

***If I Ran the Country* by Rich Knight**

Notes for Teachers

What would you do if YOU ran the country?

This fun, smart-thinking introduction to politics gives kids the chance to run their own country, learning everything from elections and tackling big issues like climate change, to teamwork and leadership skills along the way.

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These resources have been created
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Activities

The activities included here are based on the themes covered in *If I Ran the Country* and are suitable for home learning or in the classroom. For pupils aged 9+

Explore Themes of: ✓ Politics ✓ Leadership ✓ Personal values ✓ Fairness ✓ Teamwork

Subject Checklist: ✓ PSHE ✓ Citizenship ✓ History ✓ Literacy

Contents

Key Words

Idea 1: Democracy

Objectives: To understand what democracy is. To consider what makes a good leader.

Challenge: Give an example of a good leader and explain what makes them effective.

Idea 2: Political parties

Objectives: To understand what a political party is. To be able to work well in a group.

Challenge: Work in a group to create a new political party and design a party logo.

Idea 3: Voting in elections

Objectives: To consider the importance of voting in elections.

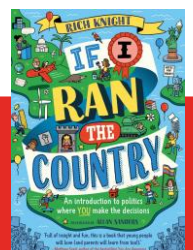
Challenge: List the pros and cons of children being allowed to vote in elections. Write a balanced argument for or against children being allowed to vote in elections.

Idea 4: Making a difference

Objectives: To know how to speak out about issues that matter.

Challenge: As a class, take action on an important issue.

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you stand for and how to lead like a pro!**



KEY WORDS

Below are some key words from the book. Do you have any ideas about what these words might mean? Write your ideas down now in the first column. As you read the book and learn the definition of each word, fill in the second column.

Word	What I think it might mean	Definition
Democracy		
Direct democracy		
Representative democracy		
Constituency		
Election		
Political party		
Candidate		
Manifesto		

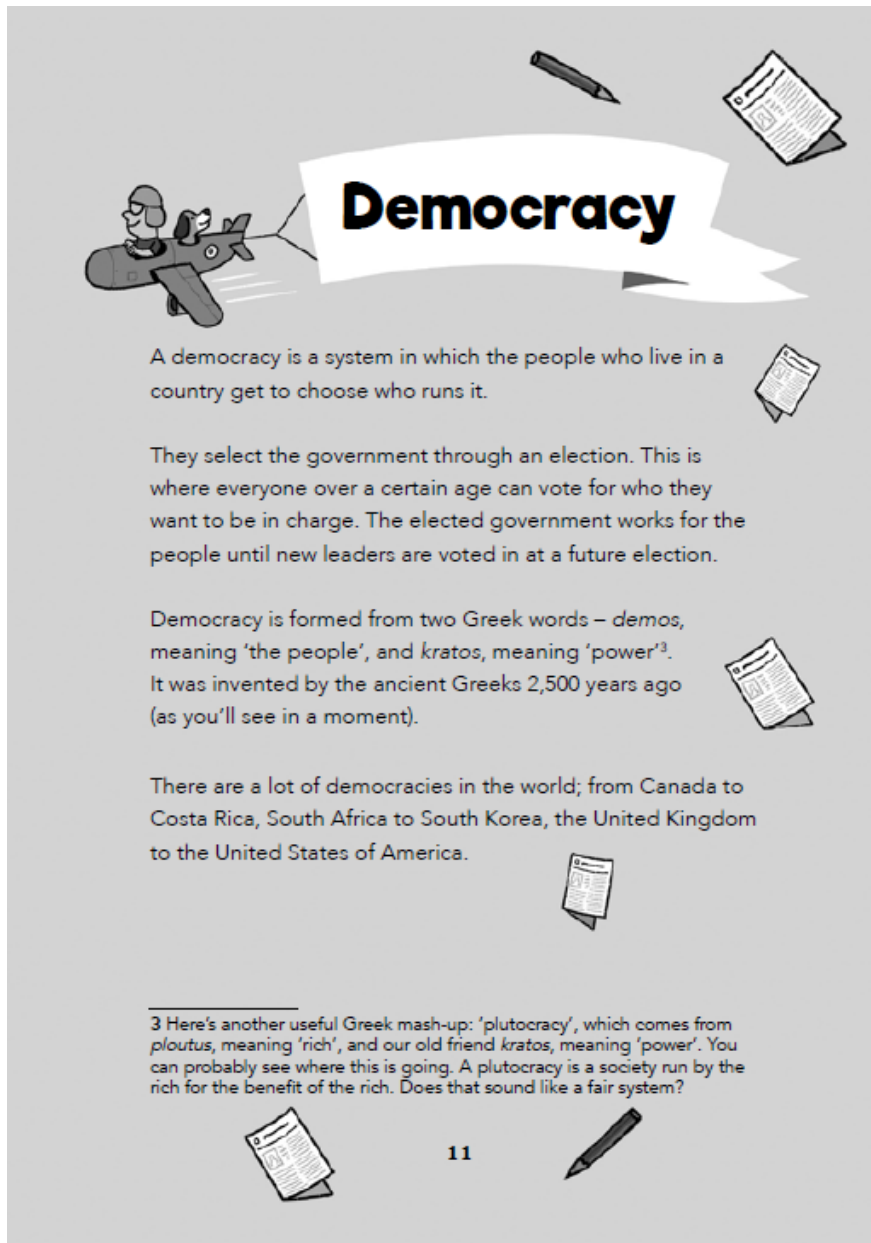
When you've completed all the definitions, write them on the definition postcards in the display pack and put them up around your classroom or library.

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IDEA 1: DEMOCRACY

Extract from p11:



Democracy

A democracy is a system in which the people who live in a country get to choose who runs it.

They select the government through an election. This is where everyone over a certain age can vote for who they want to be in charge. The elected government works for the people until new leaders are voted in at a future election.

Democracy is formed from two Greek words – *demos*, meaning 'the people', and *kratos*, meaning 'power'³. It was invented by the ancient Greeks 2,500 years ago (as you'll see in a moment).

There are a lot of democracies in the world; from Canada to Costa Rica, South Africa to South Korea, the United Kingdom to the United States of America.

³ Here's another useful Greek mash-up: 'plutocracy', which comes from *ploutos*, meaning 'rich', and our old friend *kratos*, meaning 'power'. You can probably see where this is going. A plutocracy is a society run by the rich for the benefit of the rich. Does that sound like a fair system?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What is a democracy? Can you explain how a democracy works?
- Do you think democracy is a fair system? Why?
- What is an 'election'?
- Where does the word democracy come from?
- Would you prefer to live in a democracy or a plutocracy?
- Can you make up an alternative system? (Maybe 'canine-ocracy' where dogs are in charge or a robo-crazy where robots are in charge?!)

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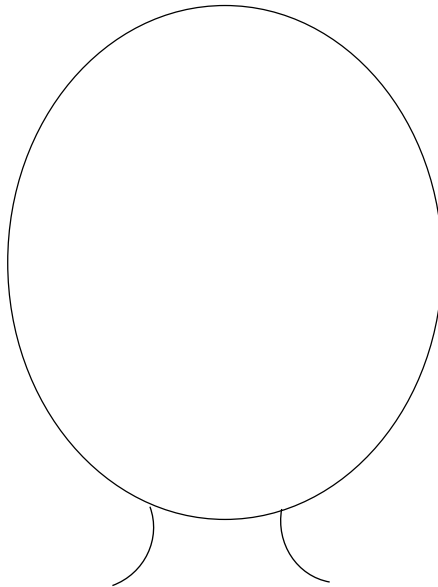
CHALLENGE 1: WHAT MAKES A GOOD LEADER

In a democracy, the people decide who they want to lead the country. As a class, discuss what you think makes a good leader and write a list of leadership qualities. Which one do you think is the most important?

Can you think of a leader you respect and admire? (It doesn't have to be the leader of a country, it could be leader of your local scouts' group or the captain of your football team.) Draw a picture of this person below.

What makes this person a good leader? Can you think of any words to describe them? Around the outside of your picture, write words and phrases to explain why this person is a good leader

A GOOD LEADER



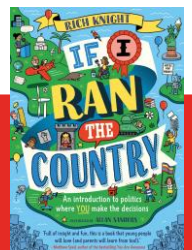
Name:

What leadership qualities do *you* have?

If you were running the country, what kind of leader would you be?

Use the What Makes a Good Leader poster from the display pack to share your class' top leadership qualities.

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IDEA 2: POLITICAL PARTIES

Extract from p30:



There are two kinds of political parties. There are parties, with cake and crisps and dancing, where people who like politics hang out together. Then there are organisations called political parties made up of people who share a similar political point of view. If you're going to set yourself up as a democracy, you're probably going to need some of the second type.

You might have heard of the Republicans in the United States, the Liberal Party in Australia or the Labour Party in the United Kingdom. There are many more. Parties are a good way to organise a large number of people around a set of political ideas.

In a 'parliamentary democracy', parties organise candidates at election time and try to get as many of their own people as possible voted in to parliament.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What is a political party?
- What do people in a political party have in common?
- Give some examples of different political parties.
- Can you use the word 'election' in a sentence?
- What does the word 'candidate' mean in this context?
- What do political parties do at election time?

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CHALLENGE 2: CREATE YOUR OWN POLITICAL PARTY

For this activity, you need to work in a group of about 4-6 because you are going to form your own political party!

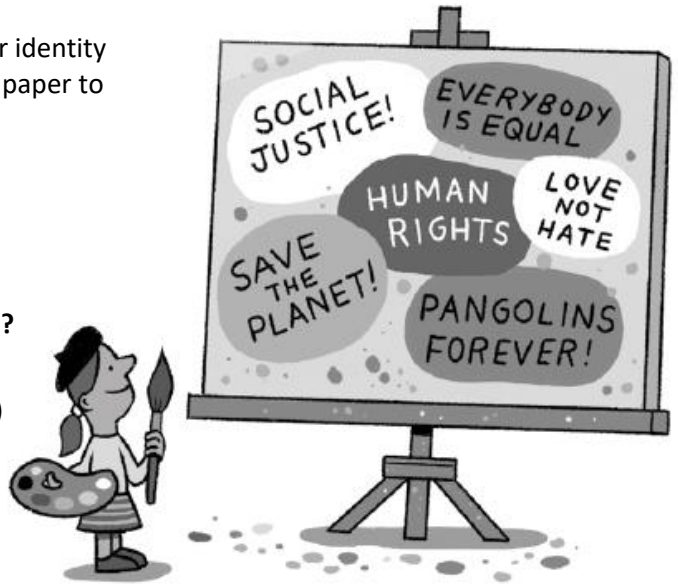
Your first job is to hold a meeting to establish your identity as a party. You might want to use a large sheet of paper to record your ideas.

You will need to answer the following questions:

- **What are our values as a party?**
- **What do we care about?**
- **What is one thing we will do if we get elected?**

(This could be a law we will pass or something about the country that we would like to improve.)

Use the Manifesto poster in the display pack to share each party's ideas and principles



Tip: It's important that everyone in your party gets a chance to contribute.

"You may have noticed [...] that some people are much happier speaking up than others. But it's very often the case that quieter people – those less likely to put their hands up – have at least as much to contribute as their noisier colleagues.

So when you're in charge of a team or a meeting – whether it's your cabinet or just your classmates – try to be careful to make sure everyone gets an opportunity to express their opinion, even those who need your encouragement to do so."

Quote from p57-58

Some helpful phrases you might like to use:

What do you think?

Do you agree?

Tell me more about...

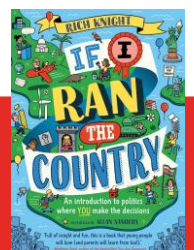
Are you saying that...?

I think...

The reason I think this is...

Can you explain...?

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CHALLENGE 2: CREATE YOUR OWN POLITICAL PARTY

Our Political Party

Now, it's time to think about how you will present your political party to the world!

Think a name for your political party. Your name should reflect your values and beliefs. Write your party name in the rosette.

Political parties usually have a colour to make them easily recognisable. What colour will you choose to represent your political party? Colour the rosette.

Can you design a logo for your political party? Your logo is important because it shows people what you stand for. Draw your logo in the space below.



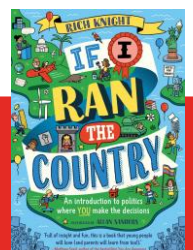
Our logo:

You could even create a campaign video to persuade people to vote for you! You might want to tell your viewers:

- Your core beliefs and values
- Why they should vote for you
- What will you do if you are elected

Try to make your video positive and inspiring, you could even have a campaign slogan and song.

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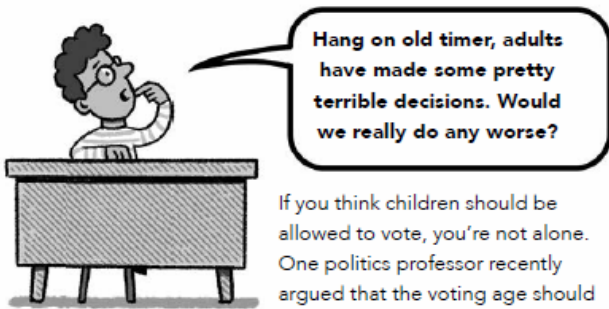
IDEA 3: VOTING IN ELECTIONS

Extract from p33-34:



Should children be allowed to vote?

No country in the world allows children under 16 to vote. A handful of countries – Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Ecuador, Malta, Nicaragua, Scotland and Wales – allow people to start voting at 16. In almost every other democracy you have to be 18 to vote. And in a few countries, such as Cameroon, you have to be even older. Why? Some argue that children don't know enough about the world to make sensible decisions.



If you think children should be allowed to vote, you're not alone. One politics professor recently argued that the voting age should be lowered to six. The more voters there are, he said, the better democracy works.

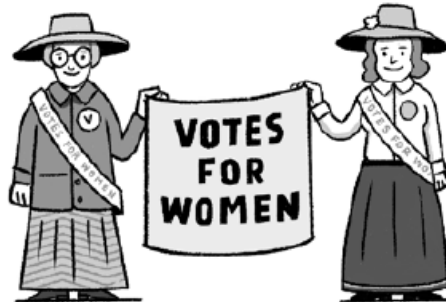
There was a time when women or people who didn't own property were not allowed to vote. Things only changed when those people pointed out how unfair that was and started demanding the vote. You might have heard of the Suffragettes, for example, who argued that women should be allowed to vote in Britain. They succeeded in 1918.

Giving the vote to more people can make government fairer because if a government wants to win an election, it needs to appeal to as many voters as possible. After 1918, for example, governments could no longer ignore the views of women without losing votes.

So perhaps it does make sense to include the one big group of citizens who still have no say in how they're governed in any democratic country: children.

Children might be given the attention they deserve by governments if they can tell their leaders what they think by voting. But would a six year old vote for serious things like fixing the environment? Or mad things like introducing alligators to park ponds?

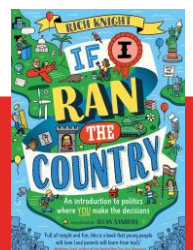
As leader of a brand new nation you'll have to decide who gets the vote and at what age. You might think giving children the vote is a risk (because of the alligator thing) but you might think the real risk is letting adults continue to keep the vote to themselves.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Can you think of a time you have voted for something? (Perhaps you've voted for a school council representative or the next captain of the netball team?)
- At what age are you allowed to vote in political elections in the country you live in?
- Will you choose to vote in political elections when you are old enough? Why?
- Which countries allow people to start voting at age 16?
- Why could governments no longer ignore the views of women after 1918?
- Is it fair to exclude one group of people from voting in political elections? Why?

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CHALLENGE 3: SHOULD CHILDREN BE ALLOWED TO VOTE

1. Some people argue that children should be allowed to vote. Can you think of any reasons this would be a good idea? Can you think of any reasons this would be a bad idea? Using pages 33 and 34 to help you, write down as many pros and cons as you can in the table below.

Then, decide what *you* think. Would children be allowed to vote if you ran the country?

Votes for Children

Pros	Cons

I think ...

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CHALLENGE 3: SHOULD CHILDREN BE ALLOWED TO VOTE

2. Write a speech arguing either for or against children being allowed to vote. Explain your point of view and try to persuade people to agree with you.

- Begin by stating your point of view
- Use paragraphs to set out different reasons for your opinion
- Show that you have considered both sides of the argument by referring to the alternative point of view and explaining why you disagree
- Finish with a clear conclusion, restating your main point

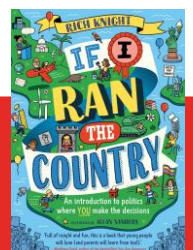
Word bank: Because / In addition / Furthermore / As a result / Some may argue that / While / Even though / Although / Despite / In conclusion

Tip: Your opinion on this issue and other issues might change in time and that's okay. It's good to keep listening to other people's opinions and reviewing your own beliefs. Being open-minded is a strength!

(Bad leaders hate changing their mind because they don't want to look indecisive. Good leaders know that they won't always be right first time and that it's better to be honest when they get things wrong.)

Quote from p106

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IDEA 4: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

You might not be running the country right now but there are *lots* of things you can do to help bring about positive change...

You can choose to be kind, forgiving, co-operative, persistent, resilient, honest and hard-working. You can try not to harm others, or the environment. When you see things that could be better – at home, at school, in your village or town – you could try to be heard.

Quote from p163

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Which of these personal qualities do you think you have?
- Can you think of a time you have shown one of these qualities?
- Which of these personal qualities would you like to develop further and how might you do that?
- What choices can you make to reduce harm to other people or to the environment?
- Can you think of anyone who has helped to bring about positive change in your school, locality, country or even in the world?
- Who are your role models in terms of making a difference?

CHALLENGE 4: TAKE ACTION!

What issues do people in your class care about?

As a class, write a list of any positive changes you would like to see at school, in your village or town or in the wider world. For example, you might think your school recycling system could be better or the number of single-use plastics used in your classroom or school could be reduced. Perhaps there's too much litter in your playground or you would like to have a wildlife area. Maybe you think your town could have better cycle lanes or access for wheelchair users. There might also be things in wider society that you would like to change such as online bullying or racism in football?

Choose one issue to focus on as a class (you could have a vote to decide which one). What could you do to make your voices heard? (Pages pages 164 – 169 in the book will give you some ideas.) Perhaps you could request a meeting with your headteacher, write a letter MP or create a petition?

You might like to think about different ways of raising awareness of your issue too. For example, you could create an infographic to share on your school social media, create a short video, make a presentation for assembly or produce posters to display? Try to get the word out and make your voices heard. Good luck!

Remember that the most important thing is to be yourself and stand up for what you think is right.

(Quote from p175)

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