

Government Comparisons/ US vs Canada Lesson Plan

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Description:

This activity introduces students to the Canadian system of government, a parliamentary democracy.

Grade Level(s):

Suitable for Grades 5-8

Subject(s):

Social Studies/Government

Duration:

One-two 60-minute sessions

Goal:

The goal is to compare and contrast the democratic systems of the United States and Canada.

Objectives:

The students will be able to:

- label a chart indicating the components of the Canadian and US governments
- discuss the terms "fusion of powers" and "separation of powers"
- explain the difference between a social democracy and a liberal democracy
- identify the members and roles of each governmental system

Standards:

This lesson meets state and NCSS, NYS, and Liverpool CSD standards regarding *Power, Authority, and Governance*.

Background Information:

Before this activity students will have studied the structure of the US government so that they can use this knowledge to better compare and contrast the Canadian democratic system with that of the US.

Materials:

- Refer to *Canada Northern Neighbor*, by Donald K. Alper, pages 41-47, for an overview of the Canadian political system and *Figure Fifteen: The Structure of Government in Canada and the United States*.
- Create a PowerPoint or overheads of the following depictions:

- (1) *Figure Fifteen: The Structure of Government in Canada and the United States* without the labels
- (2) Lyrics of the Canadian and US anthems

- Distribute a hard copy of *Figure Fifteen: The Structure of Government in Canada and the United States* without the labels to each student so that they may fill in the blanks during the class discussion.
- 12 white index cards cut in the shape of stars each listing a term or role of one component from the US chart
- 12 red index cards cut in the shape of maple leaves each listing a term or role of one component from the Canadian chart

Procedures:

1. Begin class by playing the US anthem with the lyrics displayed. Ask students to share how they felt upon hearing the national anthem. How does it feel to be an American?
2. Display *Figure Fifteen: The Structure of Government in Canada and the United States* without the labels.
3. Ask students to use their background knowledge to assist you in completing the chart for the US government. Students will fill in their hard copy simultaneously. Be sure to elaborate on the jobs of each division as well. Discuss the meaning of the term, "separation of powers" by having students draw conclusions from the chart's layout. Refer to "**Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness**," one of the most famous phrases in the United States *Declaration of Independence*, to discuss the meaning "liberal democracy."
4. Play the Canadian anthem with the lyrics displayed. Ask students to share how they think a Canadian citizen would feel upon hearing the anthem.
5. Begin to label the Canadian government's components and jobs for each area. Discuss the similarities and differences to the US government structure as you do this. Of course, attempt to have students draw their own conclusions throughout the discourse, specifically as to why the Canadian system is referred to as having "fusion of powers." Share the phrase, "peace, order and good government," often abbreviated as POGG to define the principles under which the Canadian government legislates. Have students discuss how this might explain why it is referred to as a "social" democratic system.

Evaluation/Assessment:

Divide the desks into the two government structures. Create three rows with four desks to depict the US government and two rows, one row with three desks and one row with five desks to simulate the Canadian government. Have students make one line around the room. Have them choose one of the 24 cards at random. From the clue they will need to determine where they should sit according to the revised seating arrangement.

Possible Extension/Wrap-Up/Additional Notes:

Have students use the Internet to access Canadian and US newspapers to locate reports referring to various government offices that have been discussed during this activity. This will help to authenticate the learning that has taken place.