

How to Become Prime Minister

TEACHERS NOTES

Introduction

This performance seeks to go beyond traditional mock-parliament demonstrations, presenting the essence of the idea of democracy at a level designed for all age-groups, as well as explaining the history of democracy and its development in Australia.

The show then has a participatory recreation of both an Australian election and a parliamentary debate. The whole performance is framed by comedy, physicality, and music, to maintain the enthusiasm of all students.

Ideals of Democracy

It is not unreasonable to describe democracy as the rule of the people, in which members of a society vote to jointly influence important decisions, but such a state cannot exist without certain wider values being in place.

The first section of How To Become Prime Minister presents as some of these core values; ***compromise, mutual respect, and co-operation with rules/laws.*** Actors perform dysfunctional scenes in which these values do not exist, and with the help of students, improve behavioural standards to keep the show running smoothly.

A History of Democracy

A comic mime sequence demonstrates the inequities in societies ruled by monarchs or tyrants.

Moving on to the development of democracy in Ancient Greece, we see an early example of citizens voting to make decisions at town meetings. Since it

was not possible for all citizens with voting rights to attend and vote upon all decisions, **representatives** voted on behalf of groups of people.

Elections

Like in Ancient Greece, modern Australians have **representatives** whom we elect to vote on our behalf in the decision making processes of government.

In this section of the performance, we discover that elections are held to decide upon representatives for our local area, and several student **candidates** stand in a simulation, answering questions about their beliefs and intentions or **policies**.

A **ballot paper** shows how every vote counts, and when students vote for the candidate of their choice, their **preferences** are also distributed to ensure the equal value of each vote.

Something that may surprise students to learn is that **the citizens of Australia do not vote for the Prime Minister** directly. Instead, the leader of the party which gains the most representatives in the **House of Representatives** becomes the Prime Minister.

In this section, we are also introduced to the other house of parliament, **The Senate**.

Australian Democracy

In another comic mime, students learn how democracy grew to our current system in Australia. Some members of Australian colonies gained the right to vote from the mid-1800s, and after much debate, these colonies chose to **federate** and became the nation of Australia on January 1st, 1901.

Even at this point, however, there were many people who did not have the right to vote. Women only gained the right to vote in 1902, (and this was well ahead of most of the world), and the vast majority of indigenous Australians were unable to vote until 1962.

Today, all citizens over the age of 18 have the right to vote and it is **compulsory** for them to do so.

Making Laws

In the final section of the show, students learn how a law is made, by participating in a simulated parliamentary debate. Speakers for and against a **bill** are heard, before the proposed law is voted on by the entire audience.

We also learn how the Senate works to strengthen the system by improving laws with suggested **amendments**, and not passing the law until it is satisfactory to both houses.

How to Become PM

In an entertaining closer, performers sing a song that lists the Australian Prime Ministers from Federation to today.

Best References

www.aph.gov.au/parl.htm

www.aec.gov.au

www1.curriculum.edu.au

www.abc.nt.au/civics/demos/p_intro.htm