



ISD Virtual Learning

Contemporary Issues: Democracy vs. Authoritarianism

May 4, 2020



Contemporary Issues

Lesson 4: **May 4- Democracy vs. Authoritarianism**

Objective/Learning Target: Students will be able to understand the differences in democratic and authoritarian governments.

Warm Up

This week's topic will be about different kinds of government around the world. Some governments are a **democracy** while others are **authoritarian**. This lesson will help you understand the difference between the two and also which countries practice each. But before this, answer the following warm-up questions. Keep your guesses for later in the lesson.

Which country in the world do you think has the most freedom? Which country do you think has the least freedom?



Lesson Activity

The United States is a democracy. The founding principle of a democracy is that the government is run by the people. People have power to make decisions or elect people to make them. Democracies also guarantee their citizens certain rights and protections. Some of these rights we value most as Americans are our freedoms of speech, assembly, religion, press, etc. However, in an authoritarian regime these rights and freedoms are taken away, so that the government can have complete control over what happens in their country. Read the following short article to gain a fuller understanding: [authoritarianism | Definition & Facts](#). *Here are some prominent examples of authoritarian leaders around the world:*



Xi Jinping- China



Bashar Al-Assad-
Syria



Kim Jong Un-
North Korea

Practice

Go to the following website: <https://freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=fiw&year=2020>

The website gives every country a score from 0 to 100. 0 indicates that the country is not free at all (a very authoritarian government) and a score of a 100 indicates that the country is very free (a strong democracy).

Once there, follow the directions below:

1. Use your mouse to hover over countries and see their scores (make sure you are viewing Global Freedom and not Internet Freedom).
2. The least free country is Syria with a score of 0. The most free is a tie between Norway, Sweden, and Finland at 100. Did you guess any of these right in your warm up?
3. Using your new knowledge of authoritarian governments, select one purple country that is “not free.” Click on it and then select “View Report.” Skim through the report and describe 5 examples of how the country is an example of authoritarianism. Write a 4-6 sentence paragraph on a separate sheet of paper.

Reflection

The Economist is another source that ranks governments on their democratic ideals (or lack thereof). In their map, the U.S. is labeled a “flawed democracy.” The Freedom House map also only gave the U.S. a score of 86/100. So neither map gave the U.S. an outstanding score.

Do you think these scores are fair? Are they too low? Maybe too high? Or do you agree with them? Why?

