



PRE-TOUR LESSON 1

DEMOCRACY: A HISTORY

GRADES 9-12



Key Questions

- When did the idea of democracy come to be?
- Where did the idea of democracy come from?
- How and why did democracy evolve?

Students will...

- Understand the temporal and geographical origins of democracy.
- Understand how democracy changed over time (over the course of this lesson and the next).

Teacher Primer

Democracy is an old concept. For the purpose of this lesson, democracy refers to the idea that the people being governed should have a say in who governs them. The concept of democracy is quite general and can have many different iterations depending on where and when in history you look. It should be noted that new knowledge is being uncovered all the time, so the origins of democracy continue to be re-evaluated.

This lesson will have students explore and learn about democracy and will give them an understanding of democracy from a historical standpoint. In the following lesson, students will compare democracy to other systems.

Set

Initiate a class discussion about democracy. What do students know about it today? What do they think they know about how, where, and when it originated? When was the last time that students practiced democracy in their lives?

Set

It is unlikely that they are able to vote in an election yet but democracy comes up in life often, like a vote amongst friends about whose car to take to a restaurant for lunch or a vote to decide which movie to watch. Inform students that this lesson will have them research the origins and some evolutions of democracy.

Development

Explain that the origins of democracy are difficult to pin down. Technically, the first known democracy was in Ancient Greece (specifically Athens) sometime in the 5th century BCE. Other forms of democracy may have also been present in Ancient Sumer (present-day Iraq) and Ancient India even earlier than that.

Ancient Greek democracy, like our own constitutional monarchy, had three different branches...albeit different than our executive, legislative, and judicial branches. They were:

- The *Ekklesia* (law-making branch);
- The *Boule* (group of representatives from Athens' tribes); and
- The *Dikasteria* (similar to our courts but allowed people to resolve conflict in front of jurors).

There were some issues with this system though, and it had aspects we wouldn't accept in Canada today:

- Not participating in the democracy got you in trouble.
- Only free men were citizens - women and slaves could not vote.
- Government representatives (500 of them) were chosen from the population to act as the government for one year.

Development

As time progressed, other areas around the globe began to adopt different forms of democracy. Many of these systems looked very different to what we consider democracy today. Students will now have a chance to explore some of these systems and report back to their peers what they learned.

Some options include:

- The Indian Panchayats;
- The German tribal system;
- The Icelandic Althing;
- The "Thing of All Swedes;"
- The Irish Tuatha system; and
- The Veche or Wiec assemblies in Slavic countries.

Students will research their topics and fill out a copy of the "Early Democracy Research Page" activity. It is likely that this portion of the lesson will take the remainder of the class today and then time on the next day.

When student groups have completed the exercise, have them present to the class so that each group can learn from each other's research.

Assessment

The completed "Early Democracy Research Page" and the presentations provide adequate assessment of what was learned.

Consider two things when assessing:

- Are students able to identify the elements of democracy in their assigned systems?
- How do these early democratic systems compare to ours? Are students able to draw comparisons between the two?

Closure

Thank students for their work, their presentations, and for listening to their peers present. Inform students that they will be learning about how democracy evolved in more modern times through significant democratic developments, becoming the system of democracy we live under today.

Early Democracy Research Page



DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM

WHEN DID IT EXIST?

**HOW DID PEOPLE
PARTICIPATE IN THEIR
DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM?**

**HOW DID THE SYSTEM WORK? HOW
DOES IT COMPARE TO OUR
DEMOCRACY?**

**WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT THIS
DEMOCRACY SYSTEM? DISLIKE?**
