



9780711262744
Paperback
128 pages

Educator's Guide:

A Quick History of Politics: From Pharaohs to Fair Votes

With Curriculum Connections, Discussion Questions and Activities
By Clive Gifford, illustrated by Steve Gavan

Curriculum Connections, Grades 3-7
English Language Arts, History/Government

Guide created by We Love Children's Books



Objective

Students will read the book independently; participate in a class discussion; and complete independent activities using the book as a springboard.

About the Book

How did ancient people make decisions? How do the people in power stay in power? Why did Karl Marx have to go without trousers? **A Quick History of Politics** answers these questions and more, taking a look at the silly side of government, big and small, throughout the ages. And it also explains the important stuff, like suffrage, elections and getting your voice heard. Packed with facts and jokes and perfect for introducing young readers to big concepts.

About the Author

Clive Gifford has traveled to more than 70 countries, climbed rocket launch towers, ridden on robots, and flown gliders. He's had more than 200 books published and has received nominations for or won Royal Society, School Library Association, Smithsonian, and TES awards. He won the Blue Peter Book Award for Best Book with Facts 2019 for his title *The Colors of History*. Clive lives in Manchester, UK.

About the Illustrator

Steve Gavan is a graphic designer and illustrator from Melbourne, Australia.



Post-reading discussion questions

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1. Where does the word “politics” come from? And what does it mean? Do you believe, as the book says, that politics affect everyone? What issues are you passionate about? Do you think that being engaged with politics is one way to contribute to change?
2. What are some of the ways that early communities made group decisions? In an autocracy, what types of people were often in charge? Most of them were men—but can you name two early female monarchs?
3. What were some of the duties of being a pharaoh? How did most pharaohs rise to the top? Were there any female pharaohs?
4. What were the lawmakers in Greek city-states called? What two Greek words are the basis for the word “democracy”? What does it mean? How does it work? Do you think that everyone really does get a say in governing, with a democratic system? In ancient Athens, was their system a true democracy? Why, or why not?
5. Why did ancient Romans replace their monarchy with a republic? How did the republic work? Who comprised their Senate? What type of leader did they eventually replace this system with?
6. In ancient China, who were the people who helped the emperor run the empire? How did you become a civil servant? How long did their exams last?
7. What is the world's oldest surviving parliament, and where is it located? How did England's parliament incorporate freemen? What are the two chambers of the United Kingdom's parliament called?
8. What was Feudalism, and what was the role of serfs in that system? Do you think being a serf was any different than being enslaved? Why, or why not?
9. What were John Locke's ideas about mankind's “natural rights”? Where did he believe that power should come from? How did philosopher Charles Montesquieu agree with Locke? What were the “separation of powers” that he suggested?
10. Which country became the world's largest Empire in the early 19th century? Was the British Empire good or bad for its colonies? What happened, most often, to the Native peoples in the areas they colonized? How did the United States break free of British rule? What form of government did they set up? What three branches did they split their government into? What is the system of checks and balances?

11. How did the terms "left" and "right" come to describe political viewpoints? What does each side generally represent?
12. What is a political party? What are the two largest parties in the United States? What is the symbol of each?
13. What is Gerrymandering and how is it used to weaken an opponent's voting power? Who is the practice named after?
14. What role do protests, demonstrations, and rebellions play in politics? Can you name some mentioned in the book? Can you name some more recent examples? Do you believe they can be successful? What else can people do besides voting to encourage change in the world?
15. Who were the authors of the Communist Manifesto? What are some of the ideas that it promoted? Communism and Fascism are at opposite extremes. What does each represent? In what ways are they alike?
16. How does an Open Ballot system lead to the buying of votes? When and where were secret ballots first used? What are some ways that electoral fraud can happen? How do special interest groups and lobbyists try to influence voters legally?
17. Which countries were best, and worst, about giving women the right to vote? Which was the first country to allow women to vote in national elections? In what year? Which suffragette led the fight in Britain? Do you agree with their method of "deeds not words"? What role did World War I play in getting women the vote? Who was the world's first elected female leader, and when was she elected?
18. What is a military coup? How many coups have there been since World War II? What are some of the governments who have been overthrown by coups? What are often some of the things banned when dictators rule? What are some of the just plain strange things dictators have ordered?
19. What is a Grandfather Clause? What are some other ways Black people were prevented from voting in the United States? How did the US civil rights movement help move people toward removing segregation?
20. How can the news media—tv, social media, newspapers and radio—be a watchdog for political candidates? How can this backfire if someone rich and/or influential owns the media outlet? How does biased media do its dirty work?

English Language Arts

Choose one of the books suggested in the “More Power to the People” section, read it, and write a book report about it.

Write an essay that debates the pros and cons of each ruling system:

- Gerontocracy
- Meritocracy
- Oligarchy
- Anarchy
- Autocracy
- Monarchy
- Theocracy
- Democracy

Write an essay that presents arguments for and against lowering the voting age to 16.

Research modern-day careers working in politics, and write an essay explaining the pros and cons of each one.

Why do you think that historically men in power did not want to give the vote to women, people of color and Native peoples? Write an opinion essay about your answer.

In a democracy, what are some reasons that people don't vote, despite the many historical efforts to include everyone? Write an opinion essay agreeing, or disagreeing, that voting should be made compulsory. Should the government offer rewards or punishments as enforcements?

History/Government

Take the politics quiz given in the book—and after you're done, look at the answers to see how you did!

Choose one of these subjects, conduct research, and write a report:

- French Revolution
- Federalism
- English Parliament vs. the king through history
- Marxism, Socialism and Communism
- Weird laws
- What is Proportional representation? How many countries use it?
- The European Union
- The United Nations and the UN Security Council

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