opposed to simply summarizing source material?
- ③ To what extent did the student edit his or her research to present only findings that were relevant to the questions asked?



DEMOCRACY AROUND THE WORLD



NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____ **CLASS:** _____

DEFINITIONS TO CONSIDER AND DISCUSS:

DEMOCRACY

AS DEFINED BY THE OXFORD DICTIONARY: “is a form of government in which the power resides in the people and is exercised by them either directly or by means of elected representatives.”

A COMPLEMENTARY DEFINITION: “Democracy is a universal value, based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives.”

(Source: Democracy and the United Nations Backgrounder, <http://www.un.org/en/events/democracyday/index.shtml>)

Keep these definitions in mind, along with the classroom discussion, as you continue your studies.

YOUR DEFINITION OF DEMOCRACY:



DEMOCRACY AROUND THE WORLD



NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____ **CLASS:** _____

USE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO HELP GUIDE YOUR RESEARCH:

- ① Based on the definitions of democracy in HANDOUT 1, how does Canada's political system work?
- ② Based on the definitions of democracy in HANDOUT 1, how does your assigned country's political system work?
- ③ How are government representatives selected and how often is this done?
- ④ Who can become a government representative? Who can participate in selecting government representatives?
- ⑤ What levels of government exist and what are their responsibilities?
- ⑥ What rights and responsibilities are given to citizens? How are these protected?
- ⑦ Are there political parties? If so, how many and what do they stand for?
- ⑧ What are three interesting facts about your country's way of governing itself, about its government and/or about its elections?
- ⑨ Are there differences between your assigned country's political system and Canada's? If so what are they?
- ⑩ What impact might these differences have on citizens in each country?
- ⑪ Why do you think these differences exist?



DEMOCRACY AROUND THE WORLD



NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____ **CLASS:** _____

POTENTIAL RESOURCES FOR OTHER COUNTRIES

- The CIA World Factbook
 - ⊙ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ca.html>
- Freedom House Publications
 - ⊙ http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=351&ana_page=373&year=2011
- The Electoral Systems of the World (IDEA – International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance)
 - ⊙ Web: www.idea.int Map: <http://www.idea.int/esd/upload/ESD%20map-english.pdf>
 - ⊙ State of Democracy assessment by country: <http://www.idea.int/sod/worldwide/>
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- ACE electoral Knowledge Network (available in English and French)
 - ⊙ Web and map: http://aceproject.org/index-en?set_language=en
 - ⊙ Country information: <http://aceproject.org/regions-fr>
 - ⊙ Systems of government map and information: http://aceproject.org/epic-en/CDMap?question=ES&set_language=en
 - ⊙ Spotlight on voting age (might be an interesting fact for the students to include in their presentations on their chosen country): <http://aceproject.org/today/forum/spotlight-on/voting-age>
 - ⊙ Map and voting age: http://aceproject.org/epic-en/CDMap?question=VR001&set_language=en
 - ⊙ Voter information materials: http://aceproject.org/ero-en/index_html?filter&topic=Civic and Voter Education&country=&type=Information and Promotion Materials
 - ⊙ Comparing information on elections and government for countries: <http://aceproject.org/epic-en/>
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems
 - ⊙ Web: www.ifes.org
 - ⊙ Elections guide: <http://www.ifes.org/Content/Projects/Applied-Research-Center/Cross-Cutting/Election-Guide.aspx>

POTENTIAL RESOURCES FOR CANADA

- Elections Canada
 - ⊙ www.elections.ca
- Parliament of Canada
 - ⊙ www.parl.gc.ca
- The Canadian Encyclopedia: Nova Scotia: The Cradle of Canadian Parliamentary Democracy
 - ⊙ <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=ArchivedFeatures&Params=A2173>

OTHER POTENTIAL RESOURCES

- The United Nations' International Day of Democracy Documents
 - ⊙ <http://www.un.org/en/events/democracyday/docs.shtml>
- United Nations (general – on democracy)
 - ⊙ <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/democracy/index.shtml>
- Commonwealth – youth page (may be of interest as it discusses issues related to democracy and youth)
 - ⊙ <http://www.yourcommonwealth.org/>
- EISA – Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa
 - ⊙ Information on election and governing systems of a series of African countries:
<http://www.eisa.org.za/WEP/countryindex.htm>

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