

Parliament

Approach: Team

Level: Year 8 only

Resources: 4 word sheets; 1 word card; blocks—8 orange, 4 yellow, 6 green, 3 pink; parliament seating plan.

Questions/instructions

I am going to give each of you a sheet with words on it. These words are about parliament, and I want you to take turns to discuss what the words mean that are on your sheet of paper. Everyone in the group should help with the explanations. I also want you to write down some words on your paper to help you remember the important information, because after your discussion, I am going to ask you what the words mean. You have 5 minutes so use your time well.

Give one sheet to each student and allow 5 minutes for discussion.

STUDENT 1	STUDENT 2	STUDENT 3	STUDENT 4
Government Ministers	Prime Minister Speaker of the House	Opposition Members of Parliament	Leader of the Opposition Coalition Parties

Now we will imagine that I am a reporter, and I am going to ask you to take turns to describe to me what the words on your sheets mean.

Ask one student at a time to explain the words on their sheets. Follow the order on the word card so that each student reports on two separate occasions.

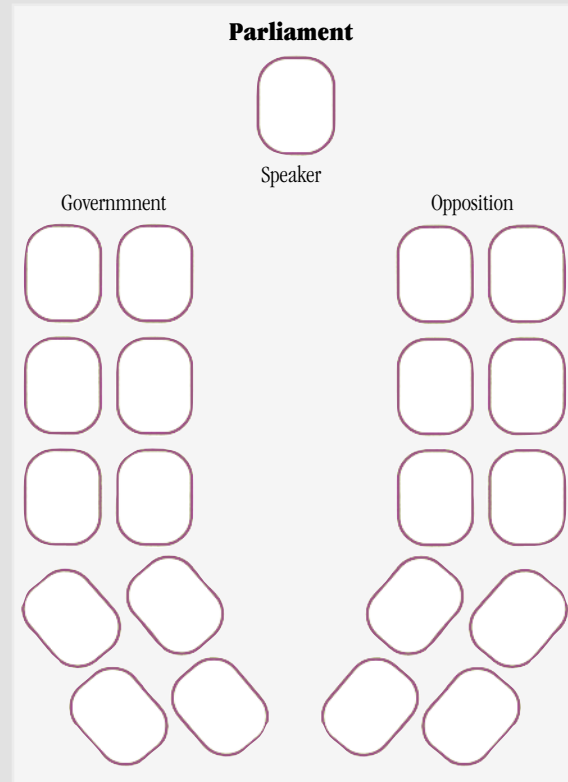
After each student reports back on a word, ask:

Is there anything else that anyone can tell me about what that word meant? % responses

Allow time for answers.

Government	good	15
	moderate	29
	poor	56
Prime Minister	good	17
	moderate	50
	poor	33
Opposition	good	7
	moderate	26
	poor	67
Leader of the Opposition	good	14
	moderate	32
	poor	54
Ministers	good	12
	moderate	35
	poor	53
Speaker of the House	good	13
	moderate	12
	poor	75
Members of Parliament	good	19
	moderate	23
	poor	58
Coalition Parties	good	29
	moderate	26
	poor	45

Place the parliament chart and coloured blocks in front of the students.



I want you to imagine that each of these blocks represents a member of parliament. There are 4 different colours for 4 different parties. For example, the yellow cubes are for the Yellow Party; the pink cubes are for the Pink Party. We will always call the parties by those names - we won't use words like "National Party" or "Labour Party".

We will imagine that each of you is the leader of one of these parties, and therefore one of the cubes is you! Remember, this is not real life, so don't worry if you haven't got the most members.

To stay as the government means you have to get more than half of the votes on important decisions. Each member has only one vote.

This chart shows a plan of a large room where all of the members of parliament meet to their do their business and have their debates. There are enough seats for each member of parliament.

		% responses y8
<p>I want you to arrange the “members of parliament” so that each one has a seat. The way you seat them should be like the way they are seated in their parties in a real parliament. You will need to decide which parties will be the government. Do that now, and I’ll ask you to explain your arrangement when it is done.</p> <p>Allow time for students to arrange the “members”.</p> <p>Now explain to me what you have done, and which parties are the government.</p> <p>What makes those parties the government?</p> <p>Students give their explanation.</p> <p>Now I want you to try to make a different arrangement of the parties to make a government. Do that now.</p> <p>Allow time for students to re-arrange the “members”.</p> <p>Now explain to me what you have done, and which parties are the government.</p> <p>What makes those parties the government?</p>	<p>Explanation of how to get numbers to form a government</p>	very good 5
		good 20
		moderate 28
		poor 47
<p>Now I want you to imagine that the Orange Party thinks a law should be passed that says children should only go to school if they want to.</p> <p>Use the model to explain to me what would have to happen if this idea was to be made into a law. See how many of the words on the chart you can use when you are giving me your explanation. You have 3 minutes to talk about it before you tell me what you think.</p> <p>Allow 3 minutes for discussion.</p> <p>Now explain to me what would need to happen for a law to be made that says children only go to school if they want to. Use the words on the chart and the model to help with your explanation.</p>	<p>Explanation of how seating would be arranged</p>	very good 6
		good 11
		moderate 28
		poor 55
<p>Now I want you to imagine that the Orange Party thinks a law should be passed that says children should only go to school if they want to.</p> <p>Use the model to explain to me what would have to happen if this idea was to be made into a law. See how many of the words on the chart you can use when you are giving me your explanation. You have 3 minutes to talk about it before you tell me what you think.</p> <p>Allow 3 minutes for discussion.</p> <p>Now explain to me what would need to happen for a law to be made that says children only go to school if they want to. Use the words on the chart and the model to help with your explanation.</p>	<p>Explanation of how laws are passed</p>	very good 0
		good 12
		moderate 27
		poor 61

Commentary

This task sought to investigate year 8 students’ knowledge and understanding of basic information and ideas about roles, functions, make-up and arrangements of New Zealand’s parliament. Overall, high percentages of teams of students had a moderate to poor grasp of the meaning and function of key roles such as prime minister, leader of the opposition, and member of parliament. When using our hypothetical model of the make-up of our elected parliament, again, a high percentage of teams struggled to adequately explain in general terms how a government is formed from elected members, what the basic format of seating everyone might be like in the House, and how parliament goes about passing laws. While the task used the context of New Zealand’s parliament, many of the features explored are inherent in the setup and operation of many democratically elected groups in our society. The results are grounds for concern that many students are not able to explain the basic elements of roles and processes.