



Activity 1

How do people decide how to vote?

Curriculum Links

Learning for Life and Work: Local and Global Citizenship

Key Concept - Democracy and Active Participation

Exploring Democracy and Active Participation provides opportunities for young people to understand how to participate in and to influence democratic processes and to be aware of some key democratic institutions and their role in promoting inclusion, justice and democracy.

Pupils should have opportunities to:

Investigate the basic characteristics of democracy, for example, participation, the rule of law, promotion of equality and human rights etc.

This text comes from the Statutory Order for the NI Curriculum detailing minimum requirements for Local and Global Citizenship, available in pdf form here:

http://cea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/curriculum/area_of_learning/learning_life_work/local_global_citiz/ks3_citizenship.pdf

Setting the Scene

The materials in this section deal with issues raised by the chairs of the various committees with responsibilities for holding Ministers to account across the departments of Government.

It is suggested that these issues can be used as the basis for class work to investigate and consider various topics that will have relevance to Learning for Life and Work, and for Citizenship and Employability in particular.

The materials are suitable for KS3 and KS4 classes, although KS3 classes may need some preparation beforehand, particularly in terms of the specialist vocabulary necessary to follow what the speakers are talking about.

Teachers should preview the videos and decide on one or two that contain coverage of issues that are most relevant to the Citizenship material that pupils have been studying in class. The materials here provide an outline structure for using four of the videos. A similar sequence can be used if teachers find that other of the videos are more appropriate to the direction their classes have been following.

In each case it is recommended that an introductory exercise be used before viewing any of the videos. The introduction is to set the context for the issues raised by the politicians in terms of how they might influence voters. For your class to be ready to engage with the videos, a short session on familiarisation with the vocabulary is suggested. Pupils will need to be familiar with some of the specialist terms and vocabulary associated with the Assembly and with elections. Later, pupils can watch one of the videos selected by the teacher, and consider how the issues raised might influence voters in terms of matters that are of particular concern to them when deciding how to cast their vote. It can also be used to get the class used to working in small groups and using online sources of information to investigate the issues.



1a: Introduction

Teacher introduces the activity along the lines of:

In this sequence of lessons we're going to be examining some of the issues that are the responsibility of the NI Assembly and Executive. In particular we're going to consider how the decisions they have made might influence the electorate as they decide how they will cast their vote in the election.

Task

Teacher sets the task along the lines of:

In pairs, list three reasons why people choose to vote for one candidate rather than another. What influences their decision about how to vote?

Pairs report back to class, teacher compiles the responses until all the ideas are collected.

Teacher then summarises, along the lines of the following bullet points:

Most people decide how they are going to vote based on the candidates that are standing in their area. They choose the candidate to vote for based on a range of possible factors:

- Which parties are fielding candidates in the area (not every party puts up candidates for every seat).
- Existing party allegiances (perhaps voters have always voted for a particular party, perhaps based on their parents' preferences, or perhaps because of previous positive perceptions about that party).
- Track record of the candidates—perhaps the sitting candidate has done well for the area during the last Assembly, or alternatively did poorly, leading to voters confirming or changing their allegiances.
- Track record of the candidate's party—sometimes voters are more concerned with the party than with the candidate representing the party. Perhaps the voter supports the policies advocated by one party and disagrees with the position of another, and will choose to vote for the party they support regardless of the person standing for election.

- Sometimes, voters base their decision about who to vote for based on particular issues that concern them. For example, those concerned about climate change, biodiversity and genetically engineered crops might be more inclined to vote for a candidate representing the Green party because the Green Party's concerns are similar to their own.

The next part of the sequence then moves on to emphasise that many people make up their mind about how to cast their vote for emotional and historical reasons rather than looking more closely at what the parties are saying on specific issues like health care, economic development, climate change etc.

The point is to emphasise that well-informed voters might choose to vote in ways that are not merely about historical allegiances or family traditions, but are based on wider considerations.

The videos can then be used to draw attention to particular issues that might influence voters in their choice of who to vote for if they have specific concerns with the issues discussed.

There could also be some coverage of 'swing voters' and how parties get judged on their previous performance.



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1b: Sorting out the meanings

Teacher sets the task along the lines of:

In this session we're going to be looking at some of the particular issues that are the concern of government, and reflecting on how the issues could affect voters' choices beyond party allegiances. Note that many of the issues talked about in the videos are of concern to all the parties involved in the NI Assembly, not just the party that the speaker belongs to. Don't make the mistake of assuming that because the speaker in the video comes from a particular political party that only their party wants to take action on the issues mentioned.

Make sure you know the meaning of these words and expressions as you investigate the topic of the NI Assembly and associated elections.

Working in pairs, look at the entries for these terms using Wikipedia. Between yourselves decide on the important points and draft your own definition using simple language that the rest of the class can understand.



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Election	Sitting candidate
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Election	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incumbent
Electorate	Party
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electoral_district	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_party
Vote	Assembly
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland_Assembly
Ballot	Parliament
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ballot	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament
Constituency	Legislation
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electoral_district	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislation
Democracy	Programme for Government
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland_Executive
Majority	Policy
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majority	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy
Proportional Representation	Committee
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proportional_representation	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Committee
Transferable vote	Minister
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single_transferable_vote	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_%28government%29
Suffrage	Accountability
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suffrage	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accountability#Political
Candidate	Electoral register
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Candidate#Candidates_in_elections	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electoral_roll
Poll	Government
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exit_poll	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government
Swing voters	Devolution
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swing_vote	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devolution#United_Kingdom
Direct Rule	Manifesto
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_rule	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manifesto