

This is a worksheet suitable for
children from Classes VI – VIII.



Ankitha Cheerakathil

DEFINING

DEMOOCRACY

Activity 1: Write to your MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly)

Elections are around the corner and all politicians are concerned about their electorate. Politicians need to know what citizens want and what their problems are, so that they can develop their manifesto. It's on the basis of this manifesto that they will campaign for votes from citizens.

As a future voter, your problems and opinions matter. What would you write to your MLA about? Limit your problems to the level of your neighbourhood. (Examples: new road in your residential society, a new children's park in your neighbourhood, street lighting, etc.) (Word limit: 200)

Date: _____

Place: _____

Subject:

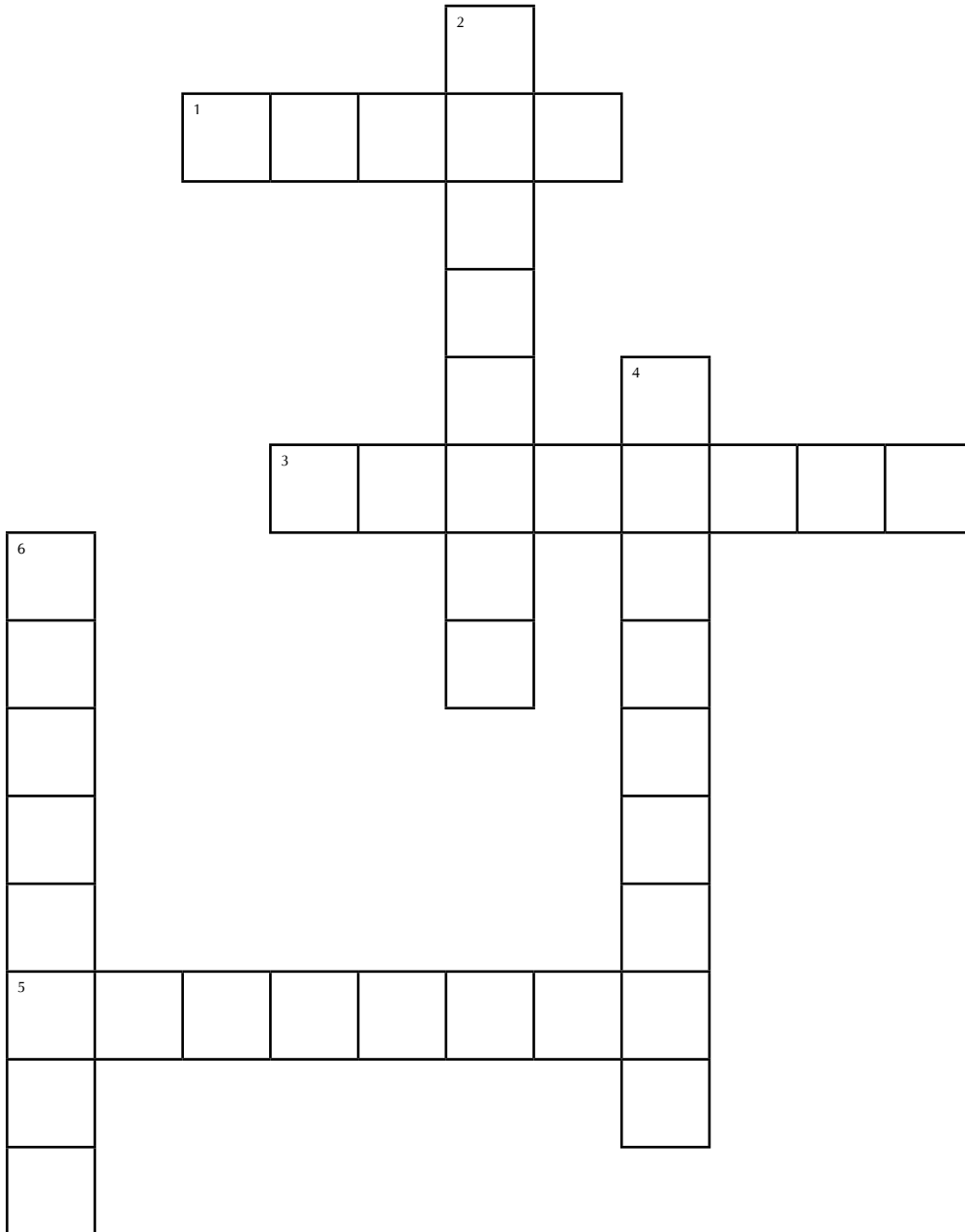
Name:

Signature:

- Have you observed your neighbourhood to find out what issues are most important?
- Have you discussed with your friends, family and neighbours what their problems are?
- Have you selected the most important issue and highlighted this to the MLA?
- Have you provided a solution to this problem in your letter? (This will help the MLA select your issue as an important part of his/her manifesto.)

Activity 2: Crossword puzzle about the Indian government

Test your knowledge about important terms and words relating to the Indian government and its history.



Word bank:

Across:

1. This person leads a city/town
3. The first political party of India
5. When people come together to vote

Down:

2. This official is appointed by the central government for leading a state
4. This official is the head of the country
6. Members of a country

Activity 3: Make your own election campaign poster

Election season is here and with it come election campaigns! Imagine that the post of the principal in your school is currently vacant and the school is conducting elections to fill that post. Who do you think should be running the school? Make an attractive election poster for someone in your school who would make a good leader (your favourite teacher, classmate, etc.). Think of an attractive election symbol for your candidate and draw it in the blank space.

Name:

Date:

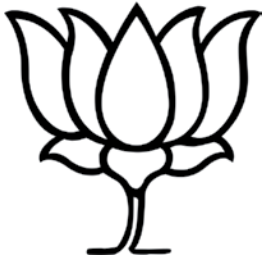
(Poster slogan)

(Election Symbol)

1. What will your candidate do to improve your school?
2. Why should everyone vote for your candidate?
3. What does your candidate's election symbol mean?

Activity 4 (a): Party platforms

A country like India has a population with different ideas and opinions. As a consequence, different political parties in India have different ideologies and views. Think of the two biggest political parties in India that have very different ideologies from each other. How about the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)? Compare and contrast each political party.





1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.

Activity 4 (b): Party platforms

Imagine that you have entered politics and have started your own political party. What would be the name of the party? What would be the party symbol? What issues would you like to work for and what would you prioritize in governance for the party?

(Name of your political party)

(Party symbol)

Party Manifesto (Main Points)

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Activity 5: School participatory budgeting



Representative image of a school

What does it mean to govern your school?

Imagine that this is your school. Study the picture of the school building carefully and you will observe many classrooms, a big campus, trees, etc. Now think about your own school. What are the ways in which your school can be improved? Does your school have a good campus? Does the school campus have trees and a good garden? Would it be useful to have a cycle rickshaw stand if there isn't one already?

Activity 6: The farming juggle game

The elected representatives of a democratic country often face difficult and complicated problems that demand resolution. How does it feel to resolve a complicated problem as a politician/bureaucrat in a stressful environment? The objective of this game is to practice decision-making under stress while handling unexpected tasks. This game allows students to explore the complex process that decision-making can be.

Rules:

1. No. of players = 10-50 (recommended to have > 15 people in 1 group)
2. Time = 10-15 minutes

Instructions:

1. Form groups of less than 15 people.
2. Each group is supposed to be one country. Ask the students to imagine that all the players in one group form a nation. Players in each group will play amongst themselves and will not interact with other groups.
3. Balls will be used by the players during the game.
4. Throw the first ball to a "citizen" within one group, announcing the context: farming in the country is going well.
5. Players in the group must keep the ball in motion by continuously throwing it around the circle, not letting it touch the ground or stay in any one participant's hands for more than two seconds. Allow some time for the group to find their rhythm.
6. At any point you can introduce new balls into the circle, either announcing their entrance in advance (e.g. "you are dealing with a specific livestock disease amongst your sheep" or "there is conflict in your community") or springing it on the circle of participants as a surprise ("there is a drought").
7. Participants in one group must try to keep as many balls circulating and off the ground as possible even as they try providing solutions to the problems posed by the game moderator.
8. Keep adding balls into the mix, until the play becomes chaotic with balls being dropped very often.

Note: You can play this using the context of a different national issue too (e.g. possibility of a war with Pakistan disrupting national security).

Debriefing:

The debriefing session, led by the teacher after the game ends is where the shared learning takes place.

Example questions:

1. How did you feel in the first stage of the game?
2. By comparison, how did you feel when multiple balls were in the circle?
3. Seeing as it is virtually impossible to keep all balls from dropping to the ground, how did you or the group prioritize which balls to put the most energy into catching?
4. How does what you have experienced in this game relate to your reality?

Ankitha Cheerakathil is Executive Director-India of Institute for Democracy 21, a research organization based in Prague working on participatory democracy and innovative voting systems. A published author, she is an alumnus of St. Stephen's College, Delhi and the Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences Po. She is also a visiting faculty at Université Mohammed VI Polytechnique in Morocco. She can be reached at <ankitha.cheerakathil@ifd21.org>.