

Date Reviewed

February 2023

Course

[Social Studies 6](#)

Topic

Comparing Governments

Big Idea

Systems of government vary in their respect for human rights and freedoms.

Essential Question

How do the Canadian and American Systems of Government compare?

Content

Students are expected to know the following:

- different systems of government

Curricular Competencies

Students are expected to be able to do the following:

- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to — ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions

Core Competencies

[Communication](#) - I can explain how Canada's system of government differs from the United States'.

[Thinking](#) – I can analyze the benefits and problems of different systems of government.

[Personal and Social](#) - I can interact in a group and achieve consensus on an issue.

First People's Principles of Learning

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

Introduction

- Show the video [USA vs Canada](#) (4:04)
- Explain that the United States has a great influence on Canada. We share a border. We have similar culture. Our economies are closely connected. Our systems of government have

similarities too. However, there are some significant differences between the American and Canadian systems of government.

Pre-Assessment

- Encourage student discussion by using a [Think Pair Share](#) strategy to ask:
 - What do you already know about Canada’s government?
 - What do you already know about the United States’ government?

Interactive Learning Activities

- Provide each student with a copy of the graphic organizer “Comparing Canadian and American Systems of Government”.
- Have students use the interactive [How do the Canadian and American systems of government compare?](#) to complete the graphic organizer.
- Afterwards, go over the graphic organizer using “Answer Key: Comparing Canadian and American Systems of Government”.
- Divide students into seven groups and assign each group one area of difference between Canadian and American systems of government.
- Challenge each group to create one or two sentences explaining their assigned difference.
- Each group should come to consensus about whether their difference is more positive or negative for Canada. Encourage groups to have reasons to support their decision.
- Once groups have reached consensus, they should add their sentences to the board under either a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” symbol.

Post-Assessment

- Have students write a reflection to consider the following questions:
 - What is the most interesting thing you learned about Canada’s system of government?
 - When comparing systems of government in Canada and the United States, are the similarities or the differences more significant?

Extension Activities

- Students can watch this YouTube: [How does government impact your everyday?](#)

Additional References

Canada. “How Government Works.” 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/system/how-government-works.html>

Canada. Parliament of Canada. “Learn About Canada.” [2020?] https://lop.parl.ca/sites/Learn/default/en_CA

Canada. Parliament of Canada. “Our Country, Our Parliament: An Introduction to How Canada’s Parliament Works.” [2020?] <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.894819/publication.html>

Forsey, E. A. “How Canadians Govern Themselves. Chapter 4. Canadian and American Government.”. 10th edition. 2020. *Library of Parliament*. https://learn.parl.ca/staticfiles/Learn/assets/PDF/ParliamentaryPrimer/how_cdn_govern_themselves_10th_ed-e.pdf

“Government and Democracy.” 2015. *YouTube*.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgBBfM8SYPA&feature=emb_logo

Gow, J.I. and P. Bishop. “Government.” 2016. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/government>

Materials and Resources

Comparing Canadian and American Systems of Government

How are they the same?

--

How are they different?

Canada	With regard to...	United States
	Constitution	
	Languages	
	Head of State / Head of Government	
	Elections	
	Senators	
	Support of the House	
	Division of Powers	

Answer Key: Comparing Canadian and American Systems of Government

How are they the same?

- Democratic, federal states
- Similar cultures

How are they different?

Canada	With regard to...	United States
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written (Canadian and British statutes) • Unwritten (traditions, customs, conventions) 	Constitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One written document
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two official languages (French and English) 	Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One language (English)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queen (represented by Governor General) is head of state • Prime Minister is head of government 	Head of State / Head of Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President is both head of state and head of government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections every 5 years • No limit to how long person can be Prime Minister 	Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President can only be elected to a maximum of 2 terms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointed by Governor General • Serve until age 75 	Senators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected for fixed terms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime Minister needs the support of the House of Commons in order to maintain power 	Support of the House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President and Congress may disagree but President remains in power until end of term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralization—broadened powers of provinces and narrowed power of federal government 	Division of Powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralization—broadened federal power and narrowed powers of states