



# PRE-TOUR LESSON 1

# BASICS OF GOVERNMENT

GRADES 4-8



## **Key Questions**

- What is government?
- How is our government structured?
- What is a constitution? What is a monarchy?

## **Students will...**

- Understand government's role in citizens' lives.
- Understand what a constitutional monarchy is.
- Understand the three branches of government.

## **Teacher Primer**

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Canada and Saskatchewan are constitutional monarchies. The monarch of the United Kingdom is our head of state, and the Premier and Prime Minister are the heads of our provincial and federal governments, respectively. This series of lessons will focus on the provincial government, but much of it is applicable to the federal government as well.

There are three branches of government: the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch. Among other things, the executive branch puts laws into action, the legislative branch creates those laws, and the judicial branch resolves conflicts between citizens and the laws that rule them. We have both a monarch and a constitution that play significant roles in our government, therefore our system of government is called a constitutional monarchy.

# **Set**

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Conduct three rounds of a think-pair-share activity with the following questions:

- What do you know about government?
- What are some laws you are aware of?
- What are some things that the government does for you? For us all?

Consider opening up discussion as a whole class after giving each pair a moment to consider each question.

# **Development**

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Explain to students that the word "government" actually encompasses several pieces that come together to mean "government." For this lesson, when we refer to the word "government," we are referring to the institution of government, not the current party in power. Government is broken down into three branches. Do not use their real names at this point. Instead refer to these pieces (and write them on the board) as:

- Branch #1- the people and organizations that make the laws
- Branch #2 - the people and organizations that put laws into action
- Branch #3 - the people and organizations that enforce the laws

Can the students think of any people/places/things that might fall under any of the above? If yes, write them on the board under the branch where they fit.

# Development

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Hand out one copy of the attached "Three Branches of Government" graphic organizer to each student. Explain that you will fill it in together now, but they will learn more about the contents of the sheet in a later lesson. Start by filling in the spaces at the bottom of the page together, going from left to right.

In the leftmost box, write information related to the legislative (law-making) branch. You can create discussion around these entries as you see fit. Write:

- "This branch debates and creates laws"
- "This branch includes people like the Speaker and the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs)"

Move to the next box in the bottom middle. Write information related to the executive (law-administrating) branch. You can create discussion around these entries as you see fit.

Write:

- "This branch puts laws into action"
- "This branch includes people like the Premier and their cabinet ministers, as well as ministries (for example: the Ministry of Education!)"

# Development

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Move to the next box in the bottom right. Write information related to the judicial (law-enforcing) branch. You can create discussion around these entries as you see fit.

Write:

- "This branch resolves problems between the citizens and the laws that they're expected to follow"
- "This branch includes things/people like the courts and judges"



Now, fill in the three empty spaces above, labelling the branches with their official names. From left to right, the branches that have been laid out are:

1. Legislative Branch
2. Executive Branch
3. Judicial Branch

At this point, students may notice that a space goes unfilled. Have them guess who/what that space might be. As a hint, students should think of Canadian history as it relates to the United Kingdom.

- Answer: Crown/monarch

Explain that the Crown/monarch is an important part of our government. King Charles III is the head of state and, while in the present day he is mainly a symbol of our history and connection to the United Kingdom, he is represented by the Lieutenant Governor and has the power to dissolve or dismiss our Legislative Assembly. This is part of his power because he is expected to be the caretaker of our rights and constitution and to protect the Assembly from abuse of power. It is also the Crown's responsibility to give royal assent to bills (i.e. making them laws) and to open and close each legislative session.

## **Development**

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Explain that we also have a constitution to help us govern our society. A constitution is like the rule book for how that will be done. It tells us how we can expect the government to act and how they can expect us to act, and it helps us understand our relationship with our government.

- Note: how we interact with our government will be further explained in the next lesson.

Canada and Saskatchewan have both a monarch and a constitution, therefore our system of government is known as a constitutional monarchy. Take a moment to discuss any of the topics introduced so far.

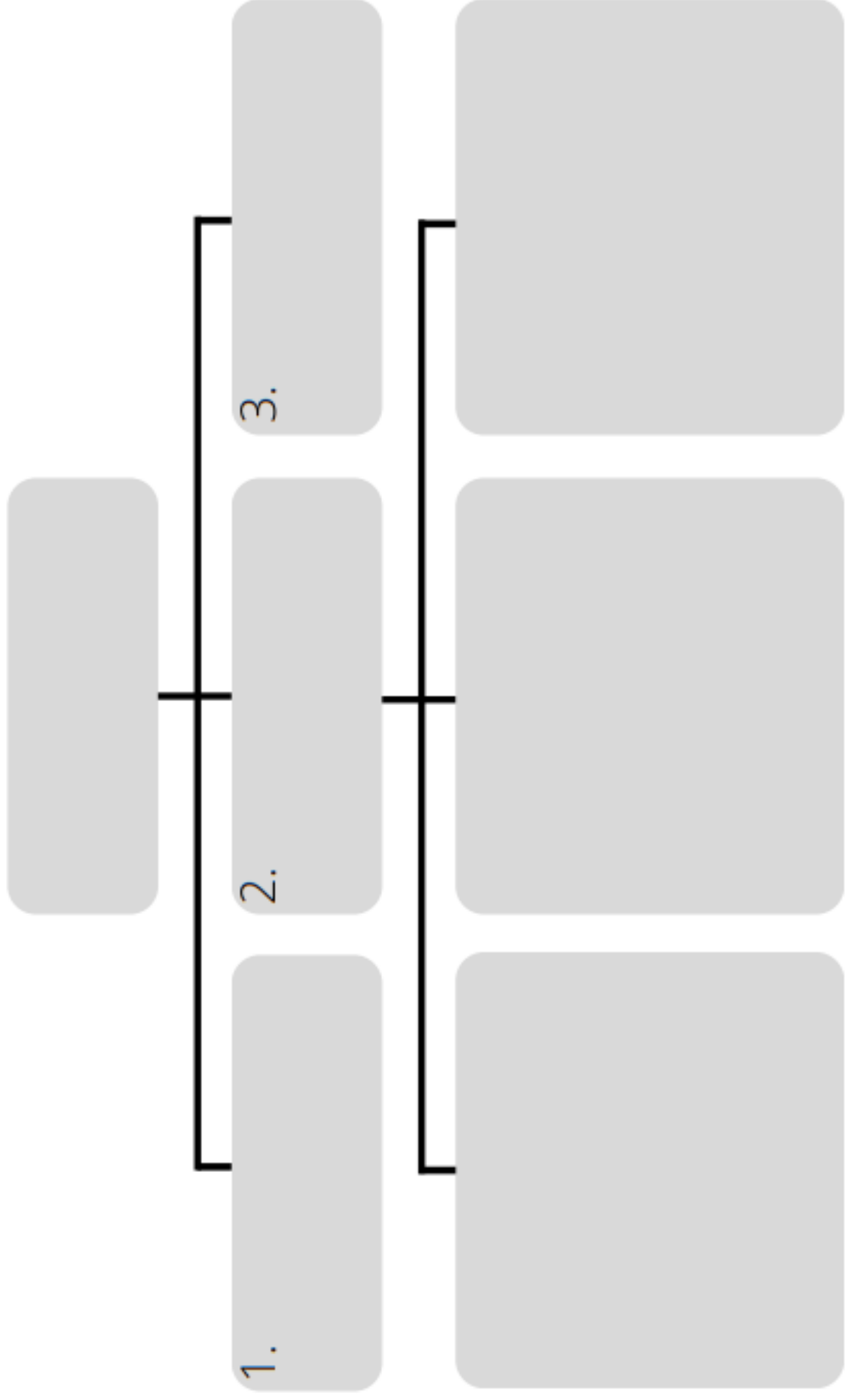
## **Closure and Assessment**

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There was a lot of information covered in this lesson! Remind students that they will learn more about some of these terms in coming lessons. Inform students that future lessons will focus on the legislative (law-making) branch.

Hand out a copy of the "All About Government" activity sheet. Students can use their completed "Three Branches of Government" handout from before to assist them. Collect the completed "All About Government" activity for assessment and allow the students to keep their completed "Three Branches of Government" handout for future reference.

# Three Branches of Government











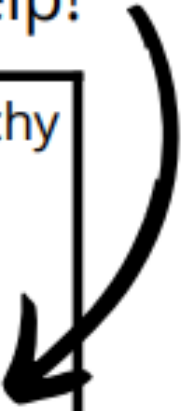
# All About Government

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Fill in the blanks about our system of government.  
Don't forget to use the word bank for help!



legislative branch 	 constitutional monarchy
courts and judges 	executive branch 
MLAs 	 Premier
judicial branch 	the Crown 



1. Two parts of the judicial branch are: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. Another name for the monarch, and an important part of our government system is: \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. The branch of government responsible for enacting laws is the: \_\_\_\_\_.
  4. The branch of government responsible for debating and creating laws is the: \_\_\_\_\_.
  5. Trick question! This person is a member of both the legislative and the executive branch: \_\_\_\_\_.
  6. These are the people that do the debating and creating within the legislative branch: \_\_\_\_\_.
  7. Our type of government is called: \_\_\_\_\_.
  8. This branch is responsible for resolving problems between the citizens and the laws that govern them: \_\_\_\_\_.
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