

CHV20 Unit 1: Citizenship and Government

Activity 1: Origins of Early Government

Overview

This first Activity begins with a simulation entitled "The River" that examines early forms of government, as well as conflicts and conflict resolution in an early society. Then, you will identify a world leader and determine what makes him/her effective in his/her role.

Lesson

THE RIVER

Picture a valley. The year is 8 000 B.C. A river that tumbles from a distant range of mountains feeds life in this valley. Along the banks of this river, five villages have developed. Each village has its own customs, leaders, and religious beliefs. The villagers have little contact with each other, often mistrust their neighbours and seldom speak. In a normal year, the river provides an ample supply of water to irrigate the fields of grain that surround each village.

In an ideal year, each village is able to easily feed every member and to gradually increase its population. This, however, is not a normal year. A drought has descended on the valley and the river has been slowed to a trickle (a drought is a very long spell of dry weather). The villagers understand the danger that this drought poses to their survival. If any village tries to take from the river the amount of water that it would ideally need to water its fields, the impact on the other villages will be immediate and severe.

The villages range in size from 110 citizens up to 300 citizens. Each village is led by a single male leader who was chosen for his position because of his age and the wisdom gained during his life in the village. The leader is responsible for maintaining peace and harmony in his village, and has two diplomats to assist him. The diplomats are young men who travel to the other villages to negotiate and trade information. The remaining village members work to provide for themselves, their village, their leader, and their diplomats.

In the valley, a severe drought means that there will be many deaths. This stark reality has compelled the leaders of the five villages to call an emergency meeting. At this meeting, a leader from each village will eventually declare what his/her village plans to do in order to respond to the drought. There are many strategies that might be followed. Not all of these strategies are peaceful. Some people in the valley think that one or more villages may combine and declare war on their neighbours. Rumours about secret deals are already circulating. Others think that the villagers will be able to work out a peaceful strategy to resolve the problems created by the drought.

Assignment

1. After reading *The River*, complete the chart below by developing the six points of comparison between the government of 8000 B.C. and the one we have today.

| Category | 8,000 B.C. | Today |
|--|------------|-------|
| The methods used to choose leaders | | |
| Characteristics of the leader | | |
| Size of government | | |
| Government responsibilities | | |
| The way the government deals with problems | | |

2. Think of a world leader. A world leader does not necessarily need to be the leader of a government. He/she could be the leader of a religion, company, social cause; or it can be an outstanding artist or an amazing athlete.
 - a. What makes this person a good leader? Try to focus on the leader's experiences, skills, qualities and challenges, as well as important issues and events he/she has faced.
 - b. What do you think are the most important qualities a leader should have? Is it important for a leader to be charismatic?