



POST-TOUR LESSON 1

WHAT MAKES A HEALTHY

DEMOCRACY?

GRADES 9-12



Key Questions

- What is a healthy democracy?
- How can citizens engage with their democracy?

Students will...

- Understand the characteristics of a healthy democracy.
- Understand different ways to engage with their democracy.

Teacher Primer

There is more than one type of democracy in the world. While any democracy will have pros and cons, democracy is often held as the goal and the benchmark for any "free" nation. Democracy places power in the hands of its citizens, allowing them to choose who leads them (through the election process). Democratic systems are based on the fundamental principle that a government exists to serve its people.

A functioning democracy, or for the purposes of this lesson, a "healthy democracy," is determined by the work of its legislators as well as the engagement level of its citizens. In a healthy democracy, legislators work together to create laws. This requires space for debate so that compromises can take place and decisions can be made. Legislators must also be aware of what their constituents want to effectively do their work and accurately represent their constituents in debate.

Set

The following video shows footage of MPs in the UK Parliament not behaving as they should (MPs Behaving Badly):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xJIPO5jqE8>. Show students as much or as little of the video as you like.

Set

While politicians may feel strongly about the topics they bring up in debate, there are rules in place in the Chamber to ensure that the work of parliament can get done. As a parliamentarian, Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly are expected to respect the rules of debate as well as respect their fellow members.

Have a quick discussion with students about how these kinds of disruptions are not helpful for getting the work of the legislative branch done.

Development

Explain to students that a democracy needs two key things to work as it should. First, it needs elected representatives to do their work while representing the needs and wants of their constituents.

- The video viewed during the set is funny but could be considered elected representatives not doing their work because no work gets done when members are shouting over each other.

If necessary, take a moment to remind students what the term "constituents" means, about the general process of elections, and the idea of "representative democracy" (i.e. the concept that we, as voters, elect people to represent us in our democratic institutions, such as the Legislative Assembly in Saskatchewan).

Development

Our democratic system is based on a social contract between the electors and the elected. During elections, the electors choose the elected to represent them. The electors must also make it clear to the elected what they need and want. The role of elected representatives is to then advocate for those needs and wants in the Legislative Assembly. Clearly, this system can fall apart or at least be less effective when the electors or elected aren't both doing their part.



Conduct a class discussion that revolves around the roles of the electors and the elected. If it helps, write on the board: "What the electors do" and "What the elected do." Under each of those headings, make a list of the thoughts and ideas that come out from your discussion with students. Sort those thoughts and ideas as you see fit.

Some ideas to tease out of the students can be found below:

- **What the electors do:** vote in elections, contact their elected official to voice their opinions, go to events hosted by the elected, learn about different political parties' platforms and speak to door knockers, remain informed by following the news and learning about current events.
- **What the elected do:** build relationships with community members, work as a team with other elected officials and on committees, make themselves approachable by speaking to journalists and attending events, consider legislation in the Assembly, etc.

Development

Hand out a copy of the "Electors and Elected" activity sheet, one to each student. To complete the worksheet, students are to write under "elector" and "elected" what the responsibilities of these two groups are in a healthy democracy.

- They should source their answers for this page from the class conversation that you had earlier!

Closure and Assessment

Collect the worksheets for assessment. When assessing, consider grading students on:

- Completeness of answers; and
- Answers that show an understanding of the connection/partnership between electors and elected.

