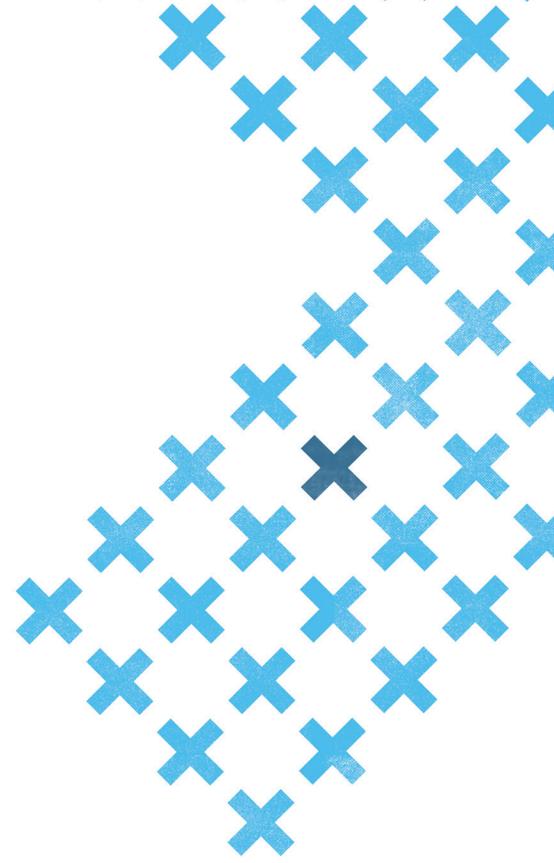


Does Voting Matter?

Experiencing the
effects of voting

Does Voting Matter?



Big idea

In every election, whether voter turnout is high or low, one person is elected in each electoral district and ends up with the power to make decisions that affect all of us.

Inquiry question:

**Does voting
matter?**

Overall description

This activity is designed for a social studies, politics, civics or citizenship class.

In this activity, students explore how much they care about decisions that are made by the federal government and how much voting matters to them. Students then engage in a series of voting simulations where they can see in a fun and engaging way how voter turnout affects choices and decisions. Finally, they view a consolidation video and reconsider their response to the question “Does voting matter?”

× Time needed

60 min

× Competencies and skills

Students will:

- **think critically** about how voting can affect individuals and society
- **apply citizenship skills** as they assess the consequences of voting decisions on individuals and communities
- **communicate** their understanding and express their conclusions in whole-class discussions
- through personal reflection, **become self-aware** of any changes in their thinking since the start of the activity

× Materials

- Campaign speeches: Captain’s Party, Dinosaur Party, Wizard Party, Zombie Party (pages 9–12)
- Campaign signs (pages 13–16)
- Summary of Party Platforms (page 17)
- Dot-voting Chart (page 18)
- Ballots (page 19)
- Exit cards: 1 per student (page 20)
- Optional assessment rubric (page 21)
- Does Voting Matter? Video*
- Stickers or markers (not included)

* Available online at electionsanddemocracy.ca



Instructions

× Minds on

10 min

1. What do I care about?

To introduce the big idea that elected officials make decisions that affect all Canadians, ask students to reflect on whether they care about the following federal issues. (They are to raise their hand if they care.)

Do you care if the government:

- changes rules about immigration to Canada?
- makes it more difficult for seniors to receive the Old Age Security pension?
- places penalties on businesses that contribute to climate change?
- joins a military alliance that could lead to war?
- changes prison terms for serious crimes?
- removes coins as a method of paying for items?
- negotiates new agreements with Indigenous peoples?

Explain that the Government of Canada makes decisions about each of these matters through our elected members of Parliament. Whether we realize it or not, and whether we choose to vote or not, many aspects of our lives are affected by the government's priorities and by the decisions of law makers.

2. Class poll

Ask students: *Does voting matter to you?* Using a traditional dot-voting chart, invite them to respond by placing a dot on the chart. They will use a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = It doesn't matter to me, and 5 = It matters to me a lot.

You can use the dot-voting template provided. You'll need to enlarge the template or create your own poster using chart paper. Alternatively, you can use a polling app or other online voting tool such as Polleverywhere, Kahoot, Google Classroom or Google Forms.

Explain that students will revisit the inquiry question "Does voting matter?" at the end of the lesson.

× Activity

35 min

1. Voting Simulation

Explain that students will elect a new class president today. You will lead them through four rounds of voting, using different scenarios for voter turnout.

Select four students to represent each of the four parties: Captain's Party, Dinosaur Party, Wizard Party, Zombie Party. Make sure to select students who are comfortable standing up and reading aloud to the class.

Ask each candidate to read their campaign speech. Encourage them to add their own dramatic and comic flair.

Round 1: Free vote

1. Tell students to go to the corner of the room featuring their preferred candidate. If students choose not to vote, they must remain seated.
2. The candidate for the party that receives the most votes wins the election. There can be only one winning candidate. Ties must be broken with a coin toss or other tie breaker.
3. Use the Summary of Party Platforms to announce the activity associated with the winning candidate's party platform (such as "make a dinosaur call" or "move like a zombie").
4. All students must do the activity associated with the party platform.
5. Ask one or two students from each group the following question:
 - *How did the outcome of the vote affect you?*

Round 2: Low voter turnout

1. Randomly choose five students to vote for the candidate of their choice. All other students are restricted from voting and must stay seated.
2. Use the Summary of Party Platforms to announce the activity associated with the winning candidate's party platform (such as "make a dinosaur call" or "move like a zombie").
3. All students must do the activity associated with the party platform.

4. Explain that you had only five students vote to represent low voter turnout. Ask students the following questions:
 - For the voters: *How did your vote affect the election?*
 - For non-voters: *How did you feel about not being able to participate in the vote?*

Round 3: Fifty percent turnout

1. Randomly select half the students in the class to vote for the candidate of their choice. All other students in the class are restricted from voting and must stay seated.
2. Use the Summary of Party Platforms to announce the activity associated with the winning candidate's party platform (such as "make a dinosaur call" or "move like a zombie").
3. All students must do the activity associated with the party platform.
4. Ask the whole class:
 - *How did the outcome of this vote compare to the previous two votes?*
 - *How might the outcome have been different if the other half of the class had voted?*

Round 4: Secret ballot

1. For this round, students mark their ballot in secret. All students may vote if they wish. Distribute one ballot to each student. Instruct them to mark the ballot with an “X” or a check mark to vote for the party of their choice. Caution them that if they vote for more than one party, their vote will be considered spoiled and will not be counted. Have them place their ballots in a box. For a quicker vote, you could use polling technology for this round or simply have students put their heads down on their desks and raise their hands to vote for their preferred candidate.
2. Assign two students to count the ballots, or do it yourself.
3. The candidate for the party with the most votes wins the election. There can be only one winning candidate. Ties must be broken with a coin toss or other tie breaker.
4. Use the Summary of Party Platforms to announce the activity associated with the winning candidate’s party platform (such as “make a dinosaur call” or “move like a zombie”).
5. All students must follow the activity associated with the party platform.
6. Ask students the following questions:
 - *How was the outcome of the election the same as or different from the first vote?*
 - *Did you vote differently knowing that your ballot was secret? Why or why not?*
 - *Does voting matter? Explain your answer.*

2. Impact in Real Life

Explain that this simulation helps us understand how voting (or not voting) affects the outcome of an election. In real life, the decisions that elected officials make and the laws they pass could affect the lives of millions of people, whether they voted or not.

Show the Does Voting Matter? video to the class and discuss it with your students afterwards.

Example of discussion questions:

- *Did voting have an impact on their lives?*
- *How have their experiences influenced their attitudes to democracy and voting?*
- *How would they answer the question: “Does voting matter?”*

✖ Consolidation

15 min

Return to the original poll from the Minds on phase. Ask students to respond again to the question “Does voting matter?”

If you are using the dot-voting method, use a new colour of dot or marker so you can compare the two polls.

Ask students to reflect on the class responses to the question before and after the activity. Did the opinions of the students change? Invite students to make observations (notice) and ask questions (wonder).

Give each student an exit card. Invite them to reflect on the following prompts and write their responses on the card:

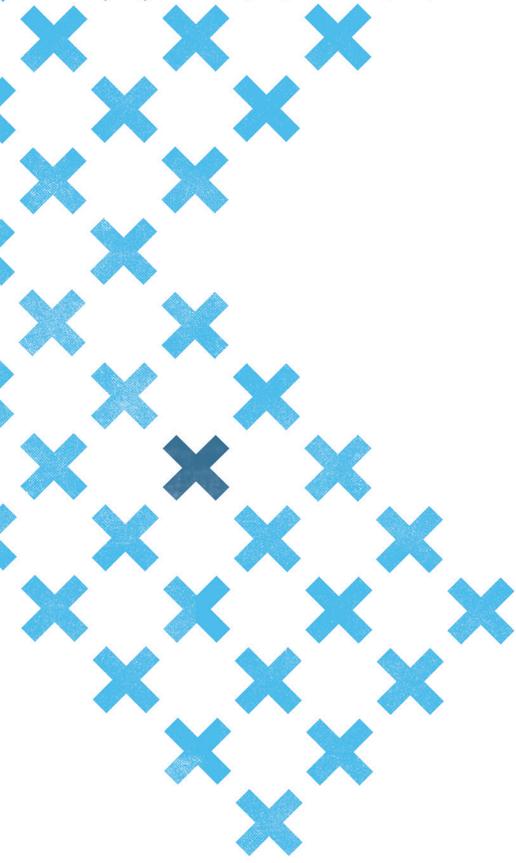
1. *One thing I learned is...*
2. *One question I have now is...*
3. *One action I will take as a result of this learning is...*

✖ Optional extension activities

1. Select an issue from a past federal election campaign and investigate whether voting mattered in the outcome of that issue.
2. If an election campaign is happening now, predict whether you think voting will have an impact.

✖ Teaching tips

- The “Do you care...” questions in the Minds on phase relate to laws enacted by the government at the federal level. You may also wish to include provincial and local laws.
- Polling students before and after a learning activity can increase the learning during the activity. This approach engages students in the content and introduces a metacognitive element. It gives the teacher instant feedback on what students are thinking before and after the activity.
- A dot-voting system (also called “dotmocracy”) is a safe and quick way to do an anonymous poll.
- Exit cards require students to write in response to prompts or questions based on the lesson. The cards provide immediate feedback to help you assess students’ understanding of content, gather feedback for your teaching, and see what questions students are asking to suggest new areas of learning. For students, exit cards provide a reflective space to consolidate and reflect on their learning and to enhance their metacognition.



Materials

To be photocopied

✘ Captain's Party Campaign Speech

Arrrr! I am running to be your new class president. I have many plans for our school, and I'd like to steal a moment of your time to tell you all about them.

I will change all the field trips! We shouldn't go to some landlubber field, but sailing on the seven seas!

I propose a spirit week that will include activities fit for a pirate such as swabbing the deck, rowing, climbing, peg-leg races, walking the plank and, of course, stealing and plundering.

Finally, the cafeteria must stop selling food that be causing the scurvy! We need to be in tip-top shape for plundering and sailing, so I will bring in limes, lemons and all the mangoes you can eat!

The Captain's Party would allow you to listen to music (though not pirated music!) during study time in class, but there would be extra homework each school day.

And when I win the election, all of you will be required to greet each other with "Ahoy, matey!"

So vote for me for your class president if you want to see a sea of change!

✖ Dinosaur Party Campaign Speech

Some of you may have thought I was extinct and gone. No way! I'm here and I have plans to make school better for all of us, even you carnivores.

We need to improve the cafeteria for us plant-eaters. We need to get rid of all the unhealthy stuff like burgers, hot dogs and meat lovers' pizza. When I'm elected, I'm going to get a better salad bar selection, cut back on the bacon bits, and have more Brussels sprouts and broccoli in our caf.

We should have exciting field trips to rain forests and camping instead of museums. We don't need to see old fossils of our ancestors!

If elected, I propose that school activities will include "scare the humanoids" days and tooth-flossing events.

Dinosaurs are big and slow, so we want everyone to have extra time to get to class before you are late. The school day would be longer, though.

If I win the election, everyone will have to participate in our new school cheer, the Dino Call, which sounds like this: RAWR!

If you want change from someone with big ideas, vote for the Dinosaur Party.

✕ Wizard Party Campaign Speech

I'm proud to be your candidate for the Wizard Party, and I have some amazing and magical ideas for ways we can all work together to improve our life at school.

Spirit week is made for us. As wizards, we connect with the spirit world. We can have dress-up days when we wear our most colourful robes. Other activities can include magic potion mixing contests and spell-ing bees (get it?). Sports events can include wand-tossing, bobbing for apples and broomball games.

Our field trips would take us to faraway places where we would fight dragons and visit magical lands.

When I'm elected, there will be some big changes around here. First, all students would get to sleep in for an extra half-hour. This would mean all students would have to walk to school, since they would have missed the school bus.

And at school events, all students would have to stand on their toes and click their heels like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* and say, "A-bra-ca-da-bra!"

Remember the famous saying "The wand chooses the wizard"? It's time for you to choose me as your elected representative.

× Zombie Party Campaign Speech

So, I'm running for class president, I guess. My name is ... uhh ... I forget.

I would like to have more brains at our school for, like, eating. We definitely need a longer lunch period so we can go chase down, I mean, buy more brains from the cafeteria.

We need more field trips to the zoo, or the cemetery – like, wherever you can get some tasty snacks.

We can have activities for spirit week, like the three-legged race, or walking, or maybe a one-armed race ...

... So, yeah, vote for me and I'll make sure we feed our brains, I mean eat brains, I mean eat good.

We all need to eat, and it is important for us growing zombies to get enough food. If elected, the Zombie Party will change the school rules so students have a longer lunchtime, but we would not be allowed to eat anything during class.

Vote for me and everyone must show their zombie spirit by moving like a zombie – like this: [*walk in a dazed manner for a few steps; hold out your arms like a zombie, etc.*].

Be alive and vote for the Zombie Party!



Illustration created by Freepik



Illustration created by Freepik



Illustration created by Freepik

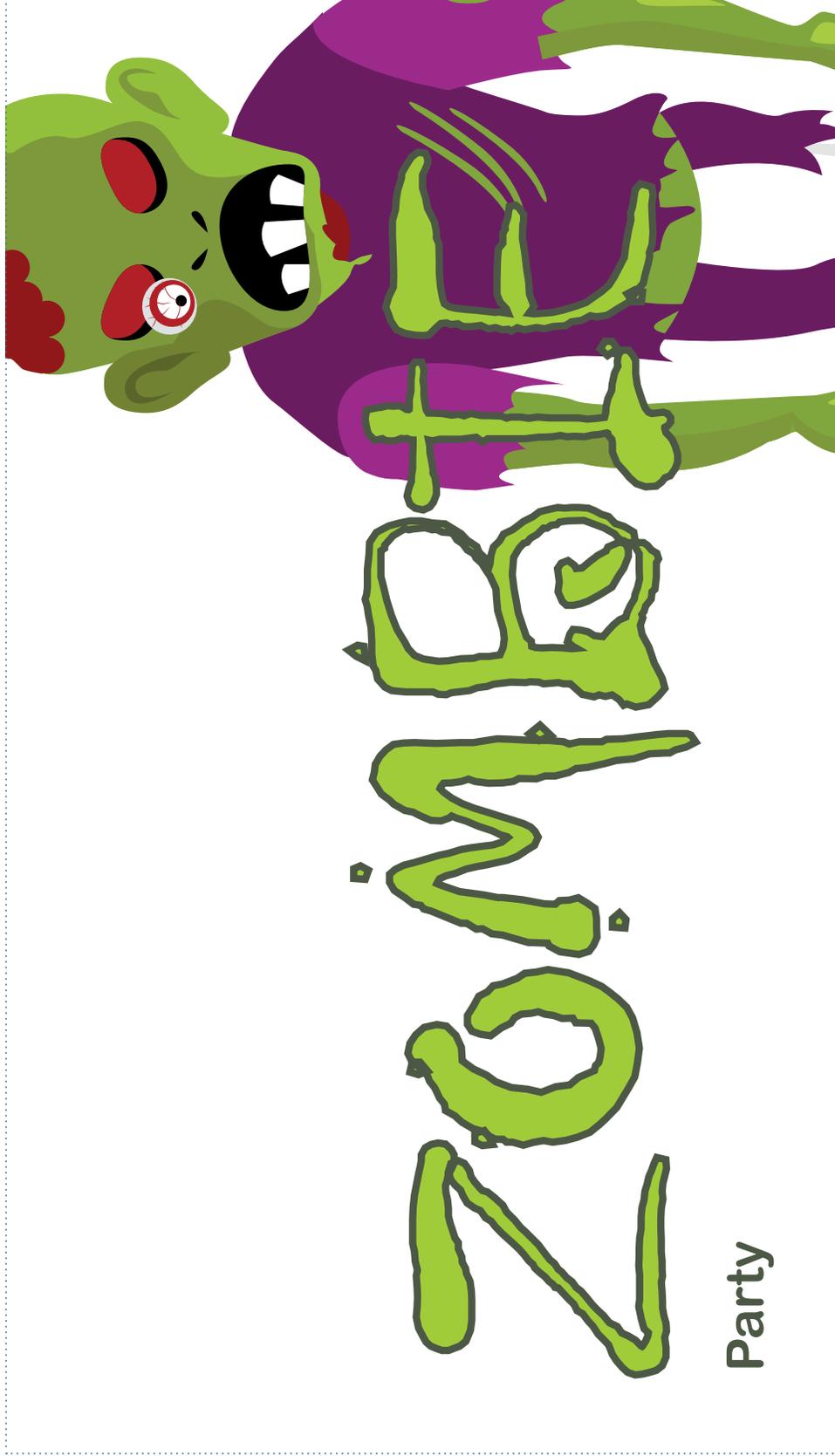


Illustration created by Freepik

× Summary of Party Platforms

Captain's Party

- + **“Positive” consequence for students**
Students are permitted to listen to music during study time in class.
- **“Negative” consequence for students**
Students have extra homework assigned each day.

Activity:

Students must greet each other by saying, “Ahoy, matey!”

Dinosaur Party

- + **“Positive” consequence for students**
Students are allowed extra time to get to class before being considered late.
- **“Negative” consequence for students**
Students have an extended school day.

Activity:

Students must make the Dino Call in unison.

Wizard Party

- + **“Positive” consequence for students**
Students are allowed to sleep in longer, with a later school start time.
- **“Negative” consequence for students**
Students have to walk to school since they missed the school bus.

Activity:

Students must stand on their toes and click their heels like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* and say, “A-bra-ca-da-bra!”

Zombie Party

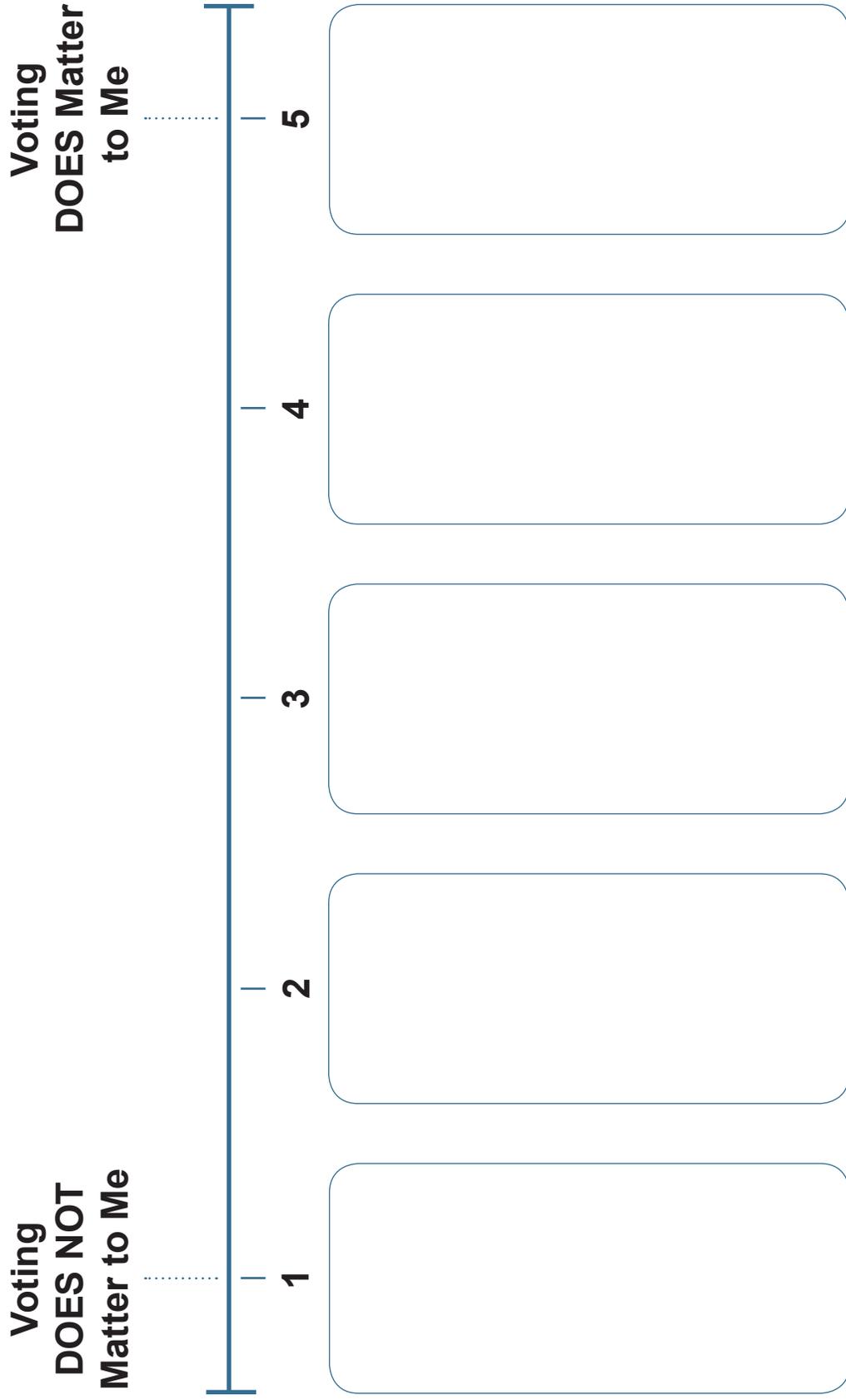
- + **“Positive” consequence for students**
Students have a longer lunch break.
- **“Negative” consequence for students**
Students are not allowed to eat during class.

Activity:

Students must move like a zombie or make zombie-like gestures.

✕ Dot-voting Chart

Does voting matter to you?



× Ballots

<input type="checkbox"/> Captain's Party <input type="checkbox"/> Dinosaur Party <input type="checkbox"/> Wizard Party <input type="checkbox"/> Zombie Party	<input type="checkbox"/> Captain's Party <input type="checkbox"/> Dinosaur Party <input type="checkbox"/> Wizard Party <input type="checkbox"/> Zombie Party
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× Exit Card

Does Voting Matter?

1. One thing I learned is...

2. One question I have now is...

3. One action I will take as a result of this learning is...

× Exit Card

Does Voting Matter?

1. One thing I learned is...

2. One question I have now is...

3. One action I will take as a result of this learning is...

x Elections Canada Civic Education Assessment Rubric

Task: Does Voting Matter?

Student name: _____ Group: _____

	Absent / Incomplete	Level 1 (Below expectations)	Level 2 (Approaches expectations)	Level 3 (Meets expectations)	Level 4 (Exceeds expectations)
Understanding Content (e.g., ideas, opinions, concepts, relationships among facts)		Demonstrates limited understanding of content	Demonstrates some understanding of content	Demonstrates considerable understanding of content	Demonstrates thorough understanding of content
Understanding Context(s) (e.g., relationship of content to big ideas, such as “fairness,” “democracy,” and “inclusion vs. exclusion;” themes; frameworks)		Demonstrates limited understanding of context(s)	Demonstrates some understanding of context(s)	Demonstrates considerable understanding of context(s)	Demonstrates thorough understanding of context(s)
Applying Critical Thinking Skills (e.g., analyzing, evaluating, inferring, interpreting, revising, refining, reviewing, reflecting, forming conclusions, detecting bias, synthesizing)		Uses critical thinking skills with limited effectiveness	Uses critical thinking skills with some effectiveness	Uses critical thinking skills with considerable effectiveness	Uses critical thinking skills with a high degree of effectiveness
Using Collaborative Group Learning Skills (e.g., communication skills, questioning, active listening, problem solving, focus on task, level of engagement, teamwork)		Shows communication skills and collaborative group learning skills with limited effectiveness	Shows communication skills and collaborative group learning skills with some effectiveness	Shows communication skills and collaborative group learning skills with considerable effectiveness	Shows communication skills and collaborative group learning skills with a high degree of effectiveness
Demonstrating Civic Disposition (e.g., respects diversity of opinion, recognizes that rights come with responsibilities, considers what is good for society as a whole)		Expresses few civic dispositions	Expresses some civic dispositions	Expresses many civic dispositions	Expresses a considerable number and range of civic dispositions

Comments:

Learn more

If you and your students enjoyed this lesson, we encourage you to use Elections Canada's other educational resources. These cross-curricular materials can be taught in a variety of subjects, including history, geography, social studies, civics and math.

All resources are available in English and French, and there are versions for language learners.

Visit electionsanddemocracy.ca to browse our complete list, download or order. You can also contact us using the information beside.

Contact us

To share comments or ask questions, or if some of your kit components are missing, write or call us:

Email: info@elections.ca

Telephone: 1-800-463-6868

TTY: 1-800-361-8935

Fax: 1-888-524-1444

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