



DEMOCRACY DOWN UNDER

Unit of work

Introduction

This unit of work aims to introduce students to the idea of democracy and how it is represented in Australia. They will research various types of rule and participate in activities that allow them to experience these as decision-makers and citizens.

They will consider Australia's three-tier system of government, identify the roles and responsibilities of federal, state and local governments and be introduced to how members are elected to these institutions.

Finally, students will consider some symbols of democracy and how they shape our national identity.

The 'lessons' in this unit may take more than one standard lesson to complete.

Please note: students will need access to the videos and facts sheets in Extra resources and Facts for students in the Themed curriculum support resources section of the For Teachers for students website. The URLs for the videos are also in the resource lists with each lesson.

Learning outcomes

By participating in these lessons, students will be able to:

- define democracy and describe how it works in Australia
- explain the roles and responsibilities of each level of government in Australia
- provide a basic outline of how the preferential voting system works
- describe and explain some symbols of democracy.



DEMOCRACY DOWN UNDER

Lesson 1: Defining democracy

Introduction

In this lesson, students will start to explore the idea of democracy and how it evolved. They will also participate in an activity that demonstrates how three types of rule work in practice.

Resources

- 'Democracy mind map' worksheet.
- Videos:
 - What is democracy? (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A42nJeaLdhM>)
 - Democracy a short introduction (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6jgWxkbR7A>)
 - What are the key features of democracy? (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qi-getj3JX8>)
 - Magna Carta – the story of our freedom (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gA-y8uOJs9k>)
- Museum of Australian Democracy website (www.moadoph.gov.au)
- 'Types of rule' worksheet
- 'Design a park – absolute monarchy' sheet
- 'Design a park – direct monarchy' sheet
- 'Design a park – representative monarchy' sheet
- 'PMI analysis' worksheet



DEMOCRACY DOWN UNDER

Lesson steps

Write the word democracy on the board. In pairs or small groups, ask students to write what they already know about democracy on the '**Democracy mind map**' worksheet. This can be enlarged to A3 size so that information can be added throughout the unit. Share what students have recorded.

Watch one or more of the videos about democracy, ask students to add any new ideas to their mind maps. You can also visit the 'Our Democracy' section of the Museum of Australian Democracy website for further information.

The 'Magna Carta' is mentioned several times in the videos and is a cornerstone document for modern democracy and human rights. Watch the 'Magna Carta – the story of our freedom' video and discuss.

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of democratic rule. How might it be different if one person was completely in charge?

Place students into small groups. Each group will represent one of three types of rule: absolute monarchy, direct democracy or representative democracy (you can have more than one group for each one). Provide each group with copies of the '**Types of rule**' worksheet. On this sheet they will collect basic information about the type of rule. Some of this can be found in the student facts, but they will need to undertake further research.

Once students understand more about how that type of rule works, they are provided with a brief to design a new park to celebrate Australia. There are three '**Design a park**' sheets: one for each type of rule. They will be guided on how they should approach this task with reference to the type of rule. Provide a time limit for the task. This task is more effective with larger groups, so you can combine the small research groups into larger groups (i.e. if you had three small groups researching absolute monarchies, combine them into one group for this activity).

Once they have finished the task (or time has run out) discuss the following:

- Did the group get the task finished? Why or why not?
- Is your group happy with the design?
- How does the group feel about the way they worked?

Each group to complete a '**PMI analysis**' worksheet about the way they worked together and/or the style of rule they experienced.



DEMOCRACY DOWN UNDER

Extension options

- Small groups to devise a campaign to promote one type of rule. This could be a brochure, ad, speech or social media campaign.

Assessment options

- Contributions to class discussions
- Democracy mind maps
- Observations of group work
- PMI analysis sheets



DEMOCRACY DOWN UNDER

Lesson 2: A deeper look at democracy in Australia

Introduction

In this lesson, students will begin to focus on how democracy is demonstrated in Australia. They will use the Museum of Australian Democracy website as their primary source of information and discuss the principles and values of democracy with their peers.

Please note: There are terms and phrases in this lesson that may be new or difficult to understand. A high degree of support and clarification should be offered to students.

Resources

- Computers with internet access
- ‘Democracy down under’ facts for students
- Museum of Australian Democracy website (www.moadoph.gov.au)
- ‘Democracy defined’ worksheet
- ‘Democracy mind map’ worksheet (started in lesson 1)

Lesson steps

Provide students with copies of the **‘Democracy defined’** worksheet and ask them to discuss the four main principles and four elements of democracy. They should underline any unfamiliar words and make notes about what they think the principles and elements mean.

Review this as a class then discuss whether or not students think that these principles apply to Australia. Explain that Australia is a representative democracy. This is a system where eligible people vote for candidates to carry out the business of governing on their behalf.

Students work in pairs to read the information about representative democracies in the student facts and on the Museum of Australian Democracy website. There are some core defining values that students should find and record on the second page of the **‘Democracy defined’** worksheet.

Once students have completed this sheet and gathered more information about Australia’s democracy, discuss their emerging understanding and clarify any issues. Students can add ideas to the mind map they started in lesson 1.



DEMOCRACY DOWN UNDER

Extension options

- Students write their own guiding principles for democracy or rewrite the existing ones in their own words.
- Students critically analyse the principles and elements of democracy asking questions such as:
 - Who is excluded from the democratic process?
 - Who makes the laws and decides what is right and wrong?
 - What happens if someone's right to freedom of speech causes distress for someone else?
 - How can democracy balance the rights of the individual with the needs/rights of the many?
- Students select one or more events or people who have contributed to Australia's democracy and prepare a report for the class. The 'Democracy' section of the Australian Museum of Democracy website has excellent resources for this.

Assessment options

- Contributions to class discussion
- 'Democracy defined' worksheet



DEMOCRACY DOWN UNDER

Lesson 3: Three levels of government

Introduction

The focus of this lesson is the roles and responsibilities of Australia's three levels of government. Students will watch videos and answer questions relating to federation and government. Using this information, and the student fact sheets (on the For Teachers for students website), students will complete a matching activity to demonstrate their understanding of federal, state and local government.

Resources

- Computers with internet access
- 'Power of three' worksheet
- 'Power of three' solutions
- The following videos:
 - Snapshots: Federation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGc-8RyUiRs>)
 - Australia's Federation – Behind the News (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecB-Lpm_AZ0)
- 'Democracy down under' facts for students (specifically the section titled 'Levels of government')
- 'Where do I go' worksheet
- 'Where do I go?' solutions



DEMOCRACY DOWN UNDER

Lesson steps

Provide students with copies of the **'Power of three'** worksheet. They will answer the questions on this sheet before, during and after watching several videos about Australia's Federation and reading about our three-tier system of government. Discuss these answers focusing on the responsibilities of each level of government.

Review and discuss the information. Using the knowledge they have gained, students complete the **'Where do I go?'** worksheet. This can be done individually, in pairs or small groups, or as a whole class activity.

If students need more information in this lesson, visit getparliament.peo.gov.au, or the Parliamentary Education Office website has fact sheets and interactives to explore this further.

Extension options

- Students can begin to research the two houses of parliament (this will be referred to briefly in the next lesson): the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- Students can organise and participate in a three-tiered system of government in your school.

Assessment options

- Contributions to class discussions
- 'Power of three' worksheet
- 'Where do I go' worksheet



DEMOCRACY DOWN UNDER

Lesson 4: Choosing our representatives

Introduction

In this lesson, students will explore the preferential voting system through a class vote activity. This is a simple introduction to an important element of Australian democracy.

Resources

- 'Popular produce' worksheet
- 'Blank ballot papers' sheet

Lesson steps

As students now know, in a representative democracy the people choose members to represent them in government. Explain to students that this is done in federal and state/territory elections.

Explain that there are two houses in parliament: the House of Representatives and the Senate.

This lesson will focus on the 'preferential voting' system that is used in the House of Representatives. Explain that you will be using a simplified version of this system to find out which fruit is the most popular in the class. You can do this as a class using the '**Popular produce**' worksheet.

To complete this activity follow these steps:

1. Provide each student with a copy of the '**Popular produce**' worksheet.
2. Ask each student to number the fruits from 1 to 4 with 1 being their favourite fruit and 4 being their least favourite. Explain that this is anonymous and private. You may wish to set up ballot booths and boxes in your classroom.
3. Collect the ballot papers and record how many students have voted.
4. Calculate how many votes will constitute a majority. This will be 50% of the students voting plus 1 (e.g. if there are 30 students, the 'winning' fruit will need 16 votes).
5. Look at the ballot papers and make piles according to the number 1 votes (i.e. all the papers with orange marked '1' go in one pile etc.).
6. Count the number of '1' votes for each fruit. You may wish to create a running tally on the board.
7. Does one of the fruits have a majority vote at this stage? If yes, that fruit is the winner. If no, you will have to consider preferences.



DEMOCRACY DOWN UNDER

To do this:

1. Identify which fruit has the lowest number of '1' votes. This fruit is eliminated, but its votes must be distributed. To do this, take all the papers from the eliminated fruit's pile and check which fruit has been given the number '2' on those ballot papers. This fruit gets another vote. Add these ballot papers to that fruit's pile.
2. Check to see if any fruit now has a majority vote. If yes, it is the winner.
3. If no, you will need to eliminate the fruit that has the lowest votes now. Distribute its votes by looking at the next highest preference that has not been eliminated (i.e. if the next highest preference on a ballot paper is a fruit that has been eliminated, you need to go to the next preference on that paper). Add these to this fruit's pile.
4. Count the votes now and continue with this process until a clear winner is achieved.

This process can be confusing, so complete it as a class before allowing students to try one on their own or in small groups with a category of their choice (such as favourite song, pizza topping, sport etc.). There is a '**Blank ballot papers**' sheet that students can use.

The Australian Electoral Commission website has some excellent voting resources, including a ballot paper generator which would support this lesson.

Go to education.aec.gov.au/getvoting/

Extension options

- Students can explore how the voting for the Senate works.
- Students use the preferential voting system to conduct a school-wide vote on an issue.
- Students research the two different houses of parliament (the Senate and the House of Representatives) to find out more about the roles and responsibilities of each.

Assessment options

- Contributions to voting activities



DEMOCRACY DOWN UNDER

Lesson 5: Symbols of democracy

Introduction

In this lesson, students will explore some of Australia's symbols of democracy and national identity, and discuss the Australian national anthem.

Resources

- Completed 'Democracy mind map' worksheets
- 'Symbols of democracy' worksheet
- 'Australian national anthem' sheet
- 'Songs about Australia' worksheet
- Computers with internet access

Lesson steps

As a class, discuss what students have learnt throughout the unit. You may ask them to refer back to their '**Democracy mind map**' worksheet (from the beginning of the unit) to compare their initial thoughts with their current knowledge. Now ask students to think of symbols. Throughout the unit have they noticed any obvious symbols that represent democracy to them? If so, what are they?

In pairs, students will research to find out more about symbols of Australian democracy on the '**Symbols of democracy**' sheet. There is space for them to record information on the sheet, or they can cut out the pictures and stick them in a book to allow more room to record. Ask students to find more examples.

Display a copy of the '**Australian national anthem**' on an interactive whiteboard, and/or provide copies to students. Read through it together and identify any unknown words. Ask students to work with a partner to discuss it and what it means to them. What does it say about Australia? What would someone new to this country think about us just from these words?

Students to find songs about Australia and conduct a similar examination of them and their lyrics. Compare them to the national anthem. The '**Songs about Australia**' worksheet can be used for this.



DEMOCRACY DOWN UNDER

Extension options

- Students write lyrics for a new song about Australia.

Assessment options

- **'Songs about Australia'** worksheet
- Contributions to class discussion