

Social Studies 11- Foundations of Government

Define *democracy* in your own words

1. What are the four features of Government in Canada?

Read Representative Democracy (pg.222)

2. What is the difference between representative democracy and direct democracy?

Discuss the following with a partner: Why is representative democracy better suited to Canada than direct democracy?

Read Constitutional Monarchy (pg.222-223)

3. **Define:** Constitutional Monarchy -

In Canada, the monarch is represented by the _____. Her name is _____.

4. What is the role and powers of the Governor General?

5. What are the three levels of government in the Federal System? Read pg. 224 (Figure 9-5) and write down 4 responsibilities for each level of government.

a.	a.	a.
b.	b.	b.
c.	c.	c.
d.	d.	d.

6. What are residual powers?

7. What is a political party?

8. What does the multi party system mean?

9. What are the five biggest political parties in Canada?

_____	_____
_____	_____

10. Who is Canada's Prime Minister and what party does he belong to?

they were a part of the oral (spoken) traditions of Canada's First Nations.

Our formal methods of decision making, including written laws and institutions such as elections, have their roots in the traditions of the nation states of Europe. European colonists brought their forms of government with them to North America. In Canada, the British parliamentary tradition became the basis for our national and provincial governments. The principal features of this tradition are representative democracy and constitutional monarchy.

Representative Democracy

Canada operates on democratic principles. **Democracy**, which means “rule by the people,” was first practised by the ancient Greeks. In the Greek city states, every eligible citizen participated directly by voting in all the decisions that affected society. This was called **direct democracy**. In modern societies, our large populations make this much involvement by each individual impractical. Instead, citizens in **representative**

democracies such as Canada allow elected representatives to make decisions on their behalf.

Constitutional Monarchy

Canada has strong historical ties to Great Britain, and has adopted many British political institutions and traditions. One of these is **constitutional monarchy**—the recognition of a monarch (king or queen) as head of state. The current monarch of Canada is Queen Elizabeth II, who is also the monarch of the United Kingdom and sixteen other nations that have some form of British political tradition. In Canada, the monarch is represented by the governor general.

Queen Elizabeth does not actually rule Canada—or any other nation—alone. She is not involved in the everyday affairs of governing the nation. For example, although royal assent is necessary before a proposed law is passed, this assent is rarely, if ever, withheld.

However, the presence of the monarch represents a crucial safeguard for our democracy. This is because she holds the powers of the

Figure 9-2 Democracy was established in Athens around 500 BCE. Citizens were guaranteed the right to membership in the Assembly, freedom of speech, and equality before the law. The Greek concept of “citizen” was limited to free men (not slaves or women) who owned property.

Thinking critically

What qualifications do you think should be required for a person to be considered a “citizen”?





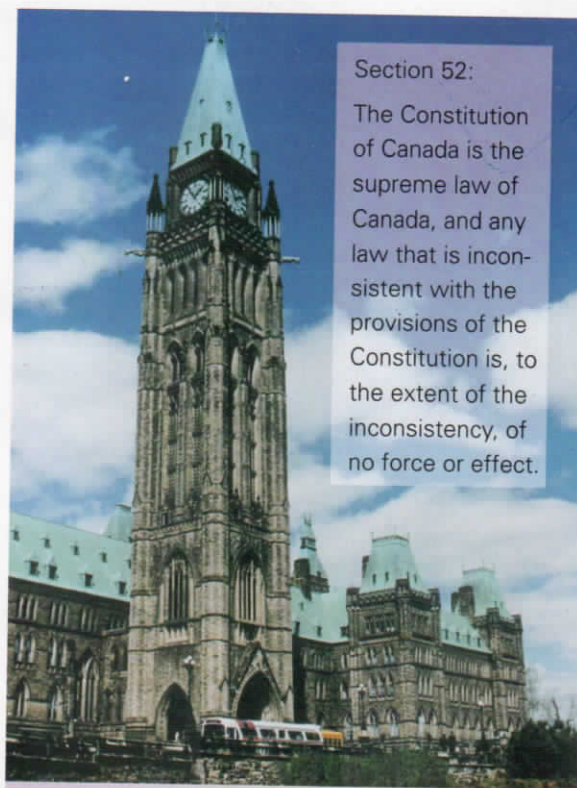
Figure 9-3 Queen Elizabeth signs Canada's constitutional proclamation in Ottawa on April 17, 1982, as Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau looks on.

Thinking critically Some people think we should cut our ties to the British monarchy. How would this change the structure of our government? Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not?

Crown. The Crown has ultimate power, beyond that held by any particular government at any particular time. Under our current system, the powers of the Crown are vested in the queen, and in the governor general as her representative.

For example, if the prime minister were to decide not to call an election within five years as required by law, the governor general could order him or her to do so—in the name of the Crown. If the prime minister refused, the governor general could call on the army to force the election. This ultimate authority ensures that no one, not even the leader of the nation, can ignore the law. This is the power of the Crown.

The powers and responsibilities of the monarch and the governor general, as well as those of citizens, elected representatives, and others who make up our government, have developed over time. The specific details are set out in the Canadian Constitution, a legal document that outlines who should have the power to make various decisions. Our Constitution is the supreme law of the land. It outlines the structure of our government and defines and limits the government's power. Canada is called a *constitutional monarchy* because the powers and responsibilities of the monarch are subject to the laws set forth in the Constitution. Not even the monarch is exempt from following these laws.



Section 52:

The Constitution of Canada is the supreme law of Canada, and any law that is inconsistent with the provisions of the Constitution is, to the extent of the inconsistency, of no force or effect.

Figure 9-4 An excerpt from the Canadian Constitution.

Identifying viewpoint What view of power and responsibility is evident in this excerpt? What does this indicate about our system of government?

The Written Constitution

Canada has both a written and an unwritten constitution. Most of the written part, drafted in 1867 during Confederation, was originally called the *British North America (BNA) Act*. The powers of the representatives of the citizens, the federal and provincial governments, and the monarch were set out in this act. Since its amendment in 1982, Canada's written Constitution now has three main parts:

- a description of the powers of provincial legislatures and Parliament, as well as their parts and authority
- a Charter of Rights and Freedoms that outlines the basic rights and responsibilities that all Canadians possess
- an amending formula, which sets out ways in which the Constitution may be changed or altered. This formula requires that the federal government and seven of the ten provinces agree on the proposed amendment or change. The seven provinces must make up at least one-half of the total population of Canada.

The Unwritten Constitution

There are other rules and practices concerning the roles and functions of Parliament and provincial legislatures that are unwritten. These are based on the thousand years of parliamentary tradition that we have inherited from Britain. These traditions, along with the written Constitution, provide the basis for the sharing of power between rulers and the people.

Numerous customs, laws, and statutes that are a part of the British tradition make up the unwritten part of our Constitution. For example, there is no mention of political parties in the Constitution Act, yet they are an important part of how we govern ourselves (see Chapter 10).

The Federal System

At the time of Confederation, the colonies of Canada East and Canada West (which became Quebec and Ontario, respectively), New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia were united to form

the nation of Canada. Unity would allow the once-separate colonies to pool their resources for defence, trade, and other common goals. However, none were willing to give up their autonomy completely to a central government. As a compromise, the Fathers of Confederation chose to unite these provinces under a *federal system*—an organization of regional governments (provinces), each acting on behalf of its own residents, with a central government in Ottawa responsible for matters vital to the nation as a whole. This system is sometimes referred to as *federalism*.

Areas that require a consistent national policy such as defence, currency, and the postal system were made a federal (or central) responsibility. The provincial governments were given jurisdiction over areas “best handled locally,” such as education. There are also areas of shared powers: for example, both the federal and provincial governments can create laws regarding agriculture, immigration, and the environment.

The Fathers of Confederation assigned all new areas of decision making that did not yet exist or were not listed in 1867 to the federal government as **residual** (leftover) **powers**. This is why the federal government is responsible for laws regarding telecommunications and information

Federal Responsibilities	Shared Responsibilities	Provincial Responsibilities
National Defence	Immigration	Education
Foreign Policy	Agriculture	Charities
Aboriginal Affairs	Health Care	Health Services & Hospitals
Postal Services	Natural Resources	Licences
Banking System	Environmental Issues	Highways
Marriage & Divorce Law		Provincial Court System
Criminal Law		Provincial Police & Prisons
Federal Prisons		

Figure 9-5 Some federal, provincial, and shared responsibilities.