

CANADIAN CONSTITUTION

IN BRIEF

TEACHER RESOURCE

Learning Objectives

- To introduce the topic of constitutional law.
- To develop an understanding of the history and nature of the *Canadian Constitution*.
- To increase students' knowledge of the responsibilities of different levels of government in Canada.

Materials

- Copies of the student handout, *Canadian Constitution* (one per student)
- Copies of the graphic organizer, *Levels and Responsibilities of Government* (one per student)
- Copies of s. 91 and s. 92 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, available here: <http://lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/> (one per student)
- Copies of *In Brief: Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom* (optional; one per student)
- Copies of *Landmark Case: The Question of Quebec Sovereignty - Reference Re Secession of Quebec*, available here: <http://ojen.ca/resource/3648> (optional; one per student)

Teaching and Learning Strategies

1. In groups, provide students with several definitions of a national constitution and have them make notes of key points. Take these up as a class, noting key similarities and differences.
2. As a class, brainstorm the roles and responsibilities of government, recording these for later reference. A guide for teachers is available at <http://www.pch.gc.ca/special/gouv-gov/105-eng.cfm>. Refer back to the key points noted by students for illustration and connection.

3. Assign the reading, discussion questions and worksheet individually or in small groups.

Teacher's Key - Discussion Questions

1. *The Constitution Act, 1867* and the *Constitution Act, 1982*.
 2. Any two of: repatriated the *Constitution*; contained an amending formula; *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.
 3. *The Constitution Act, 1867*.
 4. Individual rights can be limited by s. 1 of the *Charter* if the courts determine this limitation is reasonable, and legislatures can pass legislation contrary to the *Charter* under s. 33, but their ability to do so is strictly limited.
 5. Answers will vary, but should reflect the unpopularity of suspending basic rights and freedoms. Students might also reflect on whether politicians, although elected, are less trustworthy than judges.
4. Invite students to complete the graphic organizer, *Levels and Responsibilities of Government*, and take up their answers as a class.

Extension

1. Strengthen students' understanding of Canadian constitutional law by having them complete the companion OJEN resource, *In Brief: Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, available here: <http://ojen.ca/resource/3514>.
2. Complete the OJEN Landmark Case, *The Question of Quebec Sovereignty - Reference Re Secession of Quebec*, available here: <http://ojen.ca/resource/3648>.