



Global Voices Information Sheet

Canada and Congo's election



A man holds a ballot and riot police stand guard while voters head to Congo's polls (Source: cbsnews.com)

Background Info

- The Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo or DRC, formerly known as Zaire) is a very large country in central Africa that is bordered by nine nations, including Rwanda, a very small country to its east.
- In 1994, ethnic tensions grew in Rwanda between Tutsi and Hutu tribes to the point of mass genocide. Over 500,000 people were killed in just a few months. Many refugees fled Rwanda for Congo, including rogue militias who carried out cross border raids. The Rwandan government was concerned that the refugees in Congo were planning an invasion.
- The Rwandan army attacked with support from neighboring countries Uganda and Angola, targeting Rwandan militias, but also killing Congo civilians.
- By 1998, war broke out in Congo. The Great War of Africa, involving eight African nations, had four million casualties, with another one million people perishing later from war-related malnutrition or disease. Even more people were displaced from their homes.
- In 2003, a formal peace agreement was reached, but the fighting didn't stop and violent conflict in Congo continues to this day.
- The conflict continues, partly, due to the mineral trade, since rebel armies control some of Congo's mines. The international community (including Canada which holds over \$1 billion in private mining investments), buy minerals from Congo.
- The international community has an interest in establishing peace and good government in Congo partly because of its mineral resources. Another important reason to establish peace is the Congo's strategic position in central Africa, where internal conflict can cause instability for its border countries.

Key terms

- **Logistics**—the detailed coordination of a complex operation involving many people, facilities, or supplies
- **Think tank**—a body of experts providing advice and ideas on specific political or economic problems, usually advising governments
- **Moral imperative**—a principal that compels a person (or organization, or government) to act
- **Orange Revolution**—a series of protests that took place in the Ukraine after the presidential run-off vote in 2004, which was said to be ruined by voter intimidation, corruption and fraud
- **Paradoxical**—seemingly absurd or self-contradictory

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: elections, voting, democracy, the Democratic Republic of Congo, political unrest, civil war, international aid and investment.
- Course Connections: The Arts, Language, Social Studies.

Materials

- Chart paper or blackboard
- Blank paper and colouring utensils
- 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.

Reading Comprehension

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:
 - 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.

Knowledge and Understanding

1. Discussing the Global Voices Column (estimated time: 10 minutes)
 - a. Ask students the following suggested questions about the column, encourage them to use evidence from the Global Voices column to support their answers:
 - i. What is the message in this column?
 - ii. What perspectives are presented in this column? Which ones are left out?
 - iii. What problem is presented in this column?
 - iv. What events are discussed in this column?
 - v. What is democracy?
 - vi. What are the stages of a federal election?
 - vii. What were the results of the current election that took place in the Congo?
 - b. Before concluding this discussion, ensure students have a sound understanding of the Global Voices column and the issues at hand.

Thinking

1. Congo Commons (estimated time: 20 minutes)
 - a. Ask students to sit in a circle.
 - b. Explain that you will name a thing or a place and then each person must respond with the first word or statement that comes to mind.
 - c. Say, “The Democratic Republic of Congo”. Go around the circle to give everyone a chance to respond.
 - d. When the sharing circle is complete, lead a more guided discussion about the Congo using the following suggested questions:
 - i. Where is the Congo located? Ask students to identify the country on a world map.
 - ii. What language(s) is (are) spoken in the Congo?
 - iii. What are residents of the Congo called?
 - iv. What are some of the major events that have taken place in the Congo’s history?
 - v. What struggles do the people of the Congo face?
 - vi. What is taking place in the Congo right now?
 - e. When this discussion is complete, ask students to return to their desks and create an acrostic poem for the word “Congo” (or “Democratic Republic of Congo”). Students will write “Congo” vertically down the left hand side of their page and use each letter to write a word or statement about the Congo.
 - f. Encourage students to decorate their poems incorporating colours and images.
 - g. Display completed acrostics around the classroom.

Communication

1. Investment Debate (estimated time: 20 minutes)
 - a. In the Global Voices column, it is stated that Canada has given the Congo millions of Canadian aid dollars to buy medical supplies and send children to

- school; however Canada is stifling this progress by not supporting the Congo's bid for democracy. Address this statement with the students.
- b. Divide the class into groups of four and in these groups, ask students to join into partners.
 - c. Explain to students that they will have small debates in their groups where one set of partners will argue for the above statement, while the other set of partners will argue against the above statement.
 - d. Provide pairs time to formulate their arguments and allow the debates to begin.
 - e. Circulate the room, listing the arguments that have been formed, on the board.
 - f. When debates are complete, bring the class back together and ask groups to summarize the events of their debate. Talk about Canada's involvement with the Congo and any conclusions students reached while having their debates.

Application

1. Mock Election (estimated time: 30 minutes)
 - a. Explain to the class that they need a new classroom helper who will act as an assistant to the teacher. This assistant will help students understand their work, perform duties around the classroom and help solve problems that arise. Explain to students that there are two candidates for this role:
 - i. Candidate 1 (the fun helper): Promises to deal with classroom problems by handing out prizes to those involved and to make the classroom a fun and exciting place to be. This candidate always wants to ensure that students are having a good time.
 - ii. Candidate 2 (the community helper): Promises to deal with classroom problems through active discussions, ensuring all sides are heard so the class can act as a community and come to a compromise together. This candidate wants to ensure that the students experience academic and social success.
 - b. Discuss with the class which candidate would be most helpful in specific situations using the following suggested questions:
 - i. In what situations would the Candidate 1's leadership tactics benefit the class the most?
 - ii. In what situations would Candidate 2's leadership tactics benefit the class the most?
 - iii. In the short term, who provides the best solution?
 - iv. In the long run, who provides the best solution?
 - c. Place a ballot box at the front of the room. On a blank piece of paper ask students to write the names of both of the candidates, placing a check mark beside the candidate they would like to vote for.
 - d. When the voting polls have been closed, ask two student volunteers to count the votes, revealing each candidates total and the winner to the class. Discuss the results as a class using the following suggested questions:
 - i. Is anyone disappointed by the results?
 - ii. Is anyone excited about the results?
 - iii. How is the class going to benefit from the results of this election?
 - iv. How are the dynamics of the class going to change now that this candidate has been elected into this position?
 - e. Hold a discussion about elections and voting:
 - i. What are the differences between short term pleasure (Candidate 1), versus long term results and change (Candidate 2)?
 - ii. Why is it important to vote?
 - iii. Why is it important to learn about the campaigns of the different candidates before voting?
 - iv. How do the results of an election affect you?
 - f. Relate this activity back to the election in the Congo and discuss why the election was important to the people of the Congo.

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

We Day Teach - <http://www.weday.com/teach>