



PRE-TOUR LESSON 3

COMPARING SYSTEMS

GRADES 9-12



Key Questions

- What other systems of government exist?
- How do other systems of government compare to democratic ones?

Students will...

- Be aware of some of the democratic and undemocratic systems that exist in the world.
- Understand how systems of government compare to one another.

Teacher Primer

Democracy as a general principle for a government system is often hailed as ideal because of what a democratic government offers its citizens.

Democratic governments receive citizen input regularly and have the potential to be completely changed every election cycle. People living in democratic systems also usually feel safe speaking up for or against their government and feel as though the government "works for them."

There are, however, other ways of governing countries, and some of those will be discussed in this lesson. Also discussed in this lesson will be the other ways that countries use democracy to inform the work of their government, but their style of democracy can sometimes look quite different. One need only look to the United States to see a different form of democracy than our own, but both are decidedly democratic systems.

Set

Explain to students that they will also learn about systems that either have less democracy involved in them than they may be used to in our society, or have no democracy at all. Remind students that democracy means that the power comes from the people, but in some systems, that power may look different than our society.

While there are flaws in any democratic system, reserving power for the people of a society is one way to limit abuses of power or human rights violations.

Ask students if they have any input on the above italicized assertion and seek class discussion wherever you see it arise.



Development

Explain to students that there are a variety of government systems out there. These government systems are rarely implemented the same way from one country to another and sometimes countries blend two systems.

Students will eventually be researching each of these systems on their own, but you can introduce them here with some information as provided below:

- Communism: A system where the government owns the means of production and private ownership of property is heavily controlled or eliminated.
- Socialism: Similar to communism but the means of production and resources are controlled by the people through a democratically elected government.
- Oligarchy: A system of government where a small group of elite run the affairs of the country.
- Aristocracy: Much like an oligarchy but power is usually held and transferred among family/blood lines.
- Monarchy: In its purest form, involves a King or Queen (monarch) ruling over the country.
- Theocracy: Much like a monarchy but instead the country is ruled by a religious leader.
- Totalitarianism: A government system that is all powerful over its citizens.
- Military Dictatorship: A high-ranking military commander runs the country.

Development

As usual, feel free to pursue class discussion about any of the government systems as you go. Once you've mentioned/discussed each of the government systems above, hand out one copy of the double-sided activity sheet that includes the "3 Summaries" page and the "Government System Comparison" Venn diagram.

However you see fit, distribute a government system type, as discussed earlier, to each student. It will be their responsibility to research and fill out both sides of the page.

- For the summary side, students need to offer a definition/explanation of their government system three separate times, each varying in detail and complexity. This strategy provides for a better indication of what was learned or understood as they examined the government system assigned to them.
- For the Venn diagram side, students need to compare their government system to democracy.
- You may need to remind them how Venn diagrams work. For each side of the page it is important for students to focus on some key questions about the government systems that might help them get the most out of the assignment, such as:
 - Who has the power in this system?
 - How do they maintain power?
 - Does the citizenry have a say in how it's governed?
 - How can citizens interact with their government, if at all?
 - Would this be an enjoyable system to live under?

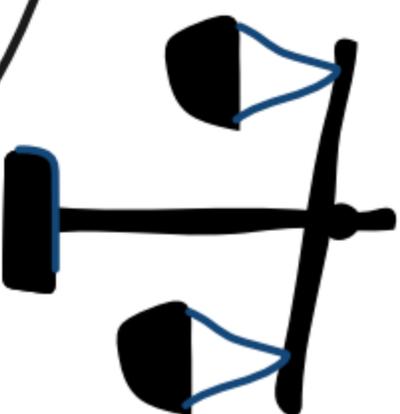
Closure

- Inform students that now that they've learned more about democracy in general and compared it to other government systems in the world, they will be learning about our own democracy in the next lesson.
- They will learn how our government is structured, how it works, and "who's who" in the government.

Assessment

- Collect the assignment for grading. Refer to the questions above for assistance in what criteria to look for, if necessary.

GOVERNMENT SYSTEM COMPARISON



Democracy _____
