



Global Voices Information Sheet

Social media and government 2.0



Background

- In Egypt, social media helped bring down the oppressive leader Hosni Mubarak.
- Protestors tweeted news of military raids and violent protests to gain international support.
- One protestor said, "We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world."
- Social media makes it possible to spread information farther and faster than ever.
- In Canada, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government was recently found in contempt. This means that the Conservatives lost the trust of the House of Commons because they refused to share information about the costs of certain government programs.
- Harper was forced to resign, and a federal election was called, which will take place on May 2, 2011.
- The Canadian government fell, in part because they refused to be transparent and share information with the public.
- Social media has changed how people interact with governments. It can support a revolution and it can change ideas about transparency.

Key terms

- **Social media**—the use of internet-based and mobile technology to have conversations and create user-generated content (examples are Facebook and Twitter)
- **Transparency**—Honesty and clarity surrounding a decision-making process, when the rules and reasons behind actions are understood by those involved; free sharing of information to invite collaboration
- **Policy**—basic principles by which a government is guided; declared goals that a government seeks to achieve
- **Generation**—All of the people born and living at about the same time, at around the same age. Mothers and daughters are from different generations
- **NDP=New Democratic Party**—A federal political party in Canada
- **MP=Member of Parliament**—An elected representative of voters to a parliament

Global Voices Elementary Educator Resources

Note to Educators:

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. Activities are structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Extension and conclusion activities are included to challenge students and finally, encourage them to reflect on the issues at hand.

Since these activities are designed as discussions rather than formal lessons, assessment strategies are not included.

Themes and Course Connections

- Themes: Canada, elections, the Canadian federal election, social media, communication, political parties, and voting.
- Course Connections: The Arts, Language, Science and Technology, and Social Studies.

Materials

- Chart paper or blackboard
- Computers and internet
- Global Voices column

Specific Expectations and Learning Goals

Students will:

- Develop and express responses to issues and problems.
- Reassess their responses to issues on the basis of new information.
- Participate in active group work and class discussions.
- Communicate effectively in written and spoken language or other forms of expression.
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically.
- Develop, express, and defend a position on an issue and explain how to put the ideas into action.

Knowledge and Understanding

1. What is Social Media? (estimated time: 20 minutes)
 - a. Divide the students into groups of four and distribute chart paper to each group.
 - b. Ask groups to write the title "Social Media" in the middle of the paper.
 - c. Tell groups to create a word web around the title writing words and drawing images they associate with social media.
 - d. When groups have completed their word webs, ask them to stand in front of the room and describe their work.
 - e. Following the presentations, ask students to list the primary social media sites that they use or people in their life use (e.g.: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blog sites etc.). Write student suggestions on the board.

- f. When this list is complete, ask students to write a reflection about one of the social media sites listed on the board answering the following:
 - i. What are its benefits?
 - ii. How does it connect people?
 - iii. What are the different ways in which it is used?
 - iv. What does it look like? (example: colours, themes, layout, popular symbols etc.)

Thinking

1. Guided Reading: The Global Voices Column (estimated time: 20 minutes)
 - a. Have students sit in a circle and distribute one copy of the Global Voices column to each student.
 - b. Pre-reading steps:
 - i. Make predictions: ask students to read the title of the column and view the pictures. After doing so, ask them to make predictions as to what the column is going to be about.
 - ii. Introduce vocabulary: politics, election, political parties, social media and federal election.
 - iii. Assess prior knowledge: ask students to discuss what they already know about these topics.
 - c. Reading steps:
 - i. Go around the circle and have each student read a section of the column to the class so that everyone gets a turn to read.
 - ii. As students are reading, offer guidance and coaching by providing prompts, asking questions, and encouraging attempts at reading strategy application.
 - d. Post reading steps:
 - i. Encourage students to provide a summary of the column in order to ensure they have understood the series of events.
 - ii. Ask questions about the text to judge comprehension.
2. Media Literacy (estimated time: 15 minutes)
 - a. On a piece of paper ask each student to write the title of the column at the top of the page. Underneath the heading, have them create a chart with two columns across and five rows down.
 - b. In the first column, have them write the following questions:
 - i. What is the title of this column?
 - ii. Who is the author?
 - iii. What is the purpose of the column?
 - iv. What statistics or facts are listed in the column?
 - v. Are there biases or obvious points of view?
 - c. Have the students revisit the Global Voices column and fill in the chart answering the above questions.
 - d. Discuss the students' charts as a class. Address the reasons why it is important to understand the source and potential bias of a website or print resource offering news information. Explain that just because a source has a bias doesn't mean it has no value. One of the traditional purposes of publications is to express opinions and attempt to convince readers of their validity. Explain that this is why it's important for each of them to form their own opinion while reading publications instead of agreeing with everything.

Communication

1. Canadian Parliament (estimated time: 30 minutes)
 - a. Ask students to identify the parties in the Canadian parliament and the leaders of each party.

- b. Show students the following party websites and discuss what issues are most important to each party:
 - i. New Democratic Party of Canada <http://www.ndp.ca/>
 - ii. Liberal Party of Canada <http://www.liberal.ca/>
 - iii. Conservative party of Canada <http://www.conservative.ca/>
 - iv. Green Party of Canada <http://greenparty.ca/>
 - v. Bloc Québécois <http://www.blocquebecois.org/accueil.aspx>
- c. Ask students to create a poster about the Canadian federal election representing each party.
- d. Display completed posters around the school.

Application

1. Keeping up with the Canadian Federal Election through Twitter (estimated time: continuous project)
 - a. In the Global Voices column, this upcoming Canadian federal election is referred to as the “social media election.” Ask students to explain what this means, using evidence from the column.
 - b. Create a class Twitter account using www.twitter.com
 - c. Explain to students that as a class, they are going to follow the Canadian federal election through Twitter.
 - d. After creating the account, ask students what they think they must do to keep up with the election process. (e.g.: follow all of the party leaders, follow national newspapers and news sites etc.). Set up the Twitter account as suggested.
 - e. Divide the class into pairs. Assign each pair to a different day.
 - f. When their day comes, the pairs must monitor the Twitter account and inform the class of any election news they read about on Twitter that day. Each time pairs inform the class of different election news, ask the students to discuss the implications of this news as well as their personal opinions.
 - g. Before the election takes place, ask students to reflect on their experience with Twitter as a class, identifying the things they learned about the social media site as a source of information as well as what they learned about the election. At this time, ask students to explain (if they are willing) how they would vote after participating in this project.
 - h. Ask students to write a reflection about their experience while monitoring the Twitter account.

Additional Resources

In addition to the above lesson plans, you may want to share some additional resources with your students. Listed below are some links to useful online resources:

Free The Children www.freethechildren.com

Lead Now www.leadnow.ca

Move On www.moveon.org

Canadian Parliament <http://www.parl.gc.ca/common/index.asp?Language=E>

New Democratic Party of Canada <http://www.ndp.ca/>

Liberal Party of Canada <http://www.liberal.ca/>

Conservative party of Canada <http://www.conservative.ca/>

Green Party of Canada <http://greenparty.ca/>

Bloc Québécois <http://www.blocquebecois.org/accueil.aspx>