

Educational Resources

MODEL PARLIAMENT UNIT – BACKGROUND LESSON: WHY STUDY PARLIAMENT

Background Lesson: Why Study Parliament?

Instructions

In small group discussion, your classmates and you will consider a number of questions about Parliament, what it means to you as an individual, and its importance to our country. You will then choose one of the questions and write or present a short personal response to it.

1. *Group Discussion*

In your group, discuss the following questions as assigned:

Observe ...

1. If you have seen video excerpts from Question Period or the Speech from the Throne, what visual images do you remember?
2. What does a senator do? What does an MP (member of the House of Commons) do?
3. If you have met with, spoken to or had written contact with a senator, an MP or his or her staff, describe the interaction. What question did you ask and what was the response?

Reflect ...

1. Have you ever visited Parliament? Have you ever watched events on Parliament Hill on TV or online? What did it mean to you?
2. Have you ever contacted a senator or an MP and let them know how you feel about important issues? Have you had successes or frustrations in contacting them?
3. What is the impression one gets about Parliament from the news?
4. What other forms of government might we have if we didn't have a Parliament?

Think about ...

1. Parliament makes decisions that affect you. What are some of those decisions? How do they affect your lives?
2. What role should the media play in its coverage of Parliament? Do you think its portrayal is accurate?
3. MPs are elected and senators are appointed to make good decisions that serve the best interests of their constituents and the country. This may be a difficult balance. Sometimes they may be asked to make decisions that are not popular with their constituents (citizens in their electoral district). Should parliamentarians always consider the needs of their constituents first?
4. Why is our parliamentary democracy so important? If we did not have a democratic system, how would our lives be different?

What if ...

1. If you were a parliamentarian, what would you do to represent the youth of Canada?
2. As a young person, can you influence what Parliament decides? If yes, how? If no, why not? Does the situation change much when you reach voting age? Who do you think has the greatest influence in determining how our country is run?
3. Over the centuries, Parliament has evolved to become a fundamental means of resolving a society's conflict peacefully. What other options would you choose for resolving conflict peacefully? What if no one in our society exercised his or her right to vote? How would it affect our parliamentary system?
4. What are your responsibilities as a citizen? To what degree do you and other Canadians meet these responsibilities? What can you do to make Parliament work better?

2. Personal Response Writing

Choose one of the "Think about ..." or "What if ..." questions and write a short piece in which you express your thoughts, feelings and ideas about the issues the questions raise. Your piece may be a series of reflections or ideas, an argument for a position about which you feel strongly, or a narrative describing personal experiences.