

Defining Democracy

Chapter 12: What is Democracy? Why Democracy? · Topic 1

Key Concept

In a democracy, citizens have the right to vote, participate in decision-making, and hold their government accountable through regular, fair elections.

Key features of democracy include the rule of law (everyone, including leaders, follows the same laws), protection of fundamental rights, and freedom of expression.

Democracies can be direct (citizens vote directly on issues) or representative (citizens elect representatives to make decisions), with most modern democracies being representative.

Democracy values pluralism, meaning diverse opinions, groups, and interests are respected, and decisions often reflect a balance between majority rule and minority rights.

Quick Revision Notes

- Democracy means power ultimately rests with the people.
- Citizens vote for representatives through free elections.
- Rule of law means everyone follows the same laws.
- Democracy protects fundamental rights and free expression.
- Direct democracy means citizens vote directly on issues.
- Representative democracy means citizens elect representatives.
- Most modern democracies are representative.
- Democracy balances majority rule and minority rights.

Practice Questions

- 1 Define democracy in your own words.
- 2 Discuss the difference between direct and representative democracy.
- 3 Explain what 'rule of law' means with an example.
- 4 Discuss why free elections matter in a democracy.
- 5 Research a fundamental right protected in a democracy.
- 6 Discuss why respecting minority views matters in a democracy.