



Grades 4 – 7; Ages 9 – 12

Govern Like a Girl

The Women Who Became Canada's First Ministers

by Kate Graham

Teacher's Guide

by Beth Carey

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Curriculum Guide for *Govern Like a Girl*

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This is a wonderful book for all grades. In the Primary/Junior divisions, it is a great way to introduce students to both Canadian politics and equity and justice issues. In the Junior/Intermediate divisions, it opens the door to a more thorough discussion on Canadian politics and justice issues.

At the time of the book's publication, in the history of Canada since Confederation, there have only been 13 women who have held a first minister's position in contrast to the three 302 men. Of the 23 people who have served in the role of prime minister, one was a woman. Only 12 women have served as premiers across the provinces and territories. In contrast, there have been 280 men. In September 2021, there is only one woman serving as a premier in Canada.

Activity 1

A great way to introduce this book is to read one chapter at a time over the month or year and have students do an inquiry-based learning activity.

Example:

1. Read Chapter 1: Premier Eva Aariak.
2. Either on chart paper, whiteboard, SMART board, or in a Google Doc, have students share their own questions about what they would like to know based on what they have read.
3. Share the questions together so that everyone can see them.
4. Ask students to decide what question they are most interested in and to put their name beside it. Work with students to choose questions when needed.
5. Ask students to go online or to the library to research answers to their questions.
6. Have students choose how they would like to share their new learning and information. Examples of ways to share: written, a mini TedTalk, green screen news cast (there are many easy ways to make your own green screen), through a performance or art piece, etc.
7. Have students share with peers.

Often, involving social justice with an inquiry-based style of learning, students develop their own ways to affect change and opportunities to educate others about the issues. It is important to support these initiatives.

Here are some questions to display in the classroom prior to each chapter. After reading the chapter, have students discuss using these questions to spark the conversation.

1. Eva Aariak: Eva fought to ensure Inuit language rights. Why is language so important to building community?
2. Catherine Callbeck: What are some of the skills that Catherine had that helped her in her role as Premier?
3. Christy Clark: Opportunity often knocks when we least expect it. What were the opportunities that “knocked” for Christy?
4. Caroline Cochrane: Caroline had many struggles to overcome. What do you think inspired her to become the first woman premier of the Northwest Territories?
5. Nellie Cournoyea: In your opinion, what were her most important achievements? How did those achievements impact her people?
6. Pat Duncan: What about the “Canada Election Act in 1890” frustrated Pat and what did she do about it?
7. Kathy Dunderdale: Kathy experienced sexism both in the political field and in her personal life. What do you think inspired her to continue to fight back?
8. Rita Johnston: As the first woman ever to be a premier in Canada, what do you think drove her into the political life?
9. Pauline Marois: Perseverance and bravery are two of Pauline’s key character traits. Can you give examples of these from the chapter?
8. Rachel Notley: What important policies did Rachel put in place and why were they important?
9. Alison Redford: What unique skills and knowledge did Alison bring to her job as premier?
10. Kathleen Wynne: Education was always very important to Kathleen. How did this help her in her role as Premier?
11. Kim Campbell: Each political party chooses the one person who will be the leader of the party. What do you think were the reasons the Progressive Conservative Party chose her to be the leader?

Activity 2

NO SECOND CHANCES: A Special Project from Canada 2020

Have students check out the following website: <https://nosecondchances.ca/>

1. Ask students to choose one of the women in the book and develop five questions you would like to ask her.
2. Have students write her a letter and find the best way to connect with her.
3. See if she would be willing to Skype or Zoom with the class.
4. Develop questions as a class. Decide how you will record the answers and what further inquiry is needed.

Activity 3

UNDERSTANDING CANADA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

Check out [this webpage](#) on the House of Commons website.

Ideas to teach about Canada's Political System

Canada's political system can be confusing, so taking the time to help students truly understand how it works is key. Here are a few ways you can work through it in the classroom:

Canada is a Constitutional Monarchy and has a Parliament System.

Divide students into six research groups:

1. Monarchy
2. Constitutional Government
3. Parliament
4. Senate
5. House of Commons
6. Canada's three levels of Government: Federal, Provincial/Territorial, Municipal

As a class, open a Google Doc or a platform where students can ask questions and make comments on the above headings.

Examples: What does this word mean? What power do they have? Who are they? Where can I find more information?

For the next few classes, take time to allow research both online and in your school's library. (If you ask any of the levels of Government, they will send you literature about many different topics.)

Now that students have a knowledge base, have each group decide who they would like to interview to ask for more information or for clarification on the topic. This could be a member of a level of government, a professor at a University, someone who works in a political office, etc. As a group, ask students to develop questions and then decide who will ask which question and who will record the answers.

Prepping students: It is important to practice asking the questions and responding to them. A mock interview could be a great way to have students gain confidence.

Set up a Google Meet, Skype, or Zoom meeting with the chosen person.

After the meeting, have students journal what they learned from this experience. Creating thank-you letters is another great way to reflect on the experience and what students have learned from it.

Activity 4

GAINING AN UNDERSTANDING OF WOMEN’S RIGHTS

There are great websites available with valuable information to help students understand the history and the background of women’s rights.

[History of Women’s Rights in Canada](#)

[History of Women’s Rights](#)

[Canadian Women’s Foundation](#)

After exploring these websites with your students, or asking them to explore it on their own, open an inquiry-based lesson:

Some Questions for Inquiry

There are some great inquiry questions in the opening of the book.

1. Where in the world are there women leaders? In what ways has the country progressed or changed socially, economically, or politically since their first woman leader?
2. What political system does Canada follow?
3. What is the current status of gender equity in Canada and in Canadian policies?
4. What are some of the controversial topics in Canada today? Which person in the book could you send an email to, to get more information and help with understanding that topic?
5. Goal 5 in the [Sustainable Development Goals from the United Nations](#) is, “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” How do you see that in the world today?

Watch this video as a class, or ask students to watch it in advance of the lesson: [The Power of Partnerships for Achieving Gender Equality](#).

Have students read the Gender and Equality and Women's Empowerment Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals from the United Nations.

Ask students to choose a country in the world that they may have a connection to or have an interest in. Try to ensure that there are many countries represented. This might be a good activity to be done in pairs or small groups depending on your students.

Have students develop a series of questions that will be easily researchable for each country.

Example:

What political roles have women been in? How many women are in positions of authority? Is there pay equity? What is historically significant with gender equality in that country?

Allow a few class periods to research the answers to their questions. Consider how students can share their knowledge. For example, small groups can create a scripted newscast to share in class.

Activity:

Create and film a news segment to show what you have learned on the country of your choice. Students will need to write scripts to share the information they have gained from answering the questions.

When all the videos have been completed, they can be shared in class or on a wider platform. Make sure students are comfortable with your choice.

More Questions for Inquiry:

1. Look at the various political parties across Canada. What is the ratio of women to men? Compare this with other countries.
2. How many countries have had women as leaders? Which countries? What do you think about this?
3. The United States has a woman as Vice President for the first time. How has that impacted the United States?
4. Canada has never elected a woman Prime Minister. Kim Campbell became Prime Minister through the retirement of Brian Mulroney. How has this impacted Canada, do you think?
5. Sixteen per cent of the premiers in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut were women. Three per cent of the remaining provinces had women as leaders. Why do you think that is?
6. There are no political parties in the Northwest Territories and the Nunavut Government. Why do you think that is? Do you think this system works better than government structures in other areas in Canada?
7. How many political parties are there in Canada? What are they and what are their policies? Is there one you believe is better? Why?

As a class, learn about the structure of government used by Indigenous peoples of Canada by reaching out to a community for answers. We can learn much from websites but inviting an Indigenous person into the classroom, or via Zoom or Skype, offers a much richer learning experience. Here are a few websites with information:

[Haudenosaunee Confederacy Family Structure](#)

[Haudenosaunee Confederacy Structure](#)

[Anishinabek Nation Governance](#)