

## Lesson Plan

**Title:** Making it Fair

**Author:** Diane Vautour

**Magazine Issue:** This lesson is inspired by the articles “Scenes from the Bad Old Days” and “The Election Trail” in the September 2024 issues of *Kayak: Canada’s History Magazine for Kids*.

**Grade Level:** 7/8/9/10

### Themes:

- National Politics
- Other: Civics and Citizenship

**Subject Area:** Social Studies/Civics

**Lesson Overview:** Fairness is a main principle of democracy. However, many instances of unfairness have occurred in democracies in the past and continue to occur today. Students will generate ideas about what fairness means to them and then extend those ideas to elections. They will look at past examples of unfairness and note how Canadian elections have changed to address those injustices. Finally, students will research examples of current issues in Canadian elections and/or elections around the world and think about how they should be addressed to create fairness.

### Historical Thinking Concepts:

- Identify *continuity and change*

### Background Information:

Elections in Canada weren’t as peaceful and orderly as they are now. Students will read the cartoon piece, “Scenes from the Bad Old Days,” to learn about past injustices and how they created unfairness for many groups. The feature, “The Election Trail,” helps students to see how fair elections are today as a reference point. By considering how fair elections are all over Canada, as well as possibly around the world, students will gain an understanding of the degree to which fairness is achieved in different democracies.

## The Lesson Activity:

### Activating

- In partners or small groups, ask students to define fairness. What is fair? They can give examples from their everyday lives (e.g. fairness between siblings, fair rules for a game). Ask them to explain what fairness means to them on a basic level. Students should generate short sentences or key words. They can use post-it notes, chart paper or white boards, or a digital app to share their thoughts.

Teacher Tip: if students struggle with this question, ask students to explain what fairness looks like and feels like. How do they feel when they are treated fairly? Conversely, they may find it easier to explain what unfairness is using these prompts.

- Create a class list of criteria for fairness using students' thoughts. Some examples may be: everyone is treated equally, everyone is included, instructions and rules are clear, there are no secret rules, everyone's voice is heard.
- Keep the class list in a visible location for the duration of the lesson.

### Acquiring

- Students will begin by listing all the ways unfairness existed historically in Canada's election rules and processes using the article "Scenes from the Bad Old Days" on page 20 in the "Choosing Canada's Leaders" issue of *Kayak: Canada's History Magazine for Kids*. Ask students to keep a list on chart paper or a digital whiteboard. Their responses should include:
  - » voters insulted each other's preferred candidates and got into altercations (20 people died in election-related violence)
  - » election organizers divided up areas so they could increase the amount of people voting for who they wanted them to vote for
  - » each province had their own rules about elections
  - » there did not seem to be a lot of rules like a candidate could just run for election in whatever area (riding) they wanted to
  - » voters had to state their choice in public and could be intimidated to change their vote
  - » people in positions of power tried to force others to vote how they wanted them to vote

- » business owners tried to intimidate their workers to vote a certain way
  - » people running for election were bribing voters with free things and prizes
  - » there didn't seem to be any rules to verify who a voter was so they could vote many times or in many different areas/ridings
  - » members of the House of Commons were found to have cheated during their election campaigns and had to quit
- In partners or small groups, ask students to rate how fair Canada's elections seemed to be based on these historical examples. This can be a simple 1 (very unfair) to 5 (very fair). Ask students to prepare one reason to justify their ranking and share with the class. Alternately, students can physically line up in a ranking scale with students who select very unfair at one end of the line and others placing themselves along the line to very fair at the other end. Students can then share their reasoning with each other in line.
  - Next, using the article, "The Election Trail," and some details from the end of "Scenes from the Bad Old Days," students will create a list of how these past unfair and unjust processes have been addressed to increase fairness in Canadian elections today. A simple chart paper or worksheet with columns titled "Historical Unfairness in Elections" → "Making it Fair Today" will work.
  - If students can't find information in *Kayak*, ask them to brainstorm how they would make it fair today. At the end of the sharing process in a whole class discussion, highlight the areas that need further research. Divide students into groups and have them research how the issue has been addressed today.
  - You can refer to the Teacher Key for guidance on responses.

### Applying

- Students can provide a final ranking for how fair or unfair Canada's elections seem to be today using the same format described above and share their reasoning with each other or the class.
- An exit ticket, with the prompt: How fair do Canada's elections seem to you?, would also be appropriate to assess student learning.

### **Extension Activity:**

- The lesson can be extended to look at contemporary examples of unfairness in Canada's elections today and/or elections around the world. In partners or small groups, students can research elections and look for examples of unfairness (e.g. voters not being registered properly, long lineups at voting sites, mistakes with voter information cards, corruption, voter intimidation, lack of choice in candidates, use of force/violence) and then consider whether they wish to change their final ranking on how fair Canada's elections seem to be.

### **Resources**

[Voting in Early Canada](#), The Canadian Encyclopedia.

[Half the world will vote in 2024, but how many elections will be fair?](#), Toby James and Holly Ann Garnett, The Conversation, 15 March 2024.

## Making it Fair Teacher Key

“Historical Unfairness in Elections”	“Making it Fair Today”
There didn’t seem to be any rules to verify who a voter was so they could vote many times or in many different areas/ridings.	The Dominion Elections Act was a bill passed by the House of Commons of Canada in 1920. The Act established Elections Canada, which oversees elections today. It maintains the National Register of Electors and International Register of Electors. The first national list of people eligible to vote was created in 1917. In 1930, government workers started going door to door to take names of electors, a process called enumeration. The last one, in 1997, was used to create the electronic National Register of Electors.
Voters had to state their choice in public and could be intimidated to change their vote.	In 1855, New Brunswick was the first province to switch to voting in private. This was passed federally in 1874. ( <a href="#">source</a> )
People in positions of power tried to force others to vote how they wanted them to vote business owners tried to intimidate their workers to vote a certain way.	Before the secret ballot, there was ample opportunity to influence or intimidate voters as they went to publicly declare their choice to an official. Economic intimidation was another, equally blunt instrument. What man could risk voting openly against the wishes of an employer or landlord? The vague property qualifications that were required of anyone who wished to vote or run for office also left the system open to disputes and abuses. The secret ballot would ensure true democratic elections. ( <a href="#">source</a> )
Election organizers divided up areas so they could increase the amount of people voting for who they wanted them to vote for.	Canada is divided into geographic areas called ridings, each of which elects one Member of Parliament. The number of ridings is reviewed every 10 years.
There did not seem to be a lot of rules like a candidate could just run for election in whatever area (riding) they wanted to.	Today, political parties each choose a person to be their candidate in some or all of the country’s ridings. A person could also run as an independent, without a party connection. A candidate can only run for election in one riding.
People running for election were bribing voters with free things and prizes.	At first, candidates could spend as much as they wanted on whatever they wanted while trying to get elected. In 1874, new rules meant they had to say how much they spent and on what but didn’t limit that spending. For years, there also weren’t any limits on how much companies and individual people could donate to a candidate or party for an election. Starting in 1920, candidates had to say who gave them money and how much. The 1974 Election Expenses Act set out a lot more rules about spending and donations.