Who can declare war?

What do kings and queens do?

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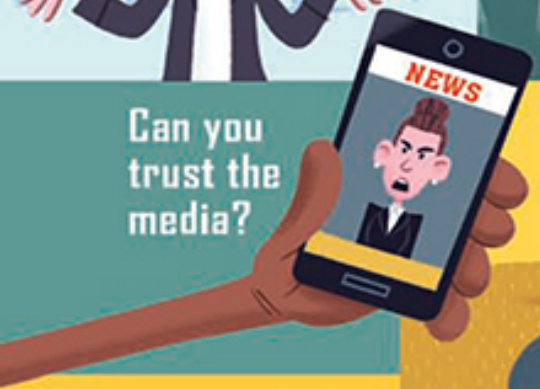
POLITICS FOR BEGINNERS

Who decides what is legal?

Can you trust the media?



Who pays for hospitals and roads?

USBORNE POLITICS

FOR BEGINNERS

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All about politics

People often use the word politics to talk about who runs the country and how. But 'politics' actually covers the way people make decisions about how to work together in all kinds of groups, big or small.

Here's an example of a (smallish) group: a sports team.

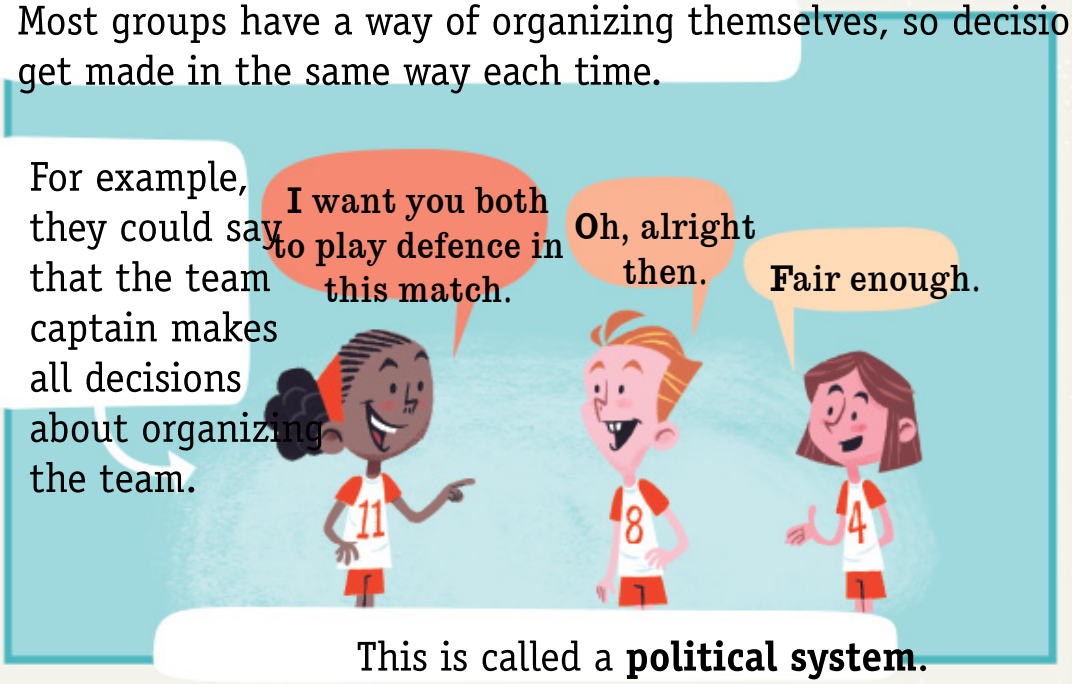
The group has some common goals...

...but not everyone agrees on how to achieve those goals.

The group may not always agree, but they need to work together, because they want to do well.

Groups deciding the best way to work together is politics in action.

Most groups have a way of organizing themselves, so decisions get made in the same way each time.



Sometimes, people in the group will want to change the system.

Groups such as sports teams can be described as **societies**. In societies, not everyone can get their way all the time. They have

Politics are everywhere

When people talk about politics, they're usually talking about *large societies*, such as entire countries. In those societies, the word politics can refer to almost any aspect of day-to-day life.

Work

Should we give money to people who don't have a job?

Should parents all get time off work during school vacations?

How much is a fair wage?

At what age should people stop working?

Do we need people from other countries to move here and work?

Transportation

How old should you be to drive?

Should bus rides be free for kids?

Do we need a new airport?

Should everyone be forced to wear helmets when cycling?

Economy

Who should be allowed to borrow money from a bank?

How many taxes should people pay?

Is our society too unequal?

Should governments control how much things cost?

What's the best way to make people better off?

Housing

What's the best way to help people who are homeless?

Is renting an apartment too expensive?

Who should be in charge of building houses?

Do we have enough homes?

Culture

Should newspapers be allowed to publish whatever they want?

Who gets to choose what's shown on TV?

Should museums be free to all visitors?

How can we get more young people playing sports?

Do we want more tourists to visit us?

Law and order

Should police officers carry guns?

Is it fair to make smoking illegal?

Who should be allowed to get married?

Who decides how long a prison sentence should be?

Who's in charge?

'Who's in charge?' is one of the biggest political questions in large societies. The answer is important, because whoever's in charge gets to tell everyone what to do. You don't always have to do what someone else tells you to, but it's hard to say 'no' to people who have *power* or *authority*.

A person with *power* can force you to do things by making you scared.

A person with *authority* doesn't have to force you, usually because you're part of a bigger group that has already agreed that he or she is allowed to tell you what to do.

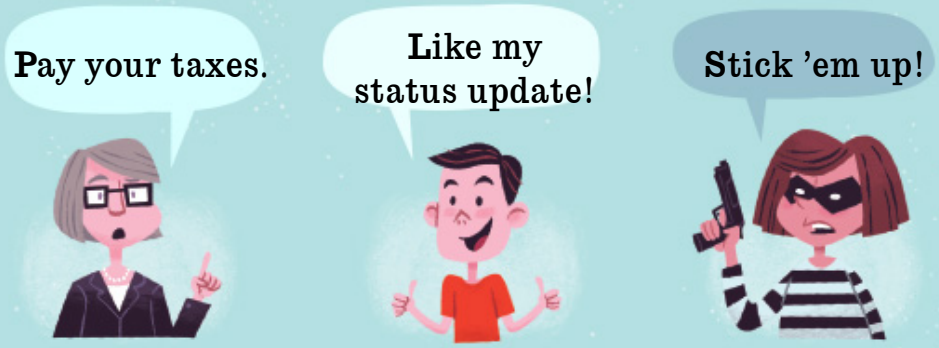
Who has authority?

In a fair society, the people in charge need to have authority, not just power. The political system will only work if most people agree that those in charge are *allowed* to tell everyone what to do.

Think about all the people who might tell you what to do.

How many of those actually have authority? What do you think?

Parents Principal Team captain



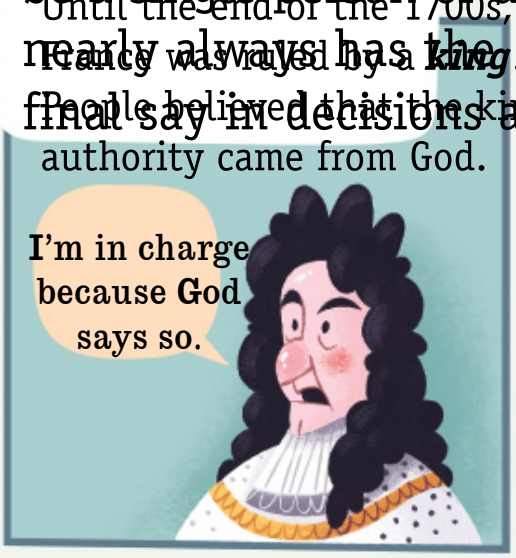
President Facebook friends Armed robber

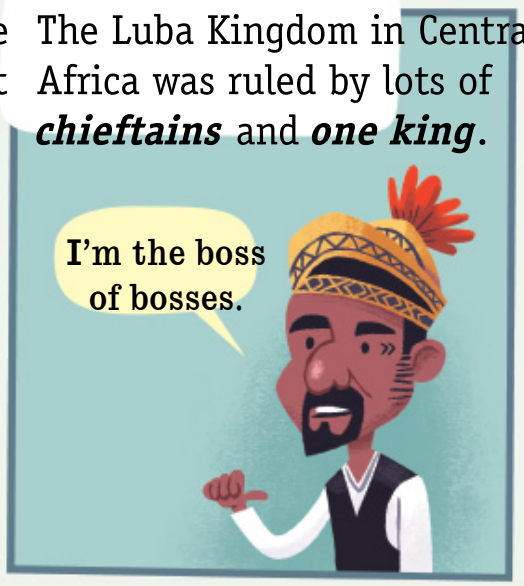
Bullies Younger brother and sister Police officer

What is a government?

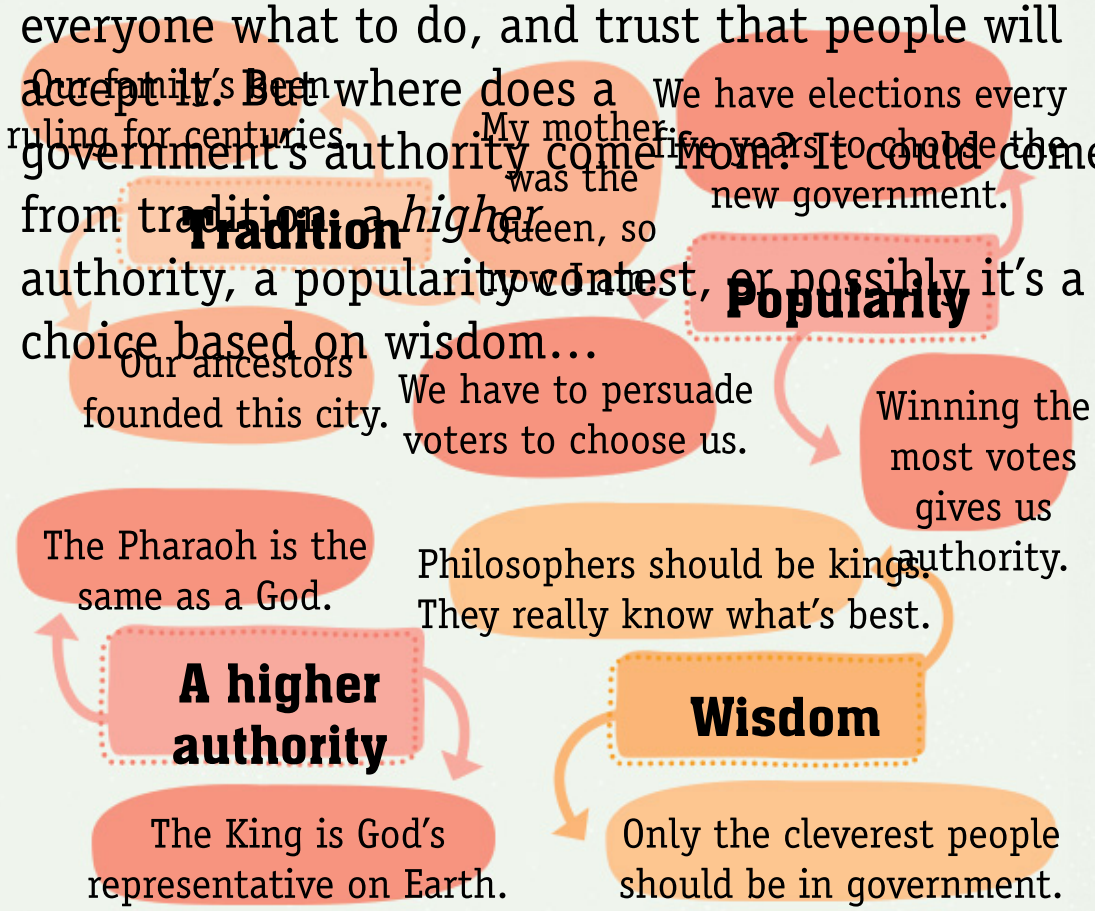
In a big society such as a country, the answer to the question,
'Who's in charge?' is usually: the government. The government can be a single person or a group of people, but it nearly always has the final say in decisions about how the society is run.

All governments are different. For example…

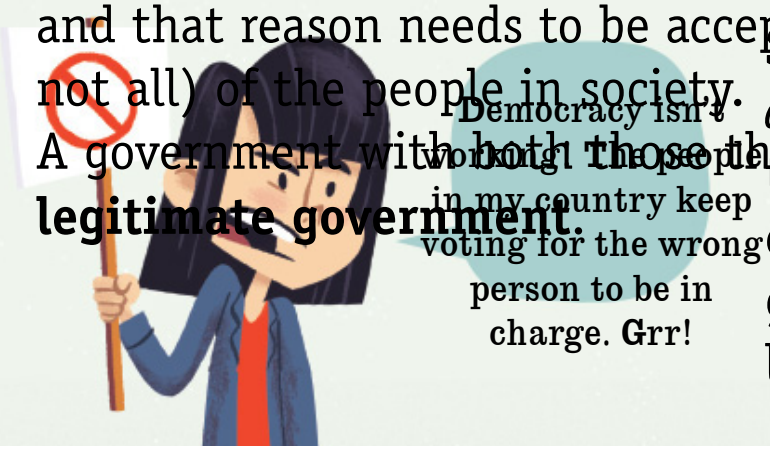




The people in a government need to have authority if they're going to tell
everyone what to do, and trust that people will accept it. But where does a government's authority come from? It could come from tradition: a *higher* authority, a popularity contest, or possibly it's a choice based on wisdom…



If a government is claiming to have authority, it needs to have a good reason –
and that reason needs to be accepted by most (if not all) of the people in society.
A government with both those things is known as a **legitimate government.**



Sometimes, people *don't* accept that the current government is legitimate, and