

1. Democracy

To mark the United Nations 'International Day of Democracy' on 15th September, this week's lesson is based on two opinions about the advantages and failings of democratic systems of government.

Level

Upper intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level B2 and above)

How to use the lesson

1. Ask your students what they understand by democracy. What does a democratic system of government consist of? What do they think are the advantages and disadvantages of democracy?
2. Give your students between five and ten minutes to read through Worksheet A, encouraging them to look up new vocabulary. Note, however, that many of the words that might be new are not in the glossary because they form part of Exercise 1.
3. Give each student a copy of Worksheet B, then divide the class into pairs and ask students to work together to complete Exercise 1, in which they have to find the words to match the definitions.
4. Check answers in open class. At this point you might want to ask the students if they agree or disagree with any of the opinions expressed by Karen or Andy, and if so, in what ways.
5. Keeping the students in their pairs, hand out Worksheet C and ask the students to work together to complete the different types of comprehension questions in Exercises 2 and 3.
6. Check answers in open class.

Answers:

Exercise 1

1. have a say
2. infuriating
3. elect
4. pass
5. bother
6. proposal
7. apathy
8. so-called
9. biased
10. see the full picture
11. address
12. industrialised
13. catastrophe
14. addicted
15. authoritarian

Exercise 2

1. T
2. F
3. D
4. F
5. F
6. F
7. D
8. T

Exercise 3

1. She says the parliaments people elect are always passing laws that affect people's lives, either for better or worse.
2. In the way that having more money helps a political party 'get its message across more easily'.
3. Because they don't pay enough attention.
4. It is generally biased in favour of one political party.
5. She suggests people should bother to study the parties' proposals.
6. The fact that people in history have fought and died for democracy.
7. Andy says there will probably be an environmental catastrophe unless industrialised countries start slowing down their consumption of the world's resources – but doubts that people in those countries will vote for the measures that are necessary to avoid that. He doesn't, however, seem to be looking forward to the prospect of a more authoritarian form of government, as he says 'It's not a comfortable thought'.
8. Andy says the important decisions are taken only by a small group of people (specifically those 'at the top of the political party in power'), while Karen contrasts democracy with systems in which 'power is in the hands of a small group of people'.

2. Related Websites

Send your students to these websites, or just take a look yourself.

<http://www.un.org/en/events/democracyday/demoun.shtml>

A text on 'Democracy and the United Nations' from the UN website, with links on the left-hand side to other pages on the subject of democracy. Challenging for upper-intermediate level.

<http://www.ipu.org/dem-e/idd/about.htm>

Information about the International Day of Democracy from the website of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Challenging for upper-intermediate level.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy>

The *Wikipedia* entry for democracy. Challenging for upper-intermediate level.