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Getting Started

Introduction to Democracy and Participation

words matter!

Majority rule means that decisions are determined by 51 percent or more of the votes recorded.

Imagine you had the chance to pick the kind of society you wanted to live in. Which one of the following would you choose? Give reasons for your choice.

Society One

One leader has all the power and authority in the society. He or she chooses people to help govern. The main goal of the leader and the government is to hold onto power. No opposition is allowed. Citizens have few rights and freedoms.

Society Two

Citizens have the right to choose the people who run the government. Citizens are able to participate in the decisions made by the government. The rights and freedoms of citizens are protected by law.

Society Three

A small group of people controls the government. These leaders have power because of their wealth, family, or military strength. Certain other groups in society have special rights. The citizens have no part in making decisions.

You have probably already guessed that society two is a description of the kind of society you live in. It is a description of a democracy, which is the form of government we have in Canada.

What do you think of when you hear the word democracy? Many Canadians would answer “elections,” “rights and freedoms,” or “**majority rule**.” This year, you will have the chance to explore Canadian democracy and how people participate in it.

✓ citizen participation



✓ voting in elections



✓ protection of rights and freedoms



✓ majority rule

Conservatives win overwhelming majority in Alberta

Democracy means...

✓ equality



✓ freedom to disagree



✓ decisions made by elected representatives



? Inquiring Minds

Here are some questions to guide your inquiry throughout this book:

1. How does our government reflect democratic principles?
2. In what ways does democracy encourage people to participate in bringing about change?

What Are Democratic Values?

words matter!

Values are principles about how people should act.

Values are also standards for what we consider important and just.

To **compromise** is to decide on a settlement that satisfies all parties.

Diversity means respecting people from varied cultures and backgrounds.

Imagine that your class is figuring out how to raise money for a local charity. Class members have suggested three ideas: a bake sale, a car wash, or a pizza day. How would you decide?

You might begin by having a class discussion about the three choices. Then take a vote. Class members put up their hands to indicate their choice or write it on a piece of paper. Finally you count the number of votes for each choice.

Results of Money-raising Vote

Bake Sale	Car Wash	Pizza Day
4	10	11

Every time you make a decision in this way, you are practising democracy. How does this kind of decision making show that members of your class share the following ideas?

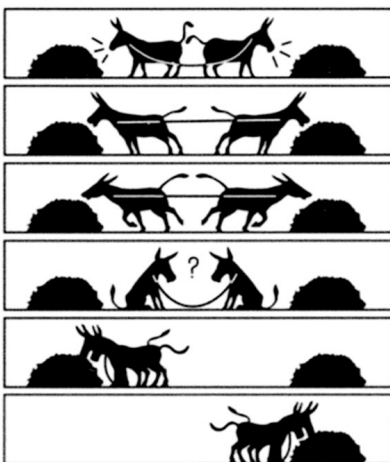
- People are free to express their opinions.
- Everyone has the right to vote.
- Everyone's vote is equal.
- Everyone agrees to go along with the choice of 51 percent of the members.

These ideas are at the heart of democratic **values**. Values are principles about how people should act. People who live in a democracy share certain values. These values affect how they think society should be run and how they behave toward others.

Canadians describe themselves as having the following values:

- the fair and equal treatment of all
- a respectful or sensitive attitude toward others who have different opinions from their own
- a belief in solving differences in a peaceful way
- discussion and **compromise** as ways to reach decisions
- support for **diversity**

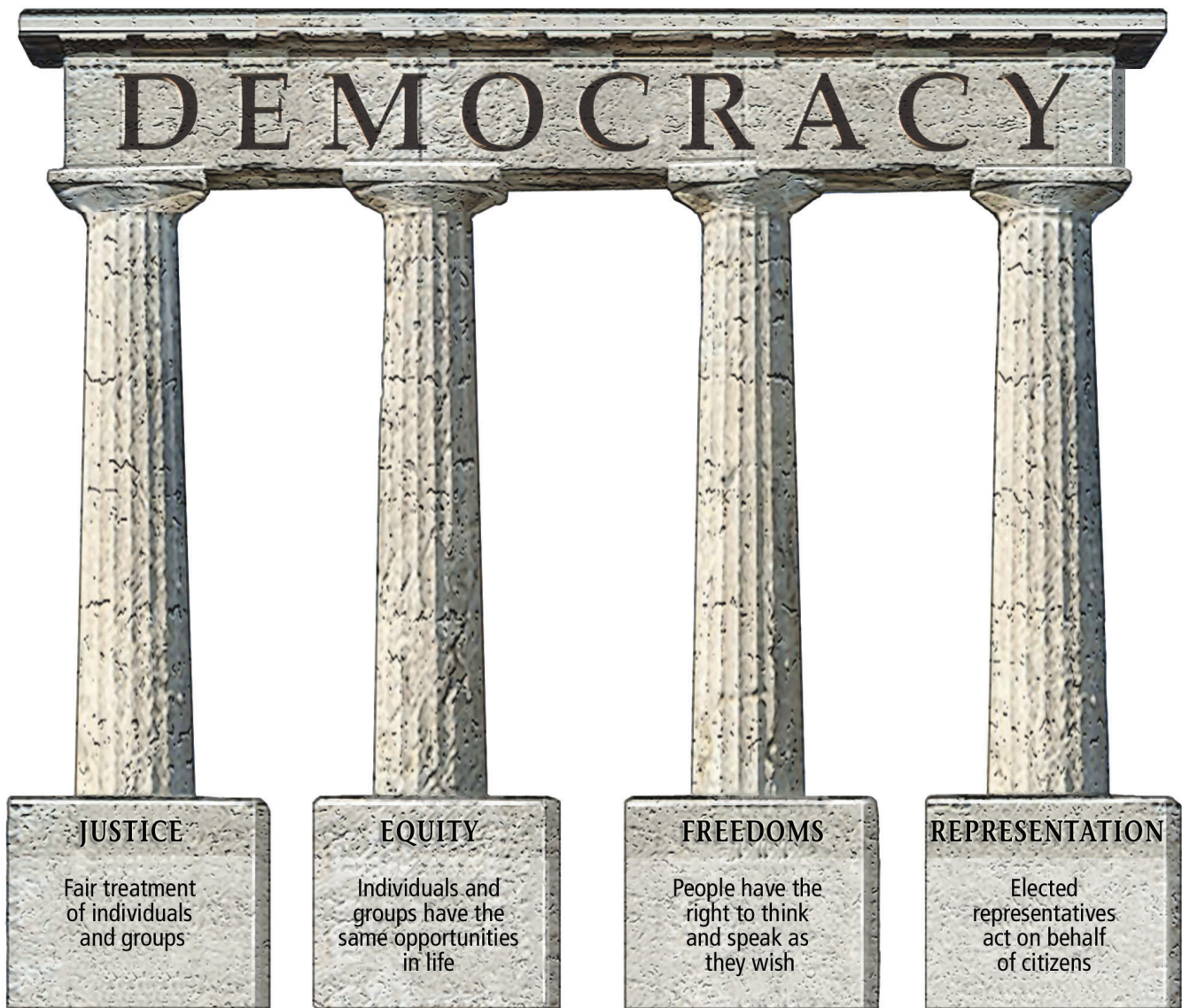
Our values are part of our identity. Describe situations in which you have seen people acting on these values.



What does this image suggest about compromise and cooperation?

What Principles Support Democracy?

Democracy cannot exist unless people in a society share similar values. Democratic values and democratic principles go hand in hand. In the course of this year, you will be looking at how democracy in Canada is supported by four principles—justice, equity, freedoms, and representation.



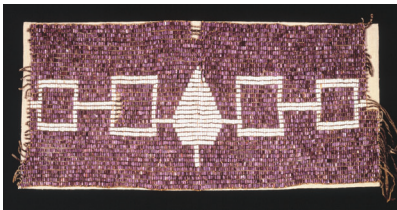
We are supporting democracy in our society when we follow these principles in the laws we make and in the ways we behave toward one another.

How Do Citizens Participate in Democracy?

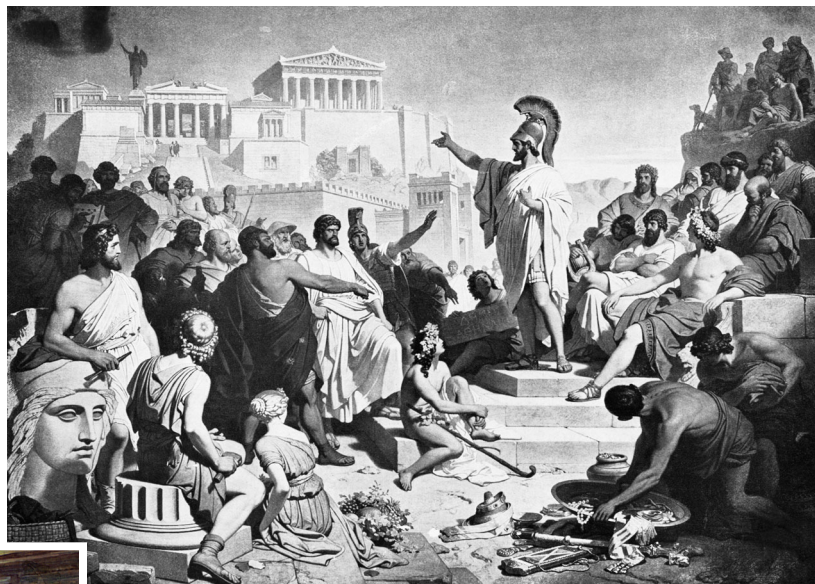
Thinking It Through

What do you get when you put the meanings of *demos* and *cratos* together? Consider how this is reflected in the ideas about democracy you looked at on page 3.

A democratic society depends on the participation of its citizens. During your studies this year, you will find out that democracy is an old idea. You will see that the democratic decision making we practise in Canada comes from Greek ideas about government some 2500 years ago. In fact, the word “democracy” comes from two Greek words: *demos* meaning “the people” and *cratos* meaning “power” or “government.” You will also have a chance to look at how democratic principles were practised in the Iroquois Confederacy beginning about 700 years ago.



The Hiawatha Wampum tells about the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy. The Great Law set out how people can participate in decision making.

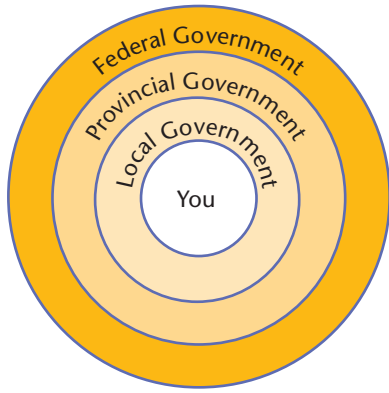


Greek citizens take turns expressing their opinions before taking a vote.



Here is an artist's idea of what the Legislative Assembly in Upper Canada might have looked like. Only land-owning men were allowed to vote. How is this different from voting in Canada today?

The first Europeans in what is now Canada came from France and England, countries ruled by monarchs—kings and queens. Early settlements were run by governors sent by their monarchs. It wasn't until the late 1700s that democratically elected governments emerged in Canada. The Legislative Assemblies of Upper and Lower Canada were democratic institutions in early Canadian history.



Canadian democracy today is built on the foundations of the past. Over time, ideas about democracy in Canada have grown and changed. We now have three democratically elected levels of government.

Democracy means much more than voting in elections or running for an elected position in government. In a democracy, everyone has the responsibility to participate and contribute to society. People your age have an important part to play in our democratic society. You can join with others to make a difference in your community, your province, your country, and even the world by taking action.

- You can help care for other people and the environment.
- You can speak out about situations that you think are unfair.

Democracy is a two-way street. We receive precious rights and freedoms and in exchange we take on the responsibility to participate and contribute.



The federal level of government is responsible for matters that concern the whole country. It is located in Ottawa

Provincial government is located in the capital of the province. It is elected by the people of the province.

These governments are elected in cities, towns, villages, reserves and settlements, and other local areas across Canada.

Having three levels of government helps to balance the needs of people living in different areas of the country.



Helping seniors is one way to make a difference in your community. What other things could you do?

These girls are taking a stand about a situation they feel strongly about.



Reading This Book

Inquiry

? Inquiring Minds

This feature appears on the opening pages of each chapter. Keep the questions in mind as you work through the chapter. They will help you to focus on how the content relates to democracy and participation.

Taking Action



The seven steps in this diagram show you the steps you can follow to take action on an issue that concerns you. The accompanying student handbook, *Take Action—Make a Difference*, provides you with more information on each step and gives you ideas for actions that you might take.

Content

More About...

This feature gives you more information about topics that are mentioned in the main text.

words matter!

Definitions for many of the words that are in boldface in the text are provided in this feature. It will help you to understand the meaning of the word as it is used in context. Some words in boldface are only defined in the Glossary at the end of the book because their meaning is described in the text around them.

Speaking Out

This feature lets you hear other points of view on topics you explore in the text.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

People who have contributed to democracy or change in Canada are introduced to you in this feature.



Viewpoints

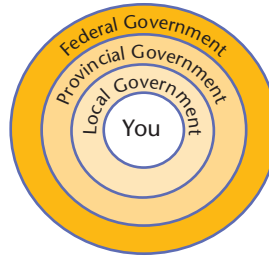
Everyone has a viewpoint about topics they care about. You do, too. In this feature, you will read different points of view about an important subject.

Contributing to Community

In this feature, students like you will be taking action in their community or exploring an issue related to democracy.

DECISIONS IN DEMOCRACY

Find out how laws made by Canadian government connect to democracy in this feature.



The levels of government diagram shows you which level of government is in charge of the things you are reading about.

Thinking Skills

SKILL POWER

This feature occurs in every chapter. It will help you develop skills you have been learning in social studies. Skill Powers are listed in the Table of Contents, so you can easily find a skill to help you with a particular activity.

Thinking It Through

The questions in this feature focus your attention on the main topic in the chapter. They also give you a chance to reflect and think critically about ideas.

Skill Smart

Each time you see this feature, you will be asked to do a short, skill-based task. Doing these tasks sharpens your skills.

Explore More!

Inquiring Minds

- Think about your responsibilities as a member of a community. Make a list of the ways that citizens and government work together in a democracy.
 - If you were part of the discussion on page 7, what reasons would you give for why people should participate in a democracy?
- People often write e-mails or letters to the editor to express their opinions on community concerns. Use the letters to the editor in a newspaper and select one on a topic that interests you. Record your understanding of this letter using the chart below.

Topic	Summary	Opinion
- Write your own email or letter to the editor on the same topic or another current topic of your choice. Make sure that you clearly state your opinions. What facts can you provide to support your opinions?
- Imagine that you are someone who wants to get Canadian citizenship. Use Government of Canada sites on the Internet to find out about:
 - your rights and responsibilities as a Canadian citizen
 - what you need to know to pass the citizenship test
 - the citizenship ceremony and the Oath of Citizenship
 Explain briefly how you fit all of the above programs you to be an active, participating citizen of Canada.

Your Turn

- With a partner or a small group, discuss the list of values on page 6. In what ways are these values reflected in the end-in-progressive behavior in your classroom and school?
 - Brainstorm a list of other ways that these values could be encouraged. Choose one item on your list and create a poster for it. Put up your poster in your school.

Democracy in Action Journal

This year, you may want to keep a journal in a notebook or binder to record your ideas about democracy, action, and participation. You will be asked to write a reflection or create a response at the end of each chapter. You can also collect pictures, newspaper articles, and cartoons to include in your Democracy in Action Journal.

You will find these features at the end of each chapter. The activities and questions give you a chance to pull together the key ideas, apply the skills you have learned, and explore ideas further.