



my homeschool

Year Ten

Eternal Vigilance:

The Value of
Freedom

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Welcome to Students

In his presidential campaign of 1980 President Reagan called on voters and supporters with the slogan *Let's Make America Great Again* and in 1992 President Clinton also used the phrase a number of times in his successful presidential campaign. Later, in 2016, President Trump used a similar campaign slogan with *Make America Great Again*. The concept of the American dream and the freedoms that the nation offers has long been touted along with America often with the line that it is *the greatest country in the world*. But what makes a country great?

Political rights, personal freedoms, and civil liberties are considered to be hallmarks of a great country, allowing justice, fairness and equality to all in society, along with a good performance in many of the social development indicators you will learn about in ***Caring for All: The Geography of Global Wellbeing*** such as literacy rates and access to quality education, life expectancy and infant mortality rates and availability of good health services, sanitation, accessible and affordable housing, dependable transport networks, high employment rates and technology levels, and so much more. This semester you will consider the value of these freedoms and what it can look like to not have access to them, including profiling various individuals and groups who advocated for all to have rights and freedoms, sometimes at great cost.

In recent years the slogan *Black Lives Matter* has come to the fore as many advocate for the rights and freedoms for all people, regardless of their skin colour. You will learn that while the slogan is new, the idea is not. The US Civil Rights Movement, individuals campaigning in Australia for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and those fighting against Apartheid in South Africa are all included, but also those concerned for the rights and freedoms in countries which are not founded on democratic principles. This is about democracy, rights and freedoms in different societies, across timeframes and political borders. It is about fairness and justice: foundations which we cannot take for granted and often come at great cost, because, as theologian, ethicist and commentator Professor Reinhold Niebuhr wrote:

Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.

Lesson 1: Defining Democracy

John Dewey, the American education reformer, philosopher, scholar, psychologist and well-known for his contribution to librarianship through the Dewey system of numerically categorising books by subjects, wrote:

The cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy.

This quote reflects that democracy isn't simply a state, but a process. It is the process of democracy, and how, at times, there has been a demand to grant more democracy, that is the focus for this semester. We will consider how groups fought for their right to be involved in the decision-making processes of their nations and what it is like to live in a country where citizens are excluded from this process.

The right to vote is considered to be a key aspect of a democratic nation, offering citizens the opportunity to be involved in one aspect of the rule of the nation. However, for some, this right to vote is a relatively recent right.

You can perhaps better reflect on how democracy is a process when you consider the following dates about groups of people receiving the right to vote and to represent others in some countries:

- 1868: First use of Te reo (the Māori language) in New Zealand parliament with the first Māori elected members and an interpreter is appointed in Parliament.
- 1893: Women in New Zealand gain the right to vote.
- 1894: Women in South Australia gain the right to vote.
- 1918: Women in Britain gain the right to vote in elections.
- 1960: First female prime minister in the world as Sirimavo Bandaranaike becomes Prime Minister of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).
- 1962: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples granted the right to enrol and vote in Australian elections if they so wished.
- 1965: Voting Rights Act passed in the United States of America to guarantee the racial minorities the right to vote (particularly African-Americans in southern states).
- 1971: Neville Bonner appointed to the Senate, becoming the first Indigenous member of any Australian parliament.
- 1990: Women in Switzerland gain the right to vote in all Swiss cantons on local issues.
- 1994: 17 million black South Africans voted for the first time.

- 1999: Aden Ridgeway becomes the first Aboriginal person to use Indigenous language in Australian Federal parliament.
- 2013: Nova Peris appointed to the Senate, becoming the first Indigenous woman of Australian parliament.
- 2015: Women in Saudi Arabia able to vote for the first time.

Australia, Britain, and the United States of America were nations built on the principles of democracy, yet many of their citizens, whether they were women or people of colour didn't always have the right to vote in those democratic nations. Removing restrictions on these groups of people and extending this right to vote gave them access to more rights and freedoms. It involved more of a country's citizens in the ruling of the nation. In the same vein as Dewey's quote above, it was about bringing more democracy to those people.

Why is the right to vote so important when examining issues of democracy? Electoral systems and voting systems are a key link between democratic representation and citizens participating in the decision-making process. It is one way that citizens are empowered to be involved, voting for whom they believe will make the best representatives. This, of course, means on the reverse, that if groups of people, whether because of gender or skin colour, cannot vote, they cannot support the people they believe will represent their interests.

The term democracy comes from Greek. "Demos" means "the people" and "kratos" means "to rule", so together they reflect that people are involved in the ruling of the nation. Ancient Greeks had a very active concept of democracy, with all adult Greek citizens being required to take an active part of the direct democracy government. This involved selecting 500 citizens from Athens each year to actively serve in the government. Those selected would make new laws and control the political process for that year and all the citizens of Athens could vote on the proposed law. However, while ancient Greece is the foundation for the concept of democracy and the rights for citizens, their definition of citizens was different to how it is generally defined today and so their concept of democracy looked different too. Women, slaves, and children were not considered to be citizens, so they were not able to take a part in the decision-making process; and their system of direct democracy is rather different to the representative democracy we tend to think of today.

Whether the direct democracy of ancient Greece, the representative democracy found in countries such as the United States of America and India, or the mix of representative democracy and constitutional monarchy found in Australia, one of the most critical ways that individuals can influence

governmental decision-making is by casting a vote. It formally expresses a person's preference for one candidate over another. This right to vote is so important it is included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in which Article 21 states:

- 1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.*
- 2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.*
- 3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.*

While Lesson 11 will examine the Declaration in more detail, it is important to include this Article here because it succinctly states some of the fundamental principles of democracy and makes the core elements of democracy a fundamental human right, protected by law, including the right to vote. It is this fight for the right and freedom to vote that we will examine over this term, considering the journey taken in the United States of America, Australia and South Africa in extending the concept of democracy to include all of its citizens as having the right and ability to be a part of the processes of democracy. As American Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote in 1964:

The right to vote freely for the candidate of one's choice is of the essence of a democratic society, and any restrictions on that right strike at the heart of representative government.

Complementary Links

Please read the resources included in the Complementary Links for this lesson. They include information on Australia's representative democracy and constitutional monarchy and what democracy really meant for ancient Athens and the role elections played in that system.

Notebook Entry

Like all of our subjects, for each of the lessons presented this semester there is so much more that can be read and learned! This is a huge topic that can seem hard and too entangled, seemingly raising more questions than answers sometimes. However, sometimes being able to formulate the questions we wish to ask is what shows us precisely what we have learned.

So, for your Notebook Entry for this lesson please write up a Q and A, that is, a Question and Answer section. Consider what you think the key themes are of this lesson and seek to explain them to someone else in a Q and A format. For example:

Q: What is democracy?

A: Coming from the Greek words “demos” (meaning “people”) and “kratos” (meaning “to rule”), democracy means to rule by the people. A democratic nation is one that has a system of government which allows and facilitates its citizens being involved in the decision-making process.