Government: Rights, Responsibilities & History

— Grade 6 —

Written by Ruth Solski

In this book, students will learn about democracy and its role in federal, provincial and municipal governments. Through articles, activities, and assignments, they will explore how governments and treaties of the past have shaped the democratic process and the various levels of Canadian government in the present.

The lessons in this book were designed to meet the expectations of the Grade 6 Alberta Social Studies curriculum with connections to language concepts. Each lesson has multiple follow-up activities designed to meet the variety of strengths, needs, and learning styles in the classroom. In addition, many extension/ differentiation options are provided.

Ruth Solski was an educator for 30 years. She has written many educational resources and is the founder of S&S Learning Materials, now On The Mark Press. As a writer, her main goal is to provide teachers with a useful tool they can implement in their classrooms to bring the joy of learning to children.

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Lesson One: All About Government

LESSON OBJECTIVE:

Students will complete a shared reading which provides an overview of the role and job of the government. They will search for "everyday evidence" of government in action around them.

TEACHING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Begin the shared reading activity by providing paper or electronic copies of the text to each student, or by displaying the text on a Smart Board or alternative projector.

2. Read the text together, pausing to ask and address questions (possibly linked to the introductory lesson).

3. Reflect on the shared reading by completing activities A and/or B.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Have students read/re-read the article with a specific focus on non-fiction text features (subtitles, captions, diagrams, etc.) to emphasize the connection to language expectations.

- Have students share their answers to activities A and B in different groupings.

- Connect back to the first lesson and discuss how the answers to these activities might begin to answer the initial discussion questions.

- Ask students to think of another analogy that might help to explain the concept of government and share their thinking.

ACCOMMODATIONS/MODIFICATIONS

- Use an electric copy of the text with programs such as "Read and Write (Google Toolbar)" or "Kurzweil" in order to support students with the reading activity. They might choose to have the text read to them and record/speak their answers using technology.

- Have students requiring additional support work in pairs with another student/a group of students.

- Orally discuss the ideas and questions with students.

ANSWER KEY

Activity A

1. "Government" comes from the verb "to govern." This means to lead a group of people and make decisions affecting their ways of living.

2. A democracy is a type of government that allows the people of a certain area to elect their representatives/leaders. Everyone of a certain age has a vote and all the votes count equally.

3. Canada's democratic government is like many others around the world but not all places in the world have democracy. There are other types of governments from the past and in the present. These governments include monarchies and dictatorships. Citizens of a place do not have a vote in these governments.

4. Democracy began a very long time ago, in ancient Greece. We can also trace democracy back to the Iroquois Confederacy in what is now Canada.

5. The three branches of government are federal (example: defense), provincial (example: education), and municipal (example: emergency services).

Activity B

Answers will vary as the answers require students to make connections between the biggest ideas and to add their own thinking/questions.

Shared Reading Activity: All About Government

Have you ever looked up at a tree and noticed how its branches travel in many different directions? Have you noticed how all of those branches come from the same trunk, standing strong in the ground, anchored there by deep roots? If you haven't, check out this tree:

You're probably thinking, what could a tree and the government possibly have in common? Well, consider this: the government of Canada has many "branches," all coming from the same common "trunk." Our government is a *democracy*, which is a government that allows citizens to choose their leaders and each person eighteen and over has an equal vote when choosing who those leaders are. With democracy as the "trunk" of our tree, our branches of government are securely anchored together.

What are the branches of Canada's government?

There are three main branches of government, each responsible for different services that affect Canadian citizens. Each of these governments work together to cover all aspects of life in Canada. For example, the federal government is responsible for managing the environment, national defense and agriculture; the provincial government is responsible for education and transportation; and the municipal (often called regional or local) government is responsible for emergency services, a town or city's water supply and businesses.

MUNICIPAL

Leonard Zhukovsky / Shutterstock.com

PROVINCIAL

FEDERAL

So, what about the roots?

The trunk and branches make up the visible part of the tree but underneath the ground, a network of roots hold everything together. The structure of our government didn't just appear out of thin air with a "poof!" It is the direct result of thousands of years of different types of governments and experiences! Did you know that the democratic process (democracy!) can be traced back to ancient Greece? Even closer to home, it can be traced to the Iroquoian Confederacy. Those are some pretty impressive roots!

What is with the complicated name?

Trees are pretty common and straightforward, right? Even the term "tree" is short and simple. If governments are similar to trees, then why is the name so long and complicated? The answer *isn't* complicated: the word government comes from the verb "to govern," which means to control or lead a group of people by making decisions that affect their quality of life. So government is about leading others. In Canada's case, the leading is done with everyone's equal rights in mind. Is that the case around the world?

Governments around the world

Different types of governments can be found around the world. While democracy is the structure in many countries, other types of governments exist, both in the past and in the present. Some examples include:

Monarchy: a government that was very popular in the past, where decisions were made by a ruler called a monarch (usually a King or a Queen). Kings and Queens inherited their position from a family member and often held their supreme position for life. Families such as the Tudors and the Stuarts in England claimed the right to make the decisions for all the people in their kingdom. Kings and Queens still exist today but more often as a symbolic "figure head" of a more democratic-style government.

Dictatorship: a type of government where one ruler or a small group of people have claimed power. They are able to make all the decisions and do not need to consider the opinions of citizens living in that place.

Like a tree, Canada's government has grown from seeds of the past. It has branched up from its roots into different divisions: federal, provincial and municipal, and it has the sturdy trunk of democracy to hold it upright. It's not entirely unique and it is not entirely perfect, but it provides what we need to live. Our equal rights, safety, and decision-making processes are very important to us. Almost as important as oxygen.

Student Directions:

1. **Re-read the text and reflect on the biggest ideas.**

2. **Use complete sentences to answer the questions below.**

1) Where does the term "government" come from? _____

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2) What is a "democracy?" _____

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3) How does Canada's democratic government compare to different types of
governments around the world? _____

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4) Where did "democracy" come from? _____

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5) What are the three branches of government in Canada? Give an example
of a responsibility for each one. _____

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Student Directions:

1. **Re-read the text and reflect on the biggest ideas.**

2. **Use complete sentences to answer the questions below.**

1) How might the tree analogy be helpful to someone trying to understand government? Explain with specific examples from the text.

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2) Why might Canada have three different branches of government? What might be the reasons for this? Explain with specific examples from the text.

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3) Why might different types of governments exist around the world? Explain with specific examples from the text.

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