



The story of
OUR UK Democracy that
EVERY UK
CITIZEN
should know.

This 'story' contains the basics which we think every citizen needs to know to fully participate in our UK democracy. Our UK democracy needs all citizens to be informed and actively encouraged to get involved, and know that it is their democratic right to challenge, question, protest, shape, critique, debate and influence our democracy all year round and not just at the ballot box.

This information is in a story format because our research shows that using story is the best way to engage and share information.

All The Democracy Box young co-creators use these seven chapters to creatively retell the story using social media, video, music, rap, podcasts and more.



You can find examples of how they have retold **this story** to date (<https://www.thedemocracybox.co.uk/our-uk-democracy>) by going to any of these links

- **The Democracy Box Podcast Series** (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Podcast-Series>)
- **4 Democracy Box raps commissioned by BBC Bitesize** (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Bitesize-Raps>)
- **The Democracy Box on Instagram** (<https://www.instagram.com/thedemocracybox>)
- **The Democracy Box on TikTok** (<https://www.tiktok.com/@thedemocracybox>)
- **The Democracy Box YouTube Channel** (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-YouTube>)
- **The Democracy Box on Twitter** (<https://twitter.com/TheDemocracyBox>)



The Story of our UK Democracy That Every Citizen Should Know in Seven Short Chapters© was written by Yvonne Murphy and The Democracy Box© and all associated content is copyright Yvonne Murphy/Omidaze Productions 2020

For more information please see www.thedemocracybox.co.uk and www.omidaze.co.uk or contact Omidaze at omidaze@outlook.com

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Foreword

Written by too many citizens to name

Watch the
video



Watch this video - 'What does democracy mean to you?' (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Video1>)

Who holds the power? What power do I have? Why vote at all? Why get involved? Why does it *matter*? What's democracy got to do with me? Who cares? How will it help? What will it do? Who do I trust? What is the truth? What is a vote anyway? Why wasn't I taught all this in school? Who represents me and why, how and where? What is the difference between parliament and government?



Well sure you *could* just stand there shouting on the side lines or you could actually get involved and be part of the story.

Because this story is
your story.

It is our story.

Written by those who went **before us** and by all of us **now** and all those **yet to come**.

Democracy is the people.
Stand up and be counted.

Stand Up by young co-creator Saskia Pay
(<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Video2>)

Watch the
video



CHAPTER 1:

Introducing the
HERO
of our story

The hero of our story is you

Watch the Discover Democracy film trailer on YouTube (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Video3>)
by young co-creators Thandi and Katherine

Watch the
video



The hero of our story is you. You are at the heart of this story. You the reader. The viewer. The listener. You the citizen. You the Voter! Without you our collective story of democracy doesn't really properly exist. Because the people rule and that means you rule!

We need all citizens to:

1. Understand the basics of our existing UK democracy and that democracy is more than the ballot box and is all year round and begins with them.
2. Have confidence and trust in our democracy and feel heard and involved.
3. Understand that democracy is not fixed or set in stone and is shaped by the people for the people.
4. Be given the confidence and permission to question and challenge our existing democracy. Because that is the very essence of a working democracy.

The word democracy comes from two Greek words that mean people (demos) and rule (kratos).

A democracy is a system of government where the power lies with the people who either rule directly or, in the case of the UK, indirectly through freely elected representatives who we can replace through peaceful transfer of power.

You vote for people to represent you.

However, democracy is about more than simply voting and elections. It is about having your say every day and not just on election days.

Democracy is about having your say and getting involved all year round. Whether that's through exercising your freedom of speech, volunteering, starting or signing a petition, protesting, campaigning, joining a youth parliament, lobbying, contacting your elected representative or finding ways large and small to take part in civic and civil society, in your local community and neighbourhood or beyond.

Democracy is collaboration and negotiation. It is being able to think critically, debate and reach a consensus.

A democracy is a society which is considered as a community of citizens linked by common interests and collective activity.

Democracy affects your life every single day. From how and when your rubbish is collected and your streets are repaired, to how your school and hospital is run, to how you collaborate with others in your community for the benefit of your community.

Democracy isn't just about voting.

Democracy needs you every single day of the year not simply on election days.

Democracy is you understanding how things operate so you can have your say all year round and not just on election days.

Democracy is

“about the responsible use of power by and for the people... Those who currently feel powerless and excluded should be able to learn how to have an effective say about issues that concern them, and do something about them. Society will be better as a result.”

Titus Alexander – Practical Politics

Listen to
the podcast



Listen to episode 2 of The Democracy Box podcast (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Podcast2>)

Don't be powerless and excluded. Be the hero of the story by reading the story and sharing this story. Read all seven chapters and find out all you need to know to begin your hero's journey.

Find out who can help you. You're not on your own. You have representatives who you elect to represent you in councils and parliaments/legislatures (that's where the laws are made) across the UK. You need to find out who they are and make sure they are representing you properly all the time.

You elect the people who you want to represent you in your council and your parliament to discuss things on your behalf. You elect representatives to make the laws on your behalf and to look carefully at everything that happens and at what is decided by governments.

And you elect the people who get to form those governments.

All those elected representatives are paid by you and work for you and they have to listen to you all year round not just at election time.

Voting is your right. Your privilege.

Taking part in our democracy is your right too. Your privilege. You are part of a community. **You are not alone.**

Your challenge, if you choose to accept it, is to read this story, share this story and own and exercise that right. And in doing so enable others in your community to do the same. You must collect seven key facts and find 10 ways to get involved in our UK democracy along the way.

Watch raps 1-4 from The Democracy Box Rap series
by Saskia Pay on BBC Bitesize
(<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Bitesize-Raps>)

Bitesize
Raps





You are a democracy hero.

Are you ready?

Key fact

Democracy is about you. The basic feature of democracy is the capacity of all voters to participate freely and fully in the life of their society.

CHAPTER 2:

The HERO'S JOURNEY

“Over the last 50 years the number of people voting in national elections has fallen from around 80% to 60% ...With a lower turnout democracy becomes meaningless.”

Peter Macfadyen — Flatpack Democracy

(nb in Welsh elections it is less than 50%)

Our UK Democracy is not set in stone

It never was. The different types of government, voting ages, voting systems have been created, shaped and changed by heroes past and present...

They have been created and shaped and changed by all the heroes past and present and must continue to shift and change to meet the needs of future generations.

The Rule of Law

The key idea of the rule of law is that the law should apply equally to all rulers and ruled alike. This ensures a 'government of law' and not a 'government of men'. In this way, the rule of law establishes the relationship between government and the people.

The Media

The UK has a strong independent media history with many different newspaper titles, television and radio channels. The media's role is to inform the public on important issues that affect them whether these are local, national or international.

Many broadcasters (BBC, ITV, C4) have it written in to their charters that they must inform all citizens about our UK democracy.

Newspapers remain an important source of political information with millions sold and read online every day.

Bias

The media is not unbiased. Newspapers don't have to be unbiased, but TV and radio journalists generally do need to be impartial. You can **check out OfCom** (<http://tinyurl.com/OFcom-link>) for more information. Different newspapers and media can choose to report the news in different ways. Newspapers can take a one-sided approach through their choice of headlines, pictures and stories. Newspapers often support one political party. This can change. It is important to understand what political bias different media sources have. Sometimes it depends on who owns that media outlet. Some urge or seek to influence their readers to vote for one political party or another in the run up to an election.



Fake News

The internet and social media allows people almost unlimited access to information which means people are better informed than ever before. As the internet allows almost anyone to post almost anything they choose, some of the information on the internet is not accurate. Check the date, source, author, detail, funder, facts via other sources.

Go to the Electoral Commission – an unbiased and trusted source of information for everything to do with elections and democracy. You can also use things like fact checkers to check if a story/fact is fake or to be trusted (<https://tinyurl.com/electoral-commission>).



Ten Ways to have your say

Democracy is about having your say and getting involved all year round.

Whether that's through exercising your freedom of speech, getting involved in your local community volunteering, starting or signing a petition, protesting, campaigning, joining a youth parliament, lobbying, contacting your elected representative, finding ways large and small to take part in Civic and Civil Society.

Here are ten ways for each and every hero to make sure their voice is heard and they can help shape and change their local area, region, nation, country for the better for themselves, their families, friends, neighbours, communities and for future generations.

1. Have conversations

Have conversations with family and friends and share this *Story of Our UK Democracy that every citizen should know*. Explain all of the above to other heroes.

Critical thought, debate, collaboration, challenge, protest, campaigning, reaching consensus (agreement) are all key to a good working democracy.

2. Volunteer and get involved in your local community

Democracy starts outside your front door and in your local community all year round. Get to know your neighbours. Find out about and get involved in volunteer groups and societies which represent the needs of your local community and things which you care about.

If one doesn't already exist, start one!

What do you want to change or help fix? What group(s) already exist that are starting to make the change you want to see that you could support?

Volunteer to help with a local community garden, or school (like helping listening to kids read or becoming a school governor or helping with the PTA) or find out about your local health board, parish, community and/or Town Council.

Find out about **Citizen's Assemblies** (<https://citizensassembly.co.uk>), **Participatory Budgeting** (<https://tinyurl.com/LGA-topic>) and local initiatives that will help you to raise your voice and be heard about what matters to you and your family and friends.



3. Find out who your Councillors, Members of Devolved Parliament (if you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) and MP are, and get in touch with them about what you care about locally, nationally and internationally

Find them at **Write To Them** (<https://www.writetothem.com>) and **They Work For You** (<https://www.theyworkforyou.com>). Contact your elected representatives by letter, email, phone, social media and in person. They should all hold 'surgeries' which just means a day when they hold face to face meetings with the people they represent. Some are drop ins and some are by appointment.



4. Protest, Campaign and Organise

Join with others to amplify your voice and, if you live in Wales, use the **Future Generations Act in Wales** (<https://tinyurl.com/future-generations>) to hold public bodies and elected representatives to account. Freedom to assemble (getting together with others in public) is your right. Know your rights. Get a copy of the book 'The Young Citizen's Passport' – a guide to those parts of the law most relevant to the everyday life of young people in England and Wales.



5. Contact the media

From letters pages in your local and national papers, to contacting journalists in the press and recorded media (TV) to social media or simply writing a blog. Freedom of speech is 'the right of people to express their opinions publicly without governmental interference, subject to the laws against libel, incitement to violence or rebellion, etc.' (Collins English Dictionary). Remember at all times the simple rules of our Freedom of Speech – that it comes with duties and responsibilities to protect the freedom and rights of others as well as ourselves and to not incite violence or hatred.

6. Start a petition

Start a petition and get it debated by a devolved body such as the **Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru** (<https://petitions.senedd.wales>) or **UK Parliament** (<https://petition.parliament.uk>).



7. Contribute towards a committee's research

They have to listen to you! Watch out for public consultations too and make sure you have your say about anything which matters to you.

8. Join a School Council, Youth Parliament or stand for public office

You can represent others in primary and/or secondary school and/or a Youth Parliament from age 11-18, and when you are 18 or over you can stand for public office. Yes you!!! Become a Councillor or even stand to be elected as a Member of a devolved parliament or the UK parliament.

9. Register to Vote

Register to vote at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.

Register to vote:
at 14 if you live in Wales or Scotland
or 16 if you live in England or Northern Ireland



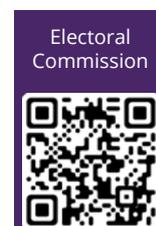
10. Vote

Check out The Electoral Commission for trusted and unbiased public information about your vote and all elections. (<https://tinyurl.com/electoral-commission>)

Also

Where do I vote? (<https://wheredoivote.co.uk>) and

Who can I vote for? (<https://whocanivotefor.co.uk>)



DEMOCRACY IS NOT SET IN STONE. IT'S SHAPED BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE. THE LAW APPLIES EQUALLY TO ALL RULERS AND RULED ALIKE.



DEMOCRACY IS ABOUT HAVING YOUR SAY AND GETTING INVOLVED ALL YEAR ROUND...

HERE ARE 10 WAYS FOR EVERY HERO TO MAKE THEIR VOICE HEARD

- | | | | | |
|---|--|---|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Share the story of our democracy with other heroes. | 2. Volunteer and get involved in your local community. | 3. Get in touch with your councillors, Members of Parliament and MP. | 4. Protest, Campaign and organise. | 5. Contact the media. |
| 6. Start a Petition, get it debated by your devolved Parliament or the UK Parliament. | 7. Contribute towards a committee's research. | 8. Join a School council/a Youth Parliament/ if you're over 18 stand for Public Office. | 9. Register to vote. | 10. VOTE! Check the Electoral Commission for unbiased voting info! |

ILLUSTRATIONS BY OLIVIA WINTER

CHAPTER 3:

The four kinds of
ELECTED
REPRESENTATIVES
our hero can call
on for **help**

“Democratic rights and freedoms without the skills and knowledge to use them are like owning a car without being able to drive.”

Titus Alexander — Practical Politics

Every hero has more than one elected representative

The first part of your quest is to find yours.

Everyone in the UK is represented by an MP and several councillors and some also elect a mayor.

If you live in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland you elect members of that devolved parliament/legislature too.

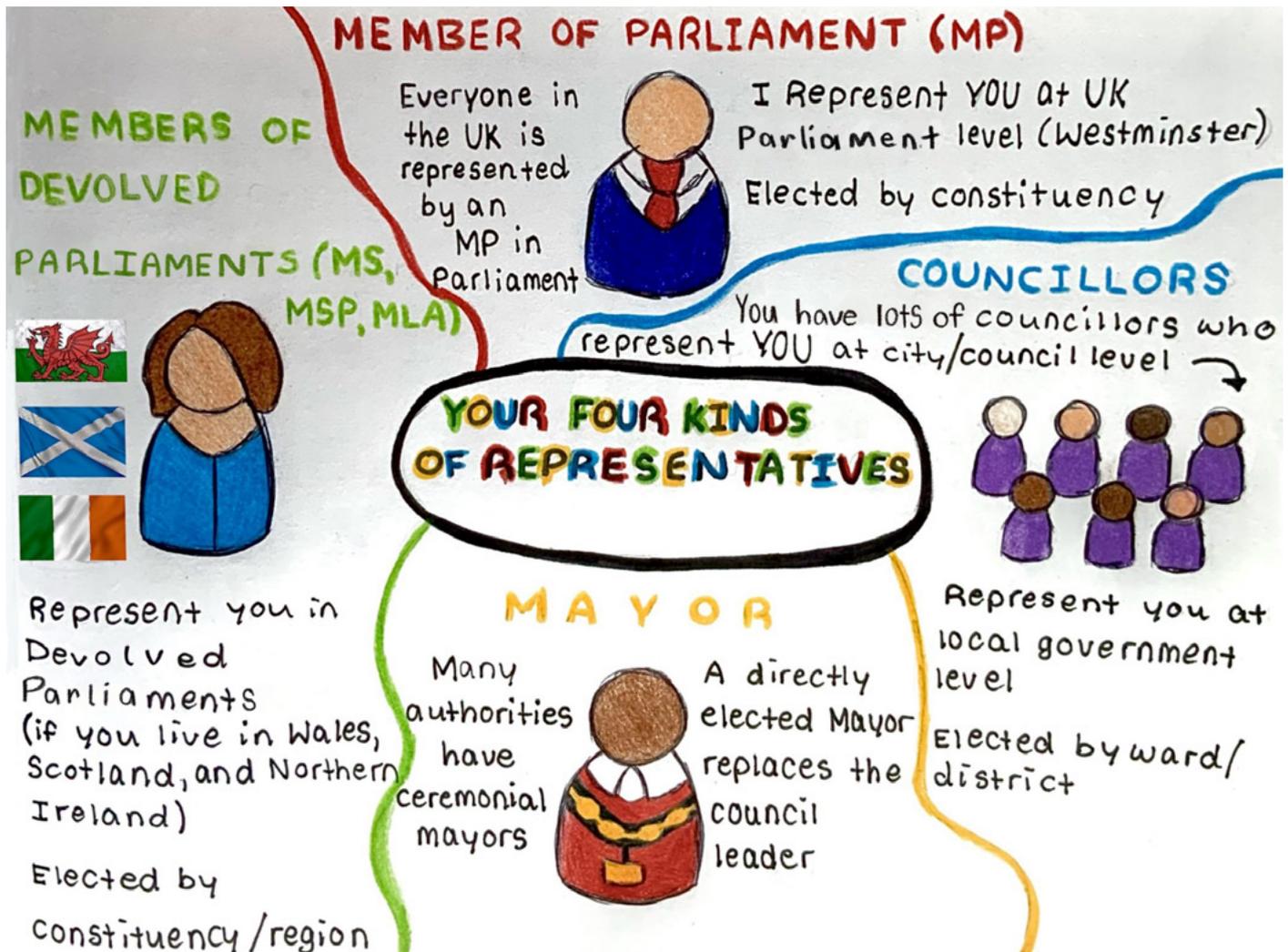
Step one on your hero's journey is to find your elected representatives at

Write To Them (<https://www.writetothem.com>) and

They Work For You (<https://www.theyworkforyou.com>).



Watch rapper and young co-creator BlankFace explain the different levels of government in his own unique way (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Video4>)



Councillors

Councillors are elected by Ward/District to represent you at local government level. Councillors represent electoral areas called Divisions, Wards, Districts or Unitary Authority Electoral Division (UTE). I know you couldn't make this stuff up. This is why the hero's challenge is so complex! It just means an area around where you live. You will have several councillors who represent you at city, county, district or borough council level which is often called your Local Authority. You may also have councillors who represent you at Town, community and parish councils too.

Find them all. Who are yours?

Mayors

Most local authorities opt for the 'leader and cabinet' model where the council leader is selected from the councillors. In some areas a 'mayor and cabinet' model has been adopted, where a directly elected mayor replaces the role of council leader. Many authorities with or without elected mayors have a ceremonial mayor who holds no executive power and the two roles of elected mayor/nominated council leader and ceremonial mayor exist concurrently.

Do you have a mayor who represents you?

Members of Parliament (MPs)

MPs represent you at UK Parliament level at Westminster in London. Everyone in the UK is represented by an MP in the UK parliament in Westminster. There are 650 MPs representing 650 constituencies. MPs and Members of Devolved Parliaments represent people who live in an official geographic area called a Constituency which is a bigger local area than a ward/district.

Who is your MP?

Members of devolved parliaments (MS, MSP, MLA)

Elected to represent the people of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland Parliaments/Legislatures.

Members of the Senedd (MS) and Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) are elected by constituency and region. Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in Northern Ireland are elected by constituency only.

Find your MS, MSP or MLA. How many have you got?

Key fact

You have more than one representative. Everyone in the UK is represented by an MP and several councillors and some also elect a mayor. If you live in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland you elect members of that devolved parliament/legislature too. **Find all your elected representatives** at <https://www.writetothem.com>

Write to
Them





Once you know who all your elected representatives are you must go seek the oracle – **go to the Electoral Commission** (<https://tinyurl.com/electoral-commission>) for trusted and unbiased public information about your vote and elections.

Our hero is now less alone in the world.

Our hero has many representatives who are paid well to listen and take on board what matters most to them and to make sure that all voices are heard equally.

Our hero has a trusted and truthful source of information.

Next our hero must travel through and **understand the ‘three realms’** - the **three different types of government** we have in the UK.

Electoral
Commission



CHAPTER 4:

The **THREE REALMS**

The **THREE DIFFERENT**

types of **GOVERNMENT**

we have in the **UK**

(*THAT'S RIGHT* we have more than one!)

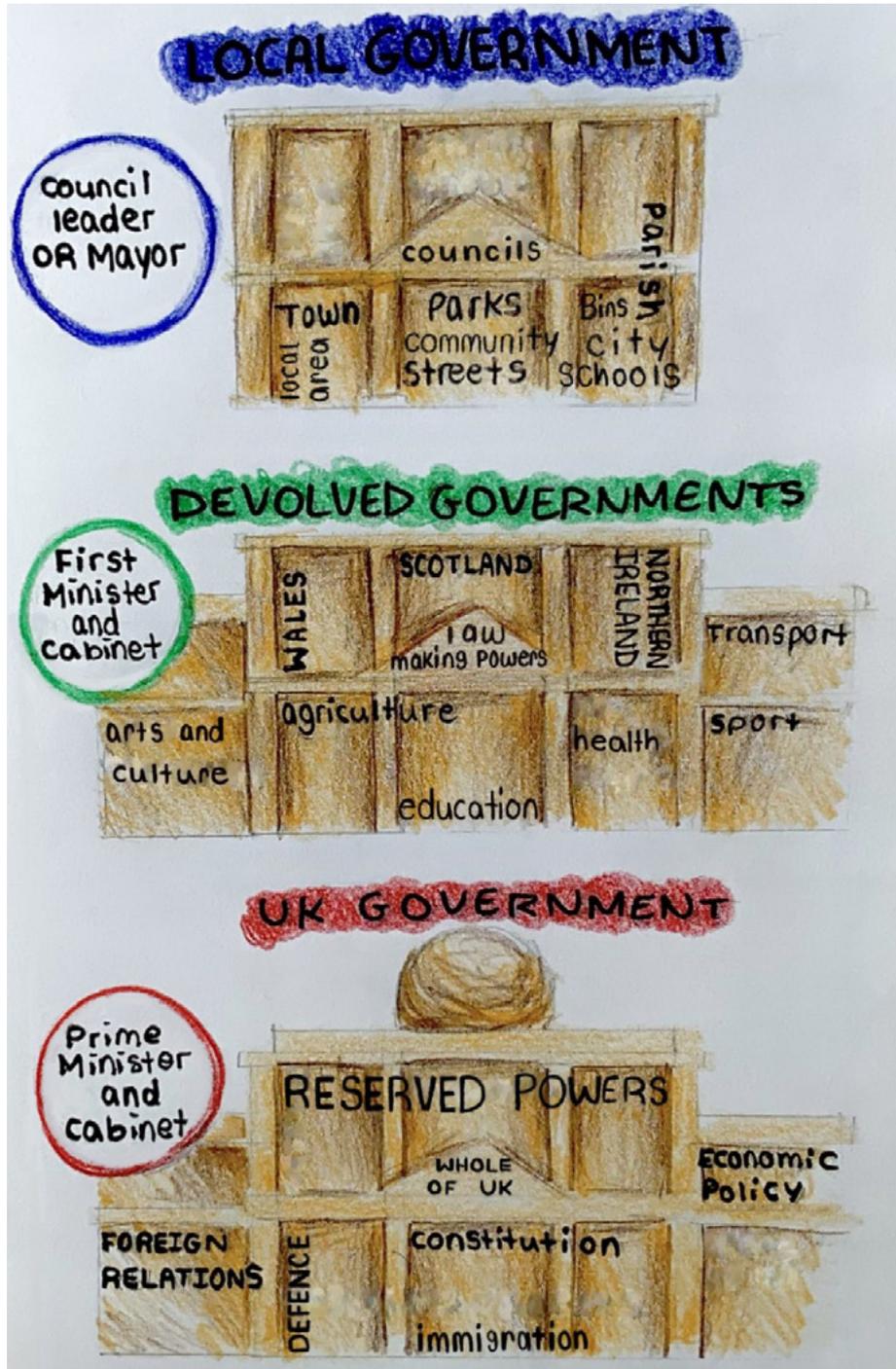
“One strength of democracy is that it shouts ‘**remember thou art mortal**’ in the face of politicians on a daily basis.”

Willie Sullivan — *The Missing Scotland*

Next our hero must travel through and understand the 'three realms' — the three types of government in the UK

Realm 1

Local Government



Realm 2

Devolved Government

Realm 3

UK Government

Listen to episode 3 of The Democracy Box podcast
<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Podcast3>

Listen to the podcast



The three types of government explained

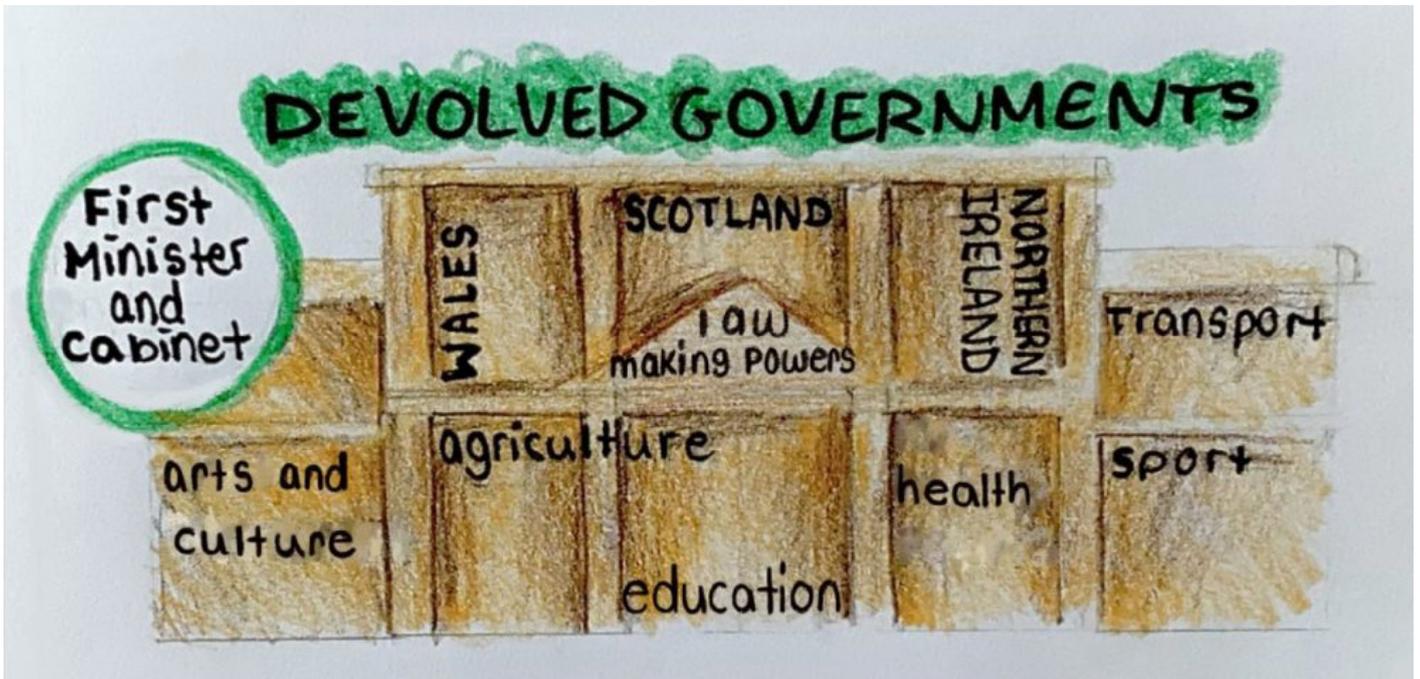
REALM 1 | Local government



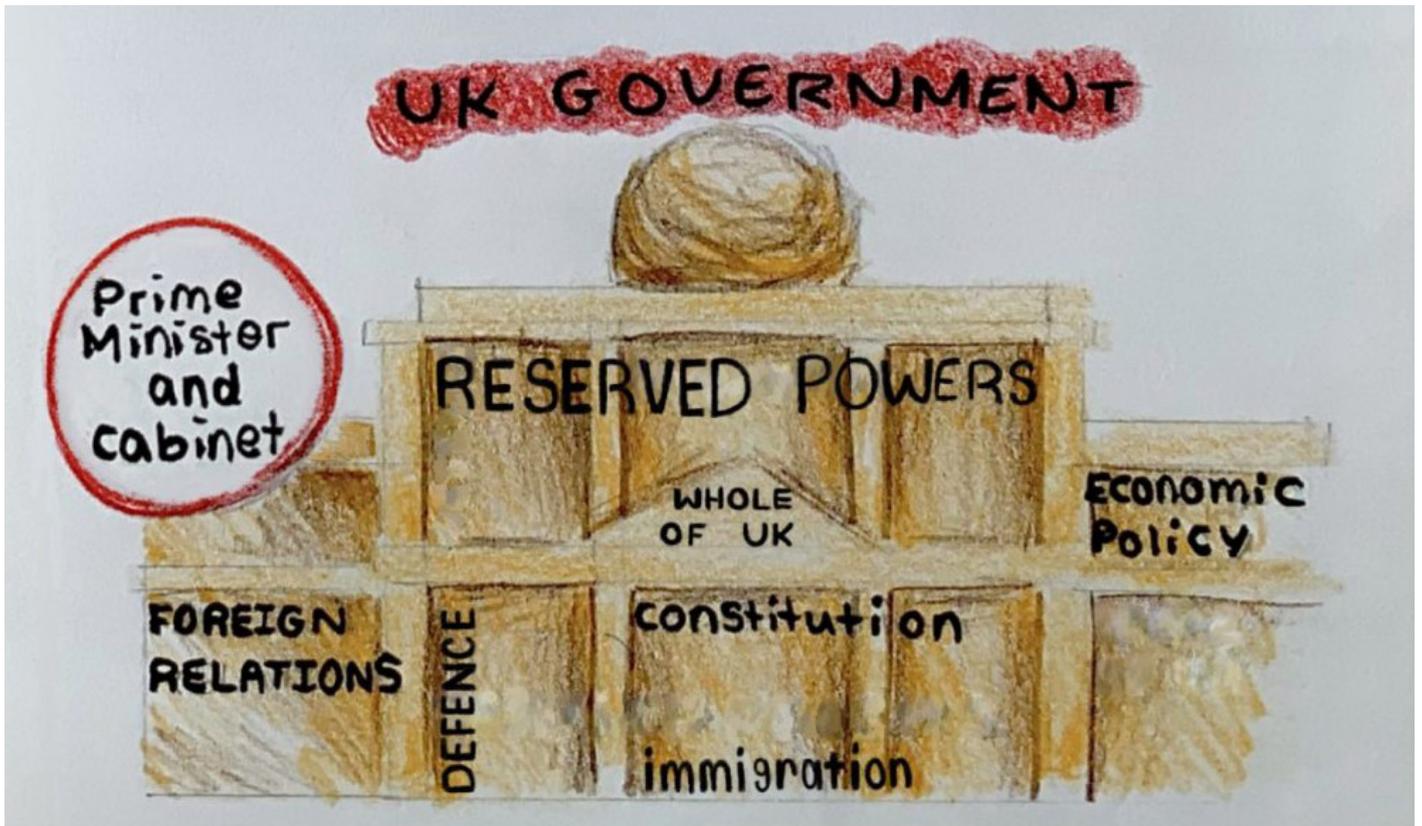
Your council/local authority deals with all the local stuff such as your bins, streets, local public buildings and open spaces like your local parks, schools, youth services and social care. Some people in the UK will also have a Community, Town or Parish Council.

Most local authorities/councils opt for the 'leader and cabinet' model where the council leader is selected from the councillors, but in some areas a 'mayor and cabinet' model has been adopted, where a directly elected mayor is established to replace the role of council leader. The leader or Mayor chooses the Cabinet.

REALM 2 | Devolved Governments and Parliaments (Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland)



Devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are in charge of many things that directly affect the people living in that part of the UK such as health, education and more. These are called devolved powers and devolved parliaments have law making powers for these. The leader of the political party with the majority of seats in a devolved parliament becomes First Minister and forms a government and chooses the cabinet.

REALM 3 | UK Government and Parliament

The leader of the political party with the majority of MPs in the UK parliament becomes Prime Minister and forms a government and chooses the cabinet. The UK Government and Parliament look after some things for the whole of the UK (such as defence and immigration) which are 'Reserved Powers' and some things for people in just England (such as health, education, transport, culture) that are 'Devolved Powers' in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

It is *very* important to understand this about devolution.

The UK Government and Parliament only look after things that are devolved like health and education for people in England and not in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

So when you hear the Prime Minister on the news talking about health and education they are only talking about in England.

The UK Government and Parliament also look after foreign relations, defence, the constitution, immigration and many aspects of economic policy for the whole of the UK.

These are called **RESERVED** powers.

(Sometimes called **EXCEPTED** powers in Northern Ireland).

This means that only the UK Government and Parliament can make decisions on these matters.

Whichever party wins an election is then in Government and gets to form a Cabinet.

Whichever party (or parties) come **second** become the **opposition**.

If there is no clear winner there may be a **Coalition Government**.

Key fact

Devolved powers include health, education, culture, sport, agriculture, transport and local government. Devolved parliaments and devolved governments are responsible for all areas which are devolved and have law making powers for these areas such as health and education.

The **UK Government** looks after all the things for people in just **England** that are **devolved** in **Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland**. Also look after foreign relations, defence, the constitution, immigration and many aspects of economic policy for the whole of the UK.

These are **reserved** powers. This means that **only** the **UK Government and Parliament** can make decisions on these matters.

CHAPTER 5:

Our hero understands
that **PARLIAMENT** and
GOVERNMENT
are two **VERY**
DIFFERENT
things

Parliament and Government are two very different things.

**Basically Parliament holds the Government to account
and makes the laws.**

Listen to episode 4 of The Democracy Box podcast (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Podcast4>)

Listen to
the podcast



“..to deny people opportunities to learn how the system works and how to exercise power as citizens, is to deny democracy.”

Titus Alexander — Practical Politics

PARLIAMENT basically means **DISCUSSION**. A Parliament is the group of people who are elected to make and change the laws of a country and check everything the Government does. A Parliament is a country's legislative (law-making) body and is sometimes called a **LEGISLATURE**.

Both words mean an institution that has the power to make or change laws.

Which is very different to...

GOVERNMENT the group of people who are officially responsible for governing (running) the country or political part of the country.

A Government has 1 job – to run the country

A **Parliament** has 2 jobs:

1. **LEGISLATION** – Propose new laws and amend (change/make better) existing laws.
2. **SCRUTINY** – Challenge and examine or inspect closely and thoroughly everything the Government/Cabinet is doing.

PARLIAMENT = (or legislature) is the group of people elected to represent YOU. They propose new laws/change existing laws, and inspect/challenge the Government.

GOVERNMENT = the group of people (Prime Minister/First Minister and cabinet) whose party won the most seats in Parliament. They're responsible for running the country.

UK PARLIAMENT

-  **MONARCH**
(final seal of approval)
-  **HOUSE OF COMMONS**
(ordinary people elected by YOU)
-  **HOUSE OF LORDS**
(non-elected)

ALL LAWS NEED TO BE APPROVED BY EACH OF THESE

DEVOLVED PARLIAMENTS

-  Make and amend laws for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
-  They can make laws WITHOUT reference to Westminster
- 

It is therefore very important that people in Devolved Nations vote in General Elections AND Wales, Scotland and NI elections



The UK Parliament

The UK Parliament makes laws for England and for the UK. The UK Parliament scrutinises the UK Government.

The UK Parliament (Westminster in London) is made up of 3 things:

1. Monarch

The monarch has the final seal of approval but it is really ceremonial and Queen Elizabeth II never challenged a law. The Monarch used to have ALL the power until 1642 when Charles I burst in and tried to arrest some MPs which led to the monarchy being abolished for 11 years!

2. The House of Commons

This is the first chamber where MPs debate and vote. Ordinary British citizens, citizens of the Republic of Ireland or eligible Commonwealth citizens can stand to be an MP unless they are disqualified because of their job (such as police/army/judge/civil servant/monarch).

You can find out who can't be an MP here (<https://tinyurl.com/Be-an-MP>).



3. The House of Lords

This is the second and non-elected chamber.

You can find out how you become a member of the House of Lords here (<https://tinyurl.com/Be-a-Lord>).



Decisions made in one House generally have to be approved in the other.

If the House of Commons proposes a new law, the House of Lords needs to approve it before it gets approved and signed off by the monarch.

It's a two way chamber system.

Checks and balances.

Making sure everything is fair, right and proper.

Devolved Parliaments

The Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland Devolved Parliaments make and amend their own laws for their own devolved nations. The devolved Parliaments scrutinise the devolved Governments. For example, the Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru makes laws for Wales and challenges and examines the Welsh Government.

The Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland parliaments do not have a second chamber.

All devolved parliaments have law making powers and can create laws about devolved areas without reference to Westminster.

It is therefore very important that people in the devolved nations vote in the UK parliamentary general election and the Welsh/Scottish/Northern Ireland elections.

A QUICK BIT OF HISTORY: *Until 1999, the UK Parliament was the source of all legislation across the whole of the UK (they made all the laws for everywhere). Since devolution, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru and the Northern Ireland Assembly have taken on the task of passing laws for their respective nations and have developed distinctive new bodies of law in areas of devolved responsibility.*

THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015:

*One of the laws that the Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru has made is the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) which gives people in Wales the ambition, permission and legal obligation to improve our social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being. **The Well-being of Future Generations Act** (<https://tinyurl.com/future-generations>) requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. The Act is unique to Wales, attracting interest from countries across the world as it offers a huge opportunity to make a long-lasting, positive change to current and future generations.*

Key fact

All devolved parliaments have law making powers and can create laws about devolved areas without reference to Westminster.

It is therefore very important that people in the devolved nations vote in the UK Parliament General Election and the Welsh/Scottish/Northern Ireland elections.

CHAPTER 6:

The **RULES** of the game part 1

VOTING AGES

“When I first joined The Democracy Box I really didn’t know anything. In fact, I didn’t even know that Britain was a democratic country.”

Democracy Box young co-creator, aged 17

Question:

Is the Voting Age 16 or 18?

Answer:

Depends where you live and what election you are voting in

How old do you have to be to play?
Take the Voting Ages Quiz with Young Co-Creators Lucy and Lloyd
(<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Video5>)

Watch the
video



IS THE VOTING AGE
16 or 18...?



VOTING depends on
AGE where you live
and what election!

GENERAL ELECTIONS
(UK Parliament) = 18

LOCAL ELECTIONS

- (in England and Northern Ireland) = 18
- (Scotland and Wales) = 16

DEVOLVED PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

- (Northern Ireland) = 18
- (Wales/Scotland) = 16

REGISTER TO VOTE!

- (Wales/Scotland) = 14
- (England/Northern Ireland) = 16

You can be **ANY AGE** to get involved in democracy by:

- Have freedom of speech!
- Have conversations!
- Volunteering!
- Petition!
- Protest!
- committee's Research!
- campaign!
- school council!
- Contact local representative!
- Lobbying!
- civic and civil society!
- Youth Parliament!
- contact the media!

REGISTER TO VOTE ONLINE

General UK Elections

To vote in General Elections (UK Parliament i.e. voting for MPs) wherever you live you have to be **18**

Local Elections

You can vote in local council elections in England and Northern Ireland (council) **at 18** and vote in local council elections in Wales and Scotland **at 16**

Devolved Parliament Elections

Wales and Scotland devolved parliament elections **at 16**
Northern Ireland devolved parliament elections **at 18**

16 year olds can now vote in Wales and Scotland in local elections and their devolved parliament elections.

Register to Vote

at 14 if you live in Wales or Scotland
or 16 if you live in England or Northern Ireland

Voting rules can change. We, the people, and groups like the Chartists and the Suffragettes, have demanded that the rules change to include all men and women equally. People have died so that all men and women could have a vote. All women only got the vote in 1928. We have only had one person one vote since 1948 and votes for everyone aged 18 and over since 1969. Votes at 16 was introduced in Wales in 2021.

You can get involved in democracy at any age:

- exercising your freedom of speech
- volunteering
- starting or signing a petition
- protesting
- campaigning
- lobbying
- contacting your elected representative
- joining a youth parliament
- getting involved in your local community and finding ways large and small to take part in Civic and Civil Society

Key fact

To get involved in democracy by exercising your freedom of speech, getting involved in your local community, starting or signing a petition, protesting, campaigning, lobbying, contacting your elected representative or finding ways large and small to take part in civic and civil Society = any age!

Your vote
MATTERS.
It is your
RIGHT.

Register to vote at
<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>



Check out **The Electoral Commission** for trusted
and unbiased public information about your vote and
all elections (<https://tinyurl.com/EC-About-My-Vote>)



CHAPTER 7:

The **RULES**

of the game part 2

VOTING SYSTEMS

Voting systems, or electoral systems, are the method by which we elect representatives. A voting system determines the rules on how we elect parties and candidates.

The House of Commons, Scottish Parliament, Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru, Northern Ireland Assembly and UK local authorities all use different voting systems.

Listen to episode 5 of The Democracy Box podcast (<https://tinyurl.com/TDB-Podcast5>)

Listen to
the podcast



First-past-the-post (FPTP)

is a type of electoral system where the candidate with the most votes in a constituency or area/districts wins.

Who uses First-past-the-post (FPTP)?

The House of Commons and local councils in England and Wales use first-past-the-post.

Proportional Representation (PR)

is a type of electoral system in which the distribution of seats corresponds closely with the proportion of the total votes cast for each party such as if a party gained 40% of the total votes, a perfectly proportional system would allow them to gain 40% of the seats in that Parliament or Council.

Who uses Proportional Representation (PR)?

A mixture of First Past the Post and Proportional Representation is used to elect Members of the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland Parliaments.

Northern Ireland uses the Single Transferable Vote (STV) method to elect members.

Wales and Scotland use the Additional Member System.

There are pros and cons for all types of electoral systems. There are many different forms of Proportional Representation. You can find out more about them here (<https://tinyurl.com/Voting-systems>)

Voting
systems



WE HAVE DIFFERENT WAYS OF COUNTING VOTES



FIRST PAST THE POST (FPTP)

USED IN UK GENERAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS



The candidate with the most votes in a constituency or area/district wins.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (PR)

The distribution of seats corresponds closely with the amount of votes cast for each party.

USED IN DEVOLVED NATION ELECTIONS

IN SIMPLER TERMS:
If a party gained 40% of the total votes, they'd gain 40% of the seats in that parliament/council.



Key fact

Voting systems, or electoral systems, are the method by which we elect representatives. A voting system determines the rules on how we elect parties and candidates. There is more than one kind used in the UK and there is much debate about the pros and cons of each. **You can find out more about the different types of voting systems here** (<https://tinyurl.com/Voting-systems>)

Voting systems



A note from Omidaze and democracy heroes past, present and yet to come:-

Thank you for reading this story. Please share this story far and wide until everyone you know has heard it and then we can write the next chapter **together**.



