

## Politics

### Parliamentary questions

- In groups of three or four, discuss the differences between these systems of government: democracy, communism, fascism, benevolent dictatorship.
- Work in groups. Answer these questions about UK politics.

What are the main political parties in the UK? (Labour, Liberal Democrats, Conservative)

What are the two Houses of Parliament? (Commons, Lords)

Who is the current Prime Minister of the UK?

Who are the leaders of the opposition?

What does MP stand for? (Member of Parliament)

How many MPs are there in the UK? (659)

How often are there elections for parliament? (Every five years, at the longest)

What is the Palace of Westminster? (Houses of Parliament)

When did women get the vote? (1918)

Where does the Prime Minister live? (10 Downing Street)

What's the name of the clock tower in Westminster Palace? (Big Ben - actually the name of the bell)

Can you name one of the more radical parties in the UK? (British National Party, Socialist Worker's Party)

Can you name a famous Prime Minister from the past? (Churchill, Thatcher, etc.)

What does 'Tory' mean? (Conservative)

(Variation: Ask these questions about US politics.)

What are the main political parties in the USA? (Republican, Democrat)

What are the two Houses of Congress? (Senate, House of Representatives)

Who is the current President of the USA?

How many Representatives/Senators are there? (435/100)

How often are there elections for President/Representatives/Senators? (every 4/6/2 years)

Where is the American government located? (Capitol Hill)

Where does the president live? (The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue)

When did women get the vote? (1869 -in Wyoming)

How many former US presidents can you name?

(Single nationality classes.) Write a similar set of questions about your own parliamentary system to test the other groups. Swap questions with another group to answer.

(Mixed nationality classes.) Tell each other about the political system in your country.

### **Frontiers**

Work in small groups and write a short definition of a country. Try to include as many of these factors as you can.

language, geography, ethnic minorities, regional autonomy, religion, history, colonialism

Give some examples of groups who are fighting for their independence, e.g. the Kurds in Iraq, the Tibetans in China. Which of these factors are relevant to their arguments? What methods do they use to achieve their aims? What do you think of their struggle? What do you think is the best solution to each problem?

What would happen if there were no frontiers?

### **Debate**

Here is a motion for a debate: There's nothing wrong with stealing from the rich to give to the poor.

Work in two groups: those for the motion and those against. (Place undecided students in the smaller group. One student could chair the debate.)

Brainstorm your arguments, and anticipate the arguments of the other side. Choose three people to represent the group. Conduct the debate, following this sequence.

1. Group A, present your arguments for the motion. Group B, present your arguments against the motion.

2. Group A, support your arguments and criticise Group B's arguments. Group B, support your arguments and criticise Group A's arguments.
3. Group A, sum up. Group B, sum up.
4. Take a class vote.

(With large classes, run two debates at opposite ends of the room. Here are some alternative topics. Write up a contentious statement as a motion.)

censorship of the press,    military service,    blood sports,    GM food,    euthanasia, the welfare state,    zoos,    cloning,    terrorism,    globalisation,    drugs,    environment
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### **Good and bad**

Work in two teams, A and B. When I call out the topic, someone from team A must quickly give an advantage. Then someone from team B must quickly give a disadvantage, beginning with 'Yes, but ... '.

TV, cars, soap, clothes, death, alcohol, the monarchy, coffee, having a baby, the welfare state, freedom, being self-employed, cats and dogs, English as a world language, hitchhiking, living in the UK, computers, being a man, being a woman
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(Variation: Alternate which team gives the advantage and disadvantage.)

### **Sort it out**

Work in small groups. Imagine you live together and that there are lots of problems in the house. When I tell you the problem, you should discuss it and agree what to do. However, one of you is being obstructive; whatever the others agree to do, you oppose. (Choose one student in each group to play this role.)

the spiders in the bath
the mice in the kitchen
the smelly old carpet
the broken window
the neighbours' parties
the dog hairs at the sofa
all the dirty dishes
the overgrown garden

## Equal opportunities

What is a 'minority group' in society? Do you think minorities are treated fairly in your country? Can you think of any political figures who have fought for the rights of oppressed minorities?

In small groups, discuss and agree an equal opportunities policy for a large company. Choose a secretary to keep notes of your decisions. Include these issues.

race, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, political opinion, language

## Left and right

Shout out some areas of policy for a political party. (Write them on the board.)

education, economy, environment, immigration, the national health system,  
international relations, transport, agriculture, education, crime, defence

Work in three groups: A, B and C.

Group A, you are a right-wing party. Agree your policy on the areas you brainstormed. Group B, you are a left-wing party. Agree your policy on the areas you brainstormed. Group C, you are TV journalists. Prepare some questions about each area of policy.

Work in groups of three, one each from groups A, B and C. Role-play a short TV debate about each area of policy.

## Projects

- Make notes about a major political story happening at the moment. Sources can include radio news, newspapers, the Internet or conversations with other people who are interested in the same story. Compose a news report to read out to the class. If there are two of you interested in the same story, do it as newsreader and an on-the-spot reporter.
- Visit the White House website and make notes about what the US president is doing at the moment. Compare notes with a partner.