

Understanding Government:

What influence does government have?

By Donna Kelly
For Grade 6/7 Social Studies

A Rationale For:

Understanding Government: What influence does government have?

A unit on governments is valuable within the grade 6/7 Social Studies curriculum because understanding governments is essential for achieving the ultimate goal of responsible citizenship. The overarching goal for grade 6/7 Social Studies is to teach students the knowledge and skills they need to think critically and become effective and responsible members of a global society. Government is one essential element to every culture. As such, it is important students understand government so they can effectively understand, examine and participate in the world they live in. This unit encourages students to examine issues from different perspectives. Through active participation and critical thinking, students will examine different perspectives in different types of governments. To understand government, students must understand how the power structure in each level of government works. Consequently, they will learn more about how the power and influence in the Canadian government is organized. As responsibly global citizens students must understand how to listen and consider the perspectives of others. Understanding different types governments and dissecting the Canadian government will increase the student's awareness of the influence government has on a country and will better prepare students to expand their knowledge and learn about other cultures. Teaching students about the role and responsibilities of governments will help them to understand their responsibilities as active, global citizens.

The goal for this unit on government is to encourage students to think critically about what influence government has on individuals in society. To achieve this, students will be encouraged to actively participate in different roles. By examining the different roles within the Canadian government and comparing it to other governments around the world, students will have a better idea of the influence government has on a society. Further, by understanding the role and systems of government students will be well-informed citizens; therefore, they will better understand how to facilitate change. As such, they will have a better understanding of how government influences them and the world they live in.

Applicable Prescribed Learning Outcomes for this gr. 6/7 Social Studies Unit:

It is expected that students will:

- Research information using print, non-print, and electronic sources.
- Support a position on a national issue by considering competing reasons from various perspectives.
- Compare individual rights and social responsibilities in various cultures.
- Compare systems of government in selected countries.
- Defend a position on a global issue by considering competing reasons from various perspectives.
- Organize information into a formal presentation using several forms of representation.

Lesson Title (1): What are the responsibilities of those in power?

Grade & Subject: Social Studies 6/7

Materials: *Global Citizens* (p.145), *Finding your Voice* handouts (p.27-31), 'What would you do with power?' worksheet

Objective: To realize the responsibilities of those in power through critical thinking.

Introduction: (~5 min)

- Teacher writes the word power on the board.
- As a class, brainstorm what is associated with this word.
- Discuss people that have power.

Body: (~40 min.)

-In groups, students will answer three questions together but all record their own copy (see attached handout).

-The questions:

- What three changes would you make if you were a _____?
- Why would you make these changes?
- Are these changes realistic? Why or Why not?

-For the worksheet, have students chose a position of power that was discussed in the introduction.

-Have each group share their answers with the class.

-Brainstorm as a class about what responsibilities are important for governments in power.

-Condense the list to resemble one similar to the 3 highlighted responsibilities from *Global Citizens* (p.145)

- To make and enforce laws
- To help people meet their needs and wants
- To deal with other governments

-Have the students record the list of responsibilities on their handout.

Conclusion: (~15 min.)

- Handout explanations of these responsibilities from *Finding Your Voice* (p. 27-31).
- Teacher reads while students follow along.

-Have students recall the three responsibilities of government.

Assessment:

-Informal assessment by listening to the group and class discussions.

-Check for participation: collect the worksheets.

Extensions/Adaptations:

-The group assignment can be done individually or as a class.

-The *Finding your Voice* handout includes questions that could be answered orally or written.

Lesson Title (2): What does power look like in different governments?

Grade & Subject: Social Studies 6/7

Materials: PowerPoint, *Global Citizens* (p. 146-154), *Discovering Canada's Government* (p.49-52) handouts, 'Governments of the world' worksheet and overhead.

Objective: To research different forms of government and understand how power plays a role in each system.

Introduction: (~15 min.)

-A power point presentation. The presentation includes pictures and words that depict different types of governments. As pictures and words appear teacher gives a brief explanation. For example, if there is a picture of Mussolini the teacher mentions dictatorship and a simple explanation of dictatorship. Another example could be a red communist flag and the teacher mentions communism and gives a brief description.

-Discuss the presentation.

-Recap the responsibilities of governments or those in power. Relate these responsibilities to the presentation.

Body: (~30 min.)

-Divide the class into 3. Each group will research one type of government: hereditary (incl. Monarchy), democracy, and dictatorship. Students can work collaboratively with someone in their group but each student must record individually. Teacher provides the material needed to research specified type of government. Each student receives a handout for the government they are researching (See the resources attached). Teacher guides the student to think of three questions while researching the governments:

-Who has the power?

-How did they get the power?

-How does this power affect individual citizens?

-As a class, each group shares their main ideas, while the teacher records them on the overhead.

Closure: (~15 min.)

-Students copy the points for each type of government (see attached handout).

Assessment:

-Informal: check students while they are researching, sharing in class discussion, and recording the information.

Extensions/Adaptations:

-Students research each type of government individually.

-Teacher provides the information needed for each type of government while students take notes from the overhead.

-Have students quiz each other on the different aspects to each type of government because they will be using the different types of government to role-play the next day.

-Discovering Canada's Government (p.52) includes critical thinking challenges that accompany this lesson on different types of government.

Lesson Title (3): How do different governments respond to situations? (Part 1)

Grade & Subject: Social Studies 6/7

Materials:

-Students should have the 'Governments of the World' worksheet they filled out in the previous lesson.

-Hypothetical scenarios for governments. Some suggestions can be found in *Critical Challenges in Law and Government or Participating in Canada* (see attached).

-Assignment rubrics (see attached)

Objective: To understand the different perspectives and responses for different systems of government.

Introduction: (~10 min.)

-Have students recall the main points for each different type of government.

-Teacher records the ideas on the overhead.

Body: (~30 min.)

-Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5; each group is assigned a type of government.

-Teacher gives a scenario (see attached resources) and groups must decide how they would react based on their role as a type of government. Students must also give an explanation for their answer. Do three scenarios so each group has an opportunity to respond for each type of government.

-Students will explain their response to two of the scenarios. The third will be acted out in a role-play. The role-play will be presented next lesson.

Closure: (~20 min)

-Explain the role-playing assignment to students and hand out a rubric (see attached)

-Students can work on organizing their role-play for the next day.

Assessment:

-Informal: Group responses to the scenarios.

Adaptations/Extensions:

-All scenarios can be presented as role-plays.

-If students finish early, encourage them to add more creativity. Watch their presentations and make suggestions for improvements. For example, you could suggest length or props.

Lesson Title (4): How do different governments respond to situations? (Part 2)

Grade & Subject: Social Studies 6/7

Materials:

-A copy of the rubrics to mark the role-plays (see lesson 3).

Objective: Through role-playing from the perspective of a specified government, students will demonstrate an understanding for different systems of government.

Introduction: (~10 min.)

-As groups, students practice the role-plays that were started in the previous lesson.

Body: (~40 min.)

-Each of the groups presents their role-plays.

-A final scenario is given. Students must write two responses to the scenario from the perspective of different governments. They should explain how the system of government influenced their thoughts and decisions for the scenario. Class time will be given if available, but it will be finished as homework.

Closure: (~10 min.)

-Teacher gives the students a rubric for the written assignment (see attached) and answers any questions. Students have the remainder of the time to work on the assignment.

Assessment:

Formal: Role Plays and written scenarios (See attached rubrics).

Extensions/Adaptations:

-A selection of scenarios can be given to students to choose from.

-Rather than writing perspective responses, teacher provides the responses and the student matches the response with the type of government.

-If a student finishes early, they can make a visual representation to accompany their written response.

Lesson Title (5): How does power and influence work in the Canadian government?

Grade & Subject: Social Studies 6/7

Materials: An overhead of the diagram for the Canadian Government in *Global Citizens* (p.151), 'Think. Jot. Share' worksheet (see attached), 'The Canadian Government' worksheet and overhead (see attached).

Objective: To understand the power structure and roles for the members of the Canadian federal government.

Introduction: (~15 min.)

-In partners, ask students to 'Think.Jot.Share' (see attached handout) with their neighbor about the power structure of their homes.

-Questions:

Who has power and influence? Why?

What decisions can be made at different levels of power? Why?

Are there limits to this power?

-Teacher gives an example before directing the students to worksheet.

-As a class, share some answers. On the overhead, Teacher draws hierarchies for the power structures that are shared in discussion.

Body: (~40 min.)

-The teacher shows an overhead of the diagram of the Canadian Government's organization of power (*Global Citizens p.151*) and explains the visual structure of the federal government. Teacher emphasizes this is the federal government and briefly mentions the role and existence of the provincial and municipal governments.

-Divide the class into the different sections of government. Divide the class using the same layout as the diagram to increase the strength of the visual learning process. Have each group read the corresponding sections in *Global Citizens* (p.150-152) and fill out a worksheet (see attached). The teacher is the monarch, as there is not much information about the monarch's role.

-Under monarch, students can write:

Canada has ties to Britain so their monarch is their honorary head of Canada.

They cannot make decisions for Canada.

Currently, the Queen is the honorary representative.

-As a class share answers. Teacher fills out the worksheet on the overhead.

Closure: (~5 min.)

-Have students record the information for the remaining sections.

Assessment:

Informal: Monitor students when they are filling out the worksheets. Make sure all students have completed the chart.

Extension/Adaptations:

-Role-Plays: students must explain the role of each level of government for a given scenario.

Lesson Title (6): What does power and influence does the Canadian federal government have?

Grade & Subject: Social Studies 6/7

Materials: Students need the Think.Jot.Share. and Canadian Government worksheets they filled out in the previous lesson, *How Canadians Govern Themselves?* (p.18), *Government Matters* (p.56)

Objectives:

-To understand the roles and responsibilities of Canadian federal government.

Introduction: (~10 min.)

-Ask students to take out their 'Think.Jot.Share.' worksheet. Direct them to the final question. Are there limits to power?

-Discuss answers as a class.

Body: (~35 min)

-Divide the class visually into the organization of the Canadian government. This is based on the chart from *Global Citizens* (p. 151).

-As a class, review the significance of each group. Each group states the main points for their role discussed in the previous class.

-Teacher records the answers on the overhead. Teacher summarizes the organization of power and moves the discussion to limits of power.

-Teacher asks: What are limits to each member's power? Discuss as a class.

-Teacher asks: What are the limits to the Canadian government as a whole? Discuss.

-Teacher introduces the 'Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms'. Hand out the worksheet: *How Canadians Govern Themselves?* (p.18)

-Teacher reads and students follow along. Discuss why such limits are important.

-Teacher asks: What are the responsibilities of the Canadian government?

-The class brainstorms and the teacher records. Students may include the general responsibilities that were discussed earlier in the unit. Encourage students to be more specific.

-Teacher compares the brainstorm with an overhead of responsibilities for the Canadian Federal Government. (p.56 *Government Matters*).

Closure: (~15 min)

-Teacher gives the students a scenario. In their groups of specified roles as members of the Canadian government, they must give a response outlining their limits of influence and power on the response.

Assesment:

Informal: Participation in class discussions and group responses.

Extensions/Adaptations:

-Students can answer more scenarios.

-If there is time in the unit students can participate in a government simulation from *Critical Challenges in Law and Government: A Parliament in Session*.

Lesson Title (7): What are the similarities and differences between Canada and China's government?

Grade & Subject: Social Studies 6/7

Materials: Chinese representation (art, jewelry, pictures, chopsticks, pictures, tea, clothing, etc.), Global Citizens

Objectives: To understand how to compare two systems of government.

Introduction: (~ 10 min.)

-Play a game of memory with items that represent China. Have the students examine the items for one minute, then cover. On a piece of paper see how many items they can remember. Change papers with the person beside them. As a class see if all items can be remembered. Teacher scribes on the overhead. Students receive a mark for each item they remember. Is there a winner?

-Discuss what the items have in common.

-Discuss what they know about China.

Body: (~45 min.)

-Teacher explains that students will be learning about China's government and will compare it to Canada.

-Teacher reads from the Global Citizens text (p.157-159) as students follow along.

-Students will individually begin to complete a Venn diagram for comparing China and Canada's government.

-As a class, share ideas while the teacher records them on the overhead. Do we need to add more information? Complete the diagram as a class.

-Teacher focuses students' attention to the organization, the different roles, the responsibilities and the limits to power.

-Students copy the information they are missing on their Venn.

Closure: (~5 min.)

-Teacher explains the final assessment for government and hands out the rubric: "A Secret Mission: How does Canada compare?" (see attached rubric) Students must start to think of a country they would like to compare with Canada.

Assessment:

-Informal: Class participation; check individual Venn's for completion.

Extensions/Adaptation:

-Students write a diary in the life of a Chinese government official and a diary in the life of a Chinese civilian. Students reflect on the diary entries. What are the similarities and differences? Why do these differences exist?

Lesson Title(8): How does Canada's government compare with other countries?

Grade & Subject: Gr.6/7 Social Studies

Objective: To research books and Internet on a selected country's government and compare the similarities and differences with Canada's government.

Materials: Book the library. Need books and Internet.

Introduction: (~10 min.)

-Make sure all students have chosen a country to research. Ensure this by recording the country for each student. Have a list of possible countries, in case students are indecisive.

-Review some rules for searching on the Internet and for books in the library.

-Remind students of proper behaviour for the library.

-Students will be searching the Internet first. At the library, the teacher will select different small groups to search for books at different times.

Body: (~45 min.)

-Students conduct research in the library. Teacher helps and monitors students with their Internet searches and the librarian helps students with their books searches.

Closure: (~5 min.)

-Students check out the appropriate material and go back to class.

Extensions/Adaptation:

-Students can start their final projects.