



# Democracy

## **U** Upper

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# Lesson 1: Democracy and dictatorship

**U**  60 mins

## Aim

To understand the differences between democracies and dictatorships.

## Learning outcomes

Children should be taught:

- to talk and write about their opinions, and explain their views, on issues that affect themselves and society;
- to research, discuss and debate topical issues, problems and events;
- to resolve differences by looking at alternatives, making decisions and explaining choices;
- what democracy is, and about the basic institutions that support it locally and nationally.

## Resources

- **Resource sheet DEM1a:** *Democracies and dictatorships – some differences between them*
- YouTube extract on Kim Jong Un at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f66xeCyxeS0>
- **Activity sheet DEM1b:** *Democracy and dictatorship*
- **Resource sheet DEM1c:** *Democracy and dictatorship*

## Activity

Initiate a discussion on what is commonly meant by the term ‘democracy’, including some of the points above. Ask:

### Key Questions ?

*What is a democracy?  
Can you think of any examples of democratic countries?*

Invite ideas on how democracy is practised in school. Discuss the role of the School Council and ask for comments about its effectiveness.

Ask:

### Key Questions ?

*How are its members chosen?*

*When you choose representatives, what sort of qualities are you looking for in the candidates?*

*(e.g. ability, leadership and organisational skills, trustworthy, etc.)*

*In what other ways (e.g. other elections) is democracy promoted in school?*

*How is democracy practised in the local community and the country at large?*

Encourage the class to mention various types of elections, perhaps general and local ones, as well as those for devolved government in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They may also have come across elections in clubs or organisations they attend.

Mention some of the advantages that should result from a democracy, such as:

- everyone has a chance to have their say in choosing representatives and making decisions;
- we can elect, and also get rid of, leaders who we think have let us down;
- no one ruler or ruling party can continue in power indefinitely and do whatever they wish;
- we have a lot of freedoms and rights;
- it is the best means of protecting the interests of the people.

Explain that:

- the UK is a democracy, which is widely considered to be the best form of government these days. Most countries in the world have adopted it, at least in name if not in practice – e.g. the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rulers understand that it is a word that carries positive overtones.

- the rule of law is considered an important – indeed, a fundamental – feature of any country calling itself democratic. It states that neither governments nor individuals are above the law and that governmental decisions must be made only by applying known legal and moral principles. In other words, it requires that there should be equality before the law (or ‘equal protection of the law’ as it is often phrased). This means that all people (rich or poor, ethnic majority or religious minority, political supporter of the government or opponent) are entitled to equal protection before the law, but must also abide by it.

Make the point that countries that are not democracies are usually some sort of dictatorship, in which an individual, the army or some other small ruling group are in power, Ask:

### Key Questions ?

*What is a dictatorship?*

*Can you think of any examples, either present day or in the past?*

*(think of ones that might be in the news currently)*

*In what ways do you think life might be different under a dictatorship?*

*Have you ever been on holiday in a country that is a dictatorship?*

*Did you notice any differences in what life was like there, compared to life in Britain?*

Use **Resource sheet DEM1a: Democracies and dictatorships: some differences between them**, to discuss what dictatorships are like and how they affect the lives of people who live in them. Explain the concept of censorship and how it can affect people’s lives. At this point, you might play the extract from YouTube, about life in North Korea – or a similar one.

**NB:** this extract is very long so you may wish to choose a short section to show the class.

Then, write the list of countries and headings given below on the whiteboard. (If possible, have a map of the world available to identify the countries.)

**Resource sheet DEM1a: Democracies and dictatorships – some differences between them** will help children understand why some countries are, or are not, democracies – it also helps them with their

knowledge of countries and continents. See if children know:

- which continent the countries are in
- the name of the capital city
- whether they are democracies or dictatorships.

Fill in the information on the board. (**NB:** In some cases, the answer for the final column might be unclear, leading to discussion of why or why not a country can be included in either group – e.g. Iraq – see answers and notes on page 134).

Ask the children to work individually to fill in **Activity sheet DEM1b: Democracy and dictatorship**. At the same time, give them **Resource sheet DEM1c: Democracy and dictatorship** to help them answer the questions.

Discuss the answers in a plenary session. Invite suggestions as to why democracies might be preferable to dictatorships, or vice versa.

In which sort of country would the children prefer to live, and why?

**NB:** Question 3 is a difficult one to answer, encourage the children to express their own ideas. What Lincoln was saying was that, in the long term, governments which depend upon the people for their support are more likely to survive and flourish than those which do not. Dictatorships tend to be transitory because they lack popular backing; it is always possible that there will be an attempt to overthrow those in power.

### Further suggestions

Think of a theme, such as arrangements for a class celebration, or the choice of the class representative on the School Council. Split the class into groups and give them five minutes to discuss who should make the arrangements. Should the teacher nominate someone or should the class have a vote? The groups have to think of the benefits and disadvantages of the teacher or the class deciding.

### Differentiation

Generally by outcome, but the **Democracy** unit is a difficult one for SEN children. Help will be needed to enable them to cope with the questions and tasks on activity sheets, in this and other lessons.

## The Democracy quiz

Country	Continent	Capital city	Democracy or dictatorship?
United Kingdom			
The United States			
China			
Canada			
Cuba			
North Korea			
India			
Australia			
Iraq			
South Africa			

## Answers to the questions in The Democracy quiz

Country	Continent	Capital city	Democracy or dictatorship?
United Kingdom	Europe	London	Democracy
The United States	North America	Washington	Democracy
China	Asia	Beijing	Dictatorship
Canada	North America	Ottawa	Democracy
Cuba	North America	Havana	Dictatorship
North Korea	Asia	Pyongyang	Dictatorship
India	Asia	New Delhi	Democracy
Australia	Australasia	Canberra	Democracy
Iraq	Asia	Baghdad	Democracy
South Africa	Africa	Johannesburg	Democracy

**NB:** Even within this list of well-known countries, not all answers are clear-cut.

Cuba – including its many archipelagos – is located in the Caribbean, and as such is in the continent of North America. Many people would consider the Caribbean as neither North nor South; they think of it as being part of Central America, which is not a continent. Of course, there is much Spanish influence in Cuba, which makes it in some respects seem more like a South American country.

Iraq is a part of the Middle East, a region that actually includes parts of Africa and Asia, which are culturally and historically linked. It is actually in South West Asia. Iraq is technically a democracy, but the country bears the hallmarks of a political system born in foreign occupation and civil war, marked by deep divisions over the power of the government, disputes between ethnic and religious groups, and between centralists and advocates of federalism. For these reasons, as currently constituted, it is unlikely to be a stable democracy for some time ahead. Yet for all its flaws, the democratic project in Iraq brought to an end more than four decades of dictatorship.



### Background information: Democracy and the rule of law

Almost every government in the world claims to be democratic. The term is fashionable, widely seen as representing something which is good and beneficial. Few countries would wish to admit to being anything other than democratic. This is not surprising because the word comes from the Greek words *demos*, which means ‘the people’ and *kratos* which means ‘power’, so in other words, democracy is about the power of the people: people-power. US President Abraham Lincoln, once referred to democracy as ‘government of the people, by the people and for the people’.

Any government that calls itself democratic is

claiming that its right to rule is based on the approval or agreement of the people, as given in free elections in which there is a meaningful choice of candidates. Often countries that are dictatorships may hold elections, even if there is no choice of candidates or policies, so that the ruler can claim to have broad backing for the regime.

Examples of democracies include: most of Europe (including countries such as Austria, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Switzerland) and the United States of America. India is the largest democracy in the world.

Examples of dictatorships include: some African

and South American countries, and also parts of Asia, such as China. (NB: Examples may need to be chosen carefully to avoid offending any children with connections to the countries concerned; remember that the situation changes over time.)

### The rule of law

The 'rule of law' is a basic ingredient of states that claim to be democratic. There is no single agreed definition of what it means but, in its most basic form, it is the principle that no-one – those who govern or those who are governed – is above the law.

The principle is intended to be a safeguard against arbitrary, unjust and chaotic government, whether from the leadership of a dictatorship or as a result of mob rule. The rule of law is distinguished from the rule of man where, for example, in an absolute monarchy, tyrannical or theocratic form of government, governance and rules of conduct are set and altered at the discretion of a single person, or a select group of people.

The rule of law requires the government to exercise its power in accordance with well-established and clearly-written rules, regulations, and legal principles; a government of law and not of men.

The citizens of a democracy submit to the law because they recognise that, however indirectly, they are submitting to themselves as makers of the law. When laws are established by the people who are then expected to obey them, both law and democracy are served.

The World Justice Project defines the rule of law as 'a system in which the following four universal principles are upheld:

1. The government and its officials and agents, as well as individuals and private entities, are accountable under the law.
2. The laws are clear, publicised, stable and just; are applied evenly; and protect fundamental rights, including the security of persons and property and certain core human rights.
3. The process by which the laws are enacted, administered and enforced is accessible, fair and efficient.
4. Justice is delivered timely by competent, ethical, and independent representatives and neutrals who are of sufficient number, have adequate resources and reflect the makeup of the communities they serve.

### Two definitions: democracy and dictatorship

A *democracy* is a country in which the people effectively decide who runs the country. This is done basically via free elections, regularly held, in which the voters choose between representatives of competing political parties.

A *dictatorship* is a form of government in which there is absolute rule by a person or group without any necessity for consent from the people who are governed. Political freedoms are unlikely to exist, and there is no opportunity for the voters to choose between candidates representing a range of parties.

Democracy Resource sheet DEM1a (1 of 2) Key Stage 2 Part 2

## Democracies and dictatorships – some differences between them

Democracies	Dictatorships
Political parties are elected by the people in free, fair and regular elections: the leader of the largest party usually heads the government.	There is just one leader (or a small ruling group) who has not usually been elected – or not for a long time.
Several political parties exist to represent a wide range of views.	Political parties may not be allowed – and if they are, their activities are closely checked by the ruling group.
People have their rights and freedoms recognised.	Few freedoms exist, for the government is able to disregard the rights of individual citizens – and the force of the police and army may be used to check for any signs of protest.
People can worship – or choose not to worship – whichever god they wish.	Worship may be made difficult, with churches and other holy buildings sometimes being closed down or raided by the police.
Newspapers are free to print their stories and can criticise the government or its members without fear of being closed down.	People have less chance to meet together and join organisations, in case they use them to campaign against the dictator.

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Democracy Resource sheet DEM1a (2 of 2) Key Stage 2 Part 2

Democracies	Dictatorships
There is not too much control over the books, films, plays and other public performances that people can enjoy.	All opposition to the government is discouraged, perhaps banned. There will be strict censorship over the films, plays and music that may be performed.
People are free to join clubs, parties and other associations.	People will be expected to show how much they like the dictator in charge, whose picture they will see displayed regularly.
The rule of law is upheld – people are entitled to equal treatment before the law. No-one, however rich and powerful, is above the law.	The rule of law is unlikely to be applied. Those in power often escape punishment for wrong-doing; opponents of the government may find themselves charged with treason; prisoners will not be given an open and fair public trial, etc.

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Democracy Activity sheet DEM1b (1 of 2) Key Stage 2 Part 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Democracy and dictatorship

**1. Some of these statements are true, others are false. By the side of each one, mark a T for true or F for false.**

- In democracies, people can play a part in running their communities
- In dictatorships, governments often deny the rule of law
- In democracies, people aren't allowed to worship God
- In dictatorships, governments are freely elected by the people
- In democracies, free speech is generally welcome
- In dictatorships, you are not allowed to criticise the Government

**2. These are some descriptions taken from dictionaries. By the side of each one, write down whether it describes a democracy or a dictatorship. Put *Dem* for democracy and *Dict* for dictatorship.**

- A country in which the people elect others to represent them
- A country in which the Government can do just as it wishes
- People power
- The rule of a dictator
- A country where there is no freedom
- Government by the people
- A situation in which people have no right to oppose the Government

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Democracy Activity sheet DEM1b (2 of 2) Key Stage 2 Part 2

**3. A famous American President once said that 'the ballot is stronger than the bullet'. Can you write down one or two sentences to say what you think he meant by his remark?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Write down any three things you would look for in a country, to help you decide whether it is a democracy or a dictatorship:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Can you name the three past and present dictators pictured below?**





\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## Democracy and dictatorship

**In Britain, we live in a free society. We have the right to say what we think. We can vote in elections. We are unlikely to end up in prison unless we have done something wrong. We live in a democracy.**

### Democracy

In a democracy, we can disagree with others but must accept that they have a right to believe what they want to. We don't have to like them, but simply recognise their right to be different. We show tolerance to one another. Where there is tolerance, people can usually settle their differences and live together.



### Dictatorship

In a dictatorship, there is no freedom of the sort that we have in the UK. In a dictatorship, the Government doesn't allow people to disagree with what it is doing. It doesn't usually listen to what people are saying. It may take strong action against those who wish to get rid of it. If there are elections, there is no real choice of candidates.