



EDUCATION GUIDE

ELEMENTARY 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.

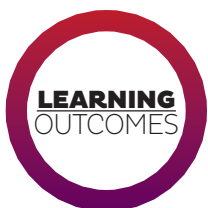
While voter turnout rates have gone down in Canada and other Western democracies, research shows that civic education is linked to increased political knowledge and intention to vote – two important predictors of voter turnout. Research also shows that open classroom discussions on issues related to 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: MADE BY YOU

The following lesson plan and activities have been designed for students at the upper elementary level. The activities will allow students to explore Canadian democracy by looking at their own rights and responsibilities in their everyday lives (at home, at school, during their extra-curricular activities) and in their local communities. Once the students understand the connection between rights and responsibilities and active citizenship, they will also discover how they can shape their lives through the right and responsibility of participating in the democratic process of voting and elections. Students will be encouraged to think critically about democracy, what it means, and how it works. This will lead students to a deeper understanding and appreciation for the rights and responsibilities that they currently have and will exercise in the future through Canadian citizenship and our democratic institutions.

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



- To introduce the concepts of rights and responsibilities (active citizenship) and democracy (a value and a process).
- To understand that rights and responsibilities are decided on together in a democracy, such as Canada.
- To have students define democracy in Canada for themselves and explore how they can contribute to it by discussion, voting, respecting everyone's rights, and fulfilling their responsibilities in their own communities.
- To identify voting as both a right and responsibility of Canadian citizenship.
- To have students decide for themselves that they can participate in democracy in the future by voting in elections.



- Venn diagrams (*HANDOUT 1*)
- Magazines/newspapers
- Pencil crayons/markers
- Chart paper/board
- Pair and Share Questions (*HANDOUT 2*)
- Presentation tools:
 - Comic life (<http://plasq.com/products/comiclife/mac>) (on the computer or iPad)
 - (OR) Prezi (<http://prezi.com/>)
 - (OR) Wordle (<http://wordle.net/>)
- Ballot template (*HANDOUT 3*)

LEARNING ACTIVITY: DEFINING RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES & CITIZENSHIP

PART A

1. Begin by asking students for some examples of responsibilities (rules) and rights (getting to do something/being allowed by all to do things) they have in the classroom. You may want to kick off the discussion by giving one or two basic examples, such as:

- All students have the right to a safe environment (right), so they must bring a peanut-free lunch (responsibility).
- All students have the right to participate (right), so they are required to raise their hand in class (responsibility).
- All students have the right to say something and be listened to by others (right), so students must be respectful listeners (responsibility).

2. If your class requires a more structured discussion, consider prompting students to think about classroom responsibilities/rules and their corresponding rights by asking (some of) the following questions:

- Are students allowed to eat/drink in the classroom? When and where are students allowed to eat/drink?
- How do students answer a question/respond to the teacher?
- How are visitors treated when they come in?
- What do students do when they agree or disagree with someone else?
- Where do students get to sit and how is that decided?
- What happens if someone breaks a “rule” or doesn’t fulfill his or her responsibility?
- How do students indicate they need to go to the washroom?
- How are assignments (like homework) decided upon?

PART B

3. When you feel that the students have grasped the idea that they have rights (getting to do certain things/being allowed to do certain things) and that these are associated with responsibilities (which can be considered similar to rules), extend the discussion to other areas of the students’ lives using a *pair and share activity*.

Divide students into pairs to discuss rights and responsibilities in their lives outside school. Once in pairs, have students brainstorm rights and responsibilities that they have in some, or all of the following areas:

- At home
- On a sports team
- At camp
- In community clubs (Scouts, Girl Guides, 4-H, etc.)

4. Hand out Venn diagrams (see **HANDOUT 1**) for students to use to record their discussions. You can hand out one diagram per partner to encourage co-operation or one each to improve recording skills. If both students have diagrams, you may also want to consider having one student record the responsibilities (rules) in his or her diagram and the other

INTRODUCTION/ PRE-ACTIVITY

To introduce students to the concepts of “rights,” “responsibilities” and active “citizenship,” have the class break into pairs and brainstorm together what they think these words mean and how they make them feel. Depending on students’ previous experience with these terms, you may want to start this discussion by writing the following linked terms on the board:

- **Right** – *Getting to do something/being allowed by all to do things*
- **Responsibility** – *Rule*
- **Citizenship** – *Belonging to a group*

After these brainstorms, create a word wall that can be displayed throughout the lesson. Ask students to write a single sentence definition for each of these terms and to draw/cut out/print out a picture to go with each definition. Post these definitions on the word wall.

Possible definitions to keep in mind:

- **Right:** Something a person should be legally allowed to have, get, or do.
- **Responsibility:** A duty or task that you are required or expected to do.
- **Citizenship:** The qualities a person has to be a responsible member of a community.

(SOURCE: [HTTP://WWW.LEARNERSDICTIONARY.COM](http://www.learnersdictionary.com))

student record the rights. As discussion takes place between partners, they should record answers that are similar to their partner's in the middle overlapping circles and any answers that are different from their partner's in the outside circles.

If students require guidance in their discussions, see **HANDOUT 2** for a list of questions for students to ask themselves and their partner.

5. To review the results from the Venn diagram activity as a class, ask pairs to share their results. For example:

- What activity did they discuss?
- What common responsibilities and/or rights did they have?
- What different responsibilities and/or rights did they have?
- What did they think about the similarities and differences – did they like some that they did not have or wished they had?

PART C

6. Conclude this activity by encouraging students to make the link between being active and community-oriented citizens at large with the rights (things they do, get, or have) and the tasks (responsibilities) that they have in their daily lives at school, at home, or at their sports or community club. For example:

- At the end of a game or competition, students must shake hands/congratulate the other team. Explain that this is good citizenship because it respects the team or community's right to have everyone treated equally, whether they won or lost.
- If students are required to raise their hand in class, then you can explain that this is good citizenship for the classroom community because it gives everyone the right to speak without being interrupted.

As a class, discuss why students like or dislike the rights and responsibilities they have identified. Ask students what they think it would be like if no one took his or her responsibilities seriously. Guide them toward understanding that everyone in Canada has responsibilities and rights as citizens, just like they have responsibilities and rights as students/members of a sports team or community club/siblings.

EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY!

Depending on the time and resources available, students could present their explanation of active citizenship, by respecting rights and performing responsibilities in the wider community by:

- **creating a poster** that encourages others to keep performing a responsibility (e.g. a poster that would be placed over garbage cans to remind others to recycle)

OR

- **creating a comic life** <http://plasq.com/products/comiclif/mac> (on the computer or ipad) or [prezi http://prezi.com/](http://prezi.com/) (on the computer) or [wordle http://wordle.net/](http://wordle.net/) (on the computer) to illustrate why a right they have discussed is beneficial to everyone.

LEARNING ACTIVITY: CONNECTING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP TO DEMOCRACY

1. Now that students have an understanding of responsibilities, rights and citizenship, they will be able to see how participating in a democracy by voting is one of the key rights and responsibilities of active Canadian citizenship. Begin by asking students how they think new responsibilities (rules) can be decided on by communities.

2. After noting students' answers on the black board/chart paper/projector screen, write a definition of democracy on the board. Possible definition:

- Democracy is a form of government in which people choose leaders and representatives by voting and in which everyone is treated equally and has equal rights. (SOURCE: [HTTP://WWW.LEARNERSDICTIONARY.COM](http://www.learnersdictionary.com))

3. You should explain that, in Canada, new responsibilities (rules) are decided on by voting and that today the class will propose and vote on a new right and/or responsibility/rule for the classroom. Ask students to propose at least five suggestions for a new right or responsibility (rule) that they would like to have in the classroom. For example:

- Everyone will take turns picking up anything left on the floor at the end of the school day. (responsibility)
- Students will sit in alphabetical order. (responsibility)
- Students will get to decide the configuration of the desks for at least one day a week. (right)
- Students will get to choose a game to play during one period a week/month (right).

4. Individually or in small groups, have students brainstorm some of the positives and negatives of the proposals. Consider assigning one proposal to each small group and having each group create a pro/con list.

5. Bring the class back together for a discussion or debate based on the positives and negatives that were brainstormed for each proposal. You may want to write the pro/con lists on the board or a chart.

6. Now have the students vote. **HANDOUT 3** is a ballot template that you can customize with your classroom's proposals. Students should vote for the one proposal they most want by marking an "x" in the space next to it. When students are done voting, they should fold their ballot in half and give it to the teacher to be counted.

7. Once the results have been counted, have students reflect on the process of voting for a new right/responsibility in the classroom by writing a journal entry on one of the following questions:

- How did students feel about voting to choose their classroom's new right or responsibility?
- Did the students feel it was their responsibility to vote and to make their voice heard on the issue? Why?
- How would the students feel if some in the classroom were not allowed to vote or did not have the right to vote?
- Do the students think this approach to making decisions works well for all of Canada?
- If they had the chance to vote in the future, would they do so?
- If they could vote on things to change in their community, what would they choose to vote about?

EXTENSION OPPORTUNITY!

BEFORE VOTING:

- Have the class interview people (the principal, other students, other teachers, each other) about the proposed new rules/responsibilities and rights. Using flip cameras, students could record video of the interviewees discussing the proposals.
- Have the students create an online poll on Google Forms to survey people on their opinion. Before they conduct the survey, students should make a prediction as to what they think the results will be.

Have students conduct the survey at recess with other students or else get permission to survey another class. When the surveys are done, have students report to the class on their findings.

SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Content assessment suggestions:

- 1 Did the students use the class brainstorm to inform their personal definitions? Did their choice of accompanying image demonstrate an understanding of the terms?
- 2 How well did the student complete the Venn diagram(s) and demonstrate an understanding of rights and responsibilities for his or her chosen activity?
- 3 In the journal entry, did the student demonstrate an understanding of the importance of voting?

Effective assessment criteria:

- 1 How well did students co-operate with each other when working in small groups or pairs?
- 2 Did students demonstrate appropriate note-taking and presentation skills?
- 3 Did students participate in class discussions and demonstrate an effort to think critically about the subjects being discussed?
- 4 Did the student participate in the classroom discussion and take voting on a new right/responsibility seriously?



RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES IN YOUR LIFE



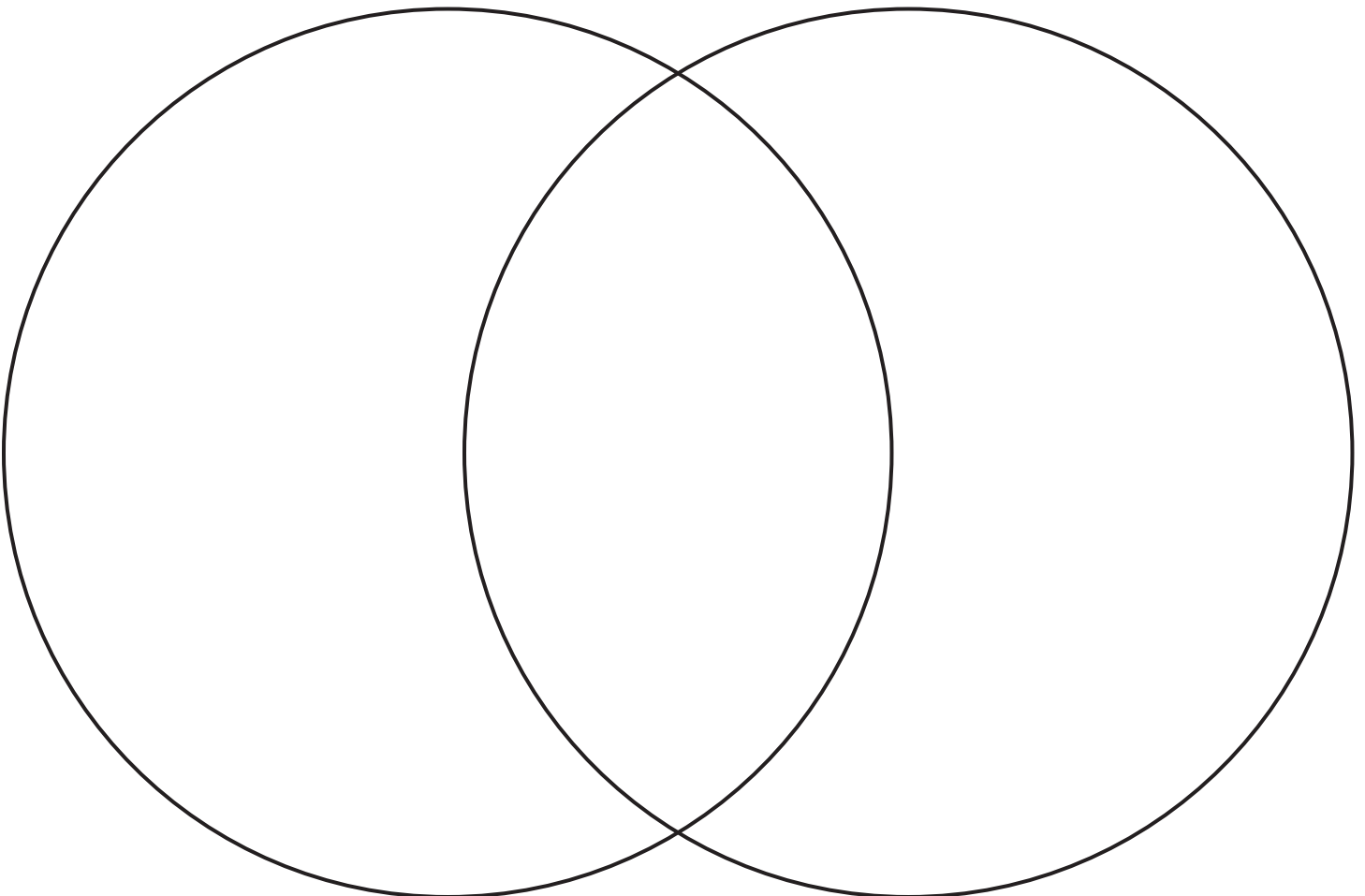
NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____ **CLASS:** _____

Record answers that are the same as your partner's in the middle overlapping circle and any answers that are different from your partner's in the outside circles.

ACTIVITY(IES) DISCUSSED: _____

MY NAME:

MY PARTNER'S NAME:





RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES IN YOUR LIFE



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

Ask your partner these questions and try to answer them yourself during your discussion.

1. How do you treat others?

- At home, how do you speak to your siblings/parents/guardians?
- At your sports or community club, how do you ask your coach/leader for help?

2. What rules do you have to follow?

- At home, what do you have to do every day before you go to school?
- At your sports or community club, what chores do you have to do after practice before leaving?

3. What tasks must you do while you are there?

- For example, at home, do you have any chores?
- At your sports or community club, what chores do you have to do before starting?

4. Do you have different jobs at different times of year or time of day?

- For example, at home, is there something you need to do every morning or before going to bed?
- At your sports club, is there something you do at the end of every game or at your community club, at the end of every meeting?



Mark an “X” beside the proposal you most want.
When you are finished, fold your ballot in half and hand it in.



RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES IN YOUR LIFE



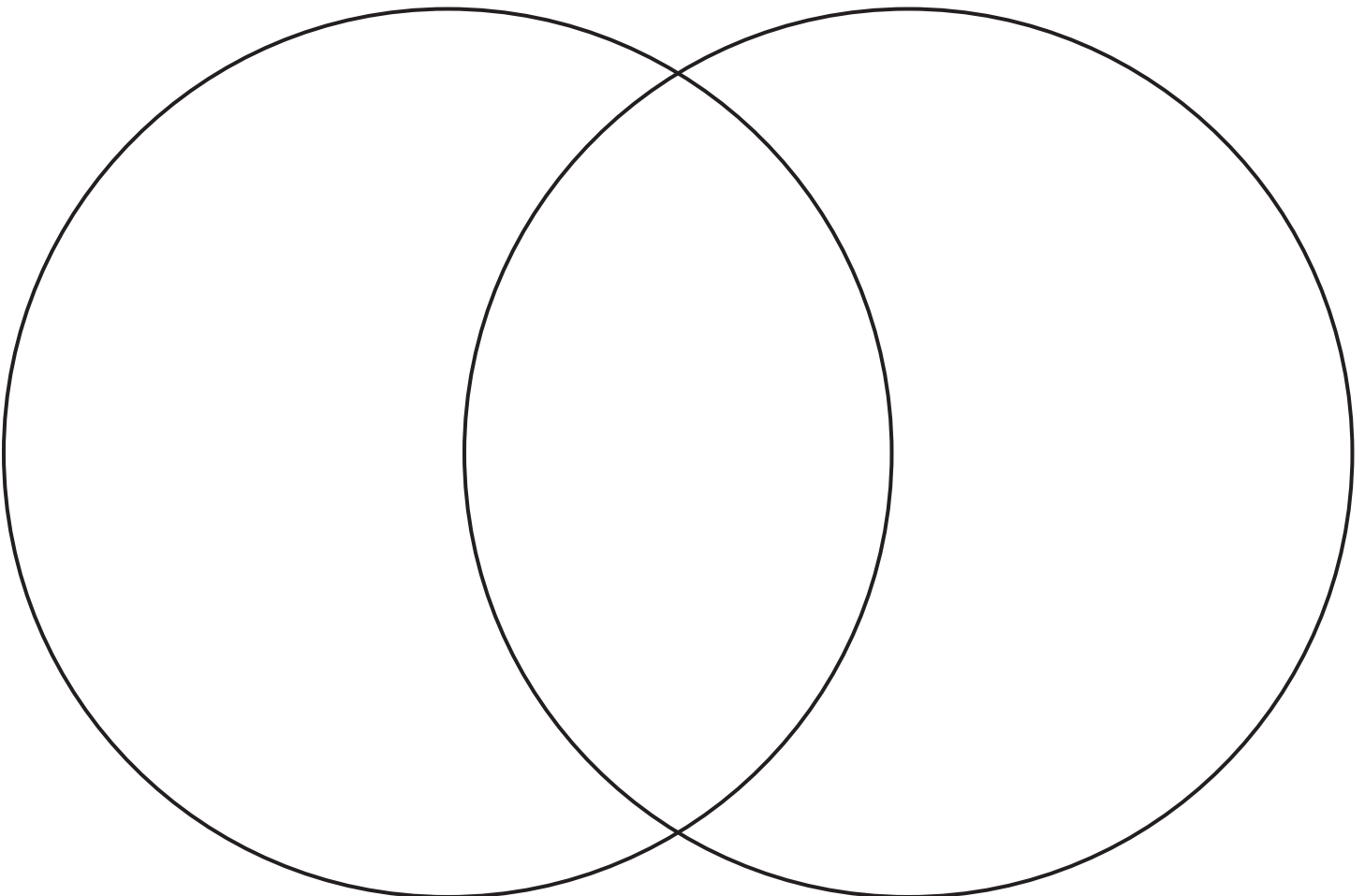
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