

Majority Rule

Lesson Plan

Majority rule is a way of organizing a government and deciding public issues. In a democracy, decisions are made by voting with a majority determining the position of the entire group. It is often called a “winner-takes-all” system. This approach has the advantage of being able to produce a prompt and clear decision. However, simple majority rule does not create a consensus of opinion by the entire group, and in some governments the majority is free to ignore the wishes of the minority. Both the German and American systems of government have ways of checking the “tyranny of the majority” by requiring that some decisions be decided by a super-majority consisting of 60%, 2/3, or 3/4 of the voting group. In Germany, the multi-party system, and in the US, the division of the houses of Congress and the independent Executive Branch usually prevent tyranny by the majority. Federal laws also prevent the majority from disregarding the basic rights of the minority.

Key Concept for Elementary Students: What is a “majority” and what happens when we vote and the majority wins?

Materials: One printout of the Majority Rule coloring sheet for each student, and crayons or markers.

Procedure:

1. Write each vocabulary word on the board. Ask students to help define each word and write a simple definition after each word. Ask students to copy each NEW word onto their master vocabulary list and then copy the definitions.

Vocabulary

Citizen - someone who is a legal member of a group or country

City Hall - a building where government workers have their offices and work

Majority - the most

Rule - tells us how to act and what to do

Right - freedom or privilege to do something

Solution - to deal with a problem

Vote - when a person in a group makes a choice to decide something

2. Project the animated cartoon called Majority Rule. Discuss each frame after it has played. Discuss what a Majority is. Ask students to react to the cartoon when completed. Why did the ants want to vote on whether to let the Fat Cats build a hotel? Who was the winner? Was it the Majority? Was the solution fair?

3. Pass out the Majority Rule coloring sheet and ask students to draw a picture that shows how the majority makes decisions in their lives.

Assessment:

A review of each student’s drawing will help you assess whether each student has grasped the concept of Majority Rule. Consider reviewing the animation with students who did not depict an appropriate image on their coloring sheet. Practice how majority rules works in your classroom by voting on issues periodically.

