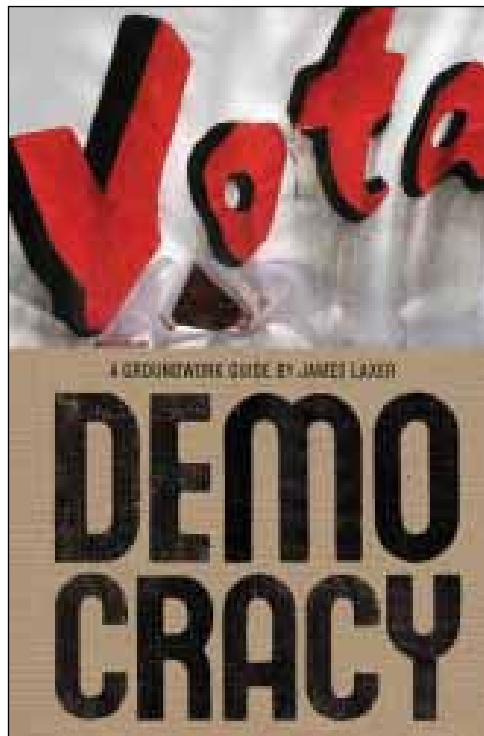




# GROUNDWOOD STUDY GUIDES

## Democracy A Groundwork Guide

*Written by James Laxer*



An investigation of the origins of democracy in a range of countries and societies, from ancient Greece to modern times, and the threats that democracy is under today.

### **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

Ages 14 and up / Grades 9 and up

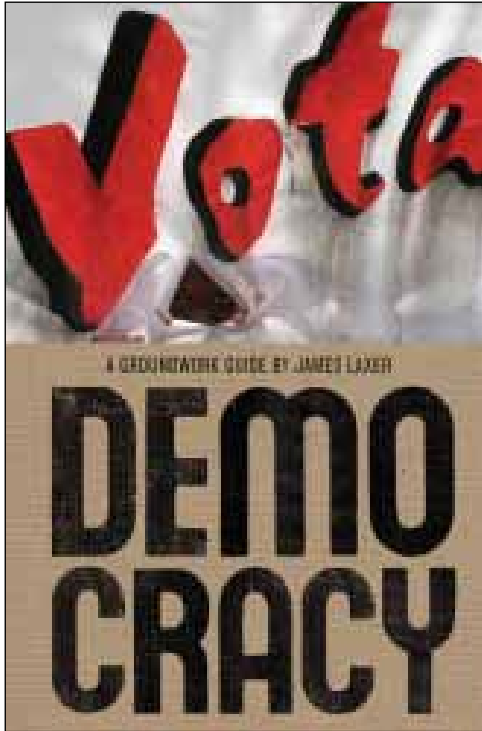
YOUNG ADULT NONFICTION / Social Studies / History / Business Studies / Language Arts

5 x 7 / 144 pages

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## BOOK DESCRIPTION

This book is about democracy: its origins in a range of countries and societies from ancient Greece to modern times. It also examines the threats that democracy is under today.

The book explores the following topics:

- the historical rise of democracy
- the struggles of women and racial and religious minorities to achieve rights
- the demise of the Soviet Union
- movements for democracy in developing countries
- the threats to democracy in the West from plutocracy, globalization and free trade
- the future of democracy and the need for a planetary perspective

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Social Studies (Civics, Geography, History, World Studies)
- Business Studies (Economics)
- English Language Arts
- Humanities and Social Sciences
- Arts (Visual Arts, Music, Theater Arts)
- Information and Communications Technology

## IDEAS FOR GETTING STARTED

Introduce the book and your goals for studying it, and briefly outline the issues the book explores. Tell students that issues-based study raises varied opinions, and that, as a class, you will set some ground rules for maintaining a respectful and safe classroom atmosphere for discussing personal views. Ask the class to collaborate to create a list of expectations, such as “We’ll respect one another’s privacy”; “We’ll listen to one another”; and “We won’t insult one another.” Post the list and revisit it periodically to allow students to make observations and air problems.

Use *Democracy: Getting Started* (in this Teachers’ Guide) to introduce and/or review some vocabulary that students will encounter when reading the book. Have them work in pairs to complete the matching quiz. Answers: 1–g; 2–h; 3–a; 4–j; 5–k; 6–d; 7–e; 8–f; 9–l; 10–b; 11–i; 12–c.

## TEACHING/LEARNING APPROACHES

Read the book as a class with group or class discussions at the end of each chapter and a culminating activity at the end. You could use a combination of teacher read aloud, guided reading and independent reading.

Have students read the book independently and create their own study project.

Assign groups of students one chapter each and have them read it and present it to the rest of the class.

Have students read the book in groups and then either collaborate on a culminating activity or complete one independently.

Ask students to keep an Issues Journal (in writing or on audio or video) in which they comment on what they have read and/or discussed. Encourage frequent updates throughout the study of Democracy. Let students know from the outset whether the journal is for personal use only or if it's meant to be part of their assessment.

## IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION

What reasons does the author cite for democracy being at risk in wealthy countries (p. 15)?

How did the anti-globalization movement become a casualty of the terror attacks (p. 36)?

The author says that democracy is constantly being tested (p. 37). What is testing it today? What do you think will test it in your future?

Do you think that all people yearn for a democratic state? What do you think the author's opinion is on this question?

What do you think of Thoreau's words: "The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right" (p. 42)?

Do you think that Canada should give refugee status to U.S. servicemen and servicewomen who desert because of their opposition to the war in Iraq?

What does it mean to be an equal citizen?

How are you affected by global capitalism or multinational corporations? How are citizens in developing countries affected? How is your country affected?

How are people being marginalized today? What new theories does the author say are being used to marginalize people (p. 122)?

Do you think it's more important to think of yourself as a citizen of your country or as a citizen of the world? Explain.

What does the author mean by having a planetary perspective (p. 122)?

In the last chapter, what does the author say must happen in democracy's future?

## IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES

Work with a librarian to develop a list of novels about totalitarian and authoritarian regimes from a range of times and places, such as in Latin America, the Soviet Union, Africa and Yugoslavia. Students choose one novel to read and to relate to their study of *Democracy*. They could write an essay on a theme of their choice; present a report about the book, perhaps through a monologue in the role of one of the characters; or write a book review.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, History, World Studies, Economics, Arts (Theater Arts), Humanities and Social Sciences**

Students investigate one or more incidences of civil disobedience in more detail. They decide on the situation or people they want to find out more about, for example, Mohandas Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, the young people in Chicago demonstrating at the National Convention of the Democratic Party, suffragists, the demonstrations at G8 summits and so on. They could present their research findings in a slideshow, photo essay, brief biography, skit or an audiotaped or videotaped educational “historical moment” for radio or television.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, History, Arts (Theater Arts), World Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences, Information and Communications Technology**

Students read Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* or another one of the works listed on page 135 of *Democracy* and report on their reading in an essay or oral report.

**Subjects: English Language Arts, History, World Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences**

Students create a T-chart, comparative essay or Venn diagram showing the differences between left-wing parties and right-wing parties.

**Subjects: Humanities and Social Sciences, History, World Studies, English Language Arts**

Students work in small groups to select one country or region and research its movements toward democracy. They could review Chapters 4 and 5 for ideas. Have them set up information stations in the classroom, and then the groups move from station to station to learn about the other countries and compare the democratic movements. Stations could feature visual and oral presentations, slideshows, audiotaped guides, photo essays or information pamphlets.

**Subjects: World Studies, History, Humanities and Social Sciences, English Language Arts, Information and Communications Technology**

Students conduct further research on one of the following: a market economy, NAFTA, the World Trade Organization, the European Union or a particular multinational corporation. Students who choose the same subject can pool their information to become the expert group and present their findings to the rest of the class.

**Subjects: Economics, World Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences, English Language Arts**

Students select music for a playlist that relates to *Democracy*. The songs they select could trace the progression of the book or focus on a particular theme or subject in the book that interests them most. Have students create an album title and cover and write liner notes explaining their reasons for each selection.

**Subjects: Arts (Music, Visual Arts), World Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences, English Language Arts, Information and Communications Technology**

Talk with students about the idea of microcosms, and have them think about microcosms of types of government, such as a democracy in a community group or school or the possible autocracy of a director on a movie set.

Students choose one idea to explore further. They sketch a concept web or flow chart showing the parts of the “government” and their relationships, and include outside factors such as globalization, racism, inequality, extremism, environmental issues and the effects they might have.

**Subjects: World Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences, Civics, English Language Arts, Economics**

Students gather statistics about poverty and create a poster, information sheet or brochure called “10 Things You Should Know About Poverty.” They can decide on the purpose, theme and scope — global poverty, national or local — of the information they gather. When they present their work, they should talk about how it relates to their reading of *Democracy*.

**Subjects: World Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences, Civics, English Language Arts, Economics**

Point out to students that the author uses strong metaphors, such as “flame of equality” and “walls of hate.” Students think of similar symbols to depict the struggle for democracy in totalitarian states or the struggle for equality in a plutocracy, and create a work of art incorporating the symbol(s). They could employ images from history, such as the man standing before the tank in Tiananmen Square or the fall of the Berlin Wall or they could think of their own images. If students prefer, they could write a poem or create a spoken-word poem using metaphor and symbolism.

**Subjects: Arts (Visual Arts), World Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences, English Language Arts**

Students create a flag that most represents democracy to them (for example, their country's flag, the United Nations flag, the flag of the French Revolution, the African National Congress flag). To make the flags, instead of coloring in the flag's symbols, they use collage comprising pictures and type depicting what they learned in *Democracy*. For example, the maple leaf in the Canadian flag could be composed partially of quotes and photos of Canadian suffragists. To avoid having this be a simple cut-and-paste activity, students should be able to explain each item in their collage and how it relates to Democracy. Some students may prefer to construct their flags on the computer.

**Subjects: World Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences, English Language Arts, Arts (Visual Arts)**

Students imagine they have access to any historical artifact they want from around the world and from any time period to create the ultimate Democracy Display for a museum. They can sketch their plans for the display and create a text or audio guide explaining each item and why they chose it.

**Subjects: History, World Studies, Arts (Visual Arts), Humanities and Social Sciences, English Language Arts**

## CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER GROUNDWORK GUIDES

See *The Betrayal of Africa* and *Empire* for issues of colonialism, imperialism and racism.

See *Genocide* for issues of totalitarianism and autocracies, racism and human rights.

See *Hip Hop World* for issues of social protest and civil rights.

See *Slavery Today* for issues of freedom and human rights.

See *Oil* and *Empire* for two other books by the same author.

Have students select other books in the series for independent study.



## DEMOCRACY: GETTING STARTED

Work with a partner to match the terms in Column A with the definitions in Column B. Compare answers with another pair of students. You'll be learning more about these terms as you read *Democracy*.

COLUMN A	COLUMN B
1. democracy	a. absolute government by one person
2. anarchy	b. strong supporter of a party or person
3. autocracy	c. controlling the supply of money as the main way of stabilizing the economy
4. plutocracy	d. alliance of political parties, usually temporary
5. egalitarian	e. government by a small group of people
6. coalition	f. formal withdrawal from a political union or alliance
7. oligarchy	g. a form of government with rule by the people
8. secession	h. political or social disorder; lack of government
9. totalitarianism	i. put in an unimportant or powerless position within a group
10. partisan	j. government by the wealthy
11. marginalize	k. relating to equal rights for all
12. monetarism	l. centralized, dictatorial government demanding complete subservience to the state

## STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE: EXPLORING ISSUES

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What goals did you set when you started reading *Democracy*? How well do you think you achieved these goals?

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What are the most important points you learned from this book? Are there ways you can see yourself applying what you learned?

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In your study of *Democracy*, how well did you make connections to your own life and experiences? How deeply did you think about the issues?

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In your study of this book, did you consider various points of view and perspectives? Did you make your own conclusions about the issues?

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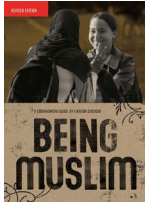
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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



**James Laxer** (1941–2018) was the award-winning author of more than twenty-five books, including *Staking Claims to a Continent*; the #1 national bestseller *Tecumseh & Brock: The War of 1812*; and *Stalking an Elephant: My Discovery of America*. He was a professor of political science in the Department of Equity Studies at York University.

## GROUNDWORK GUIDES



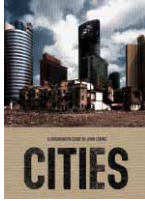
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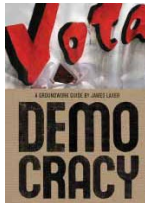
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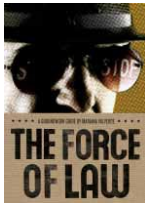
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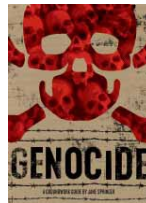
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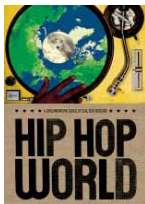
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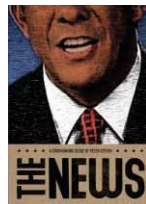
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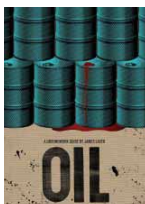
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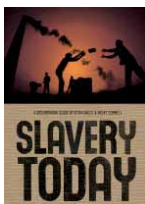
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