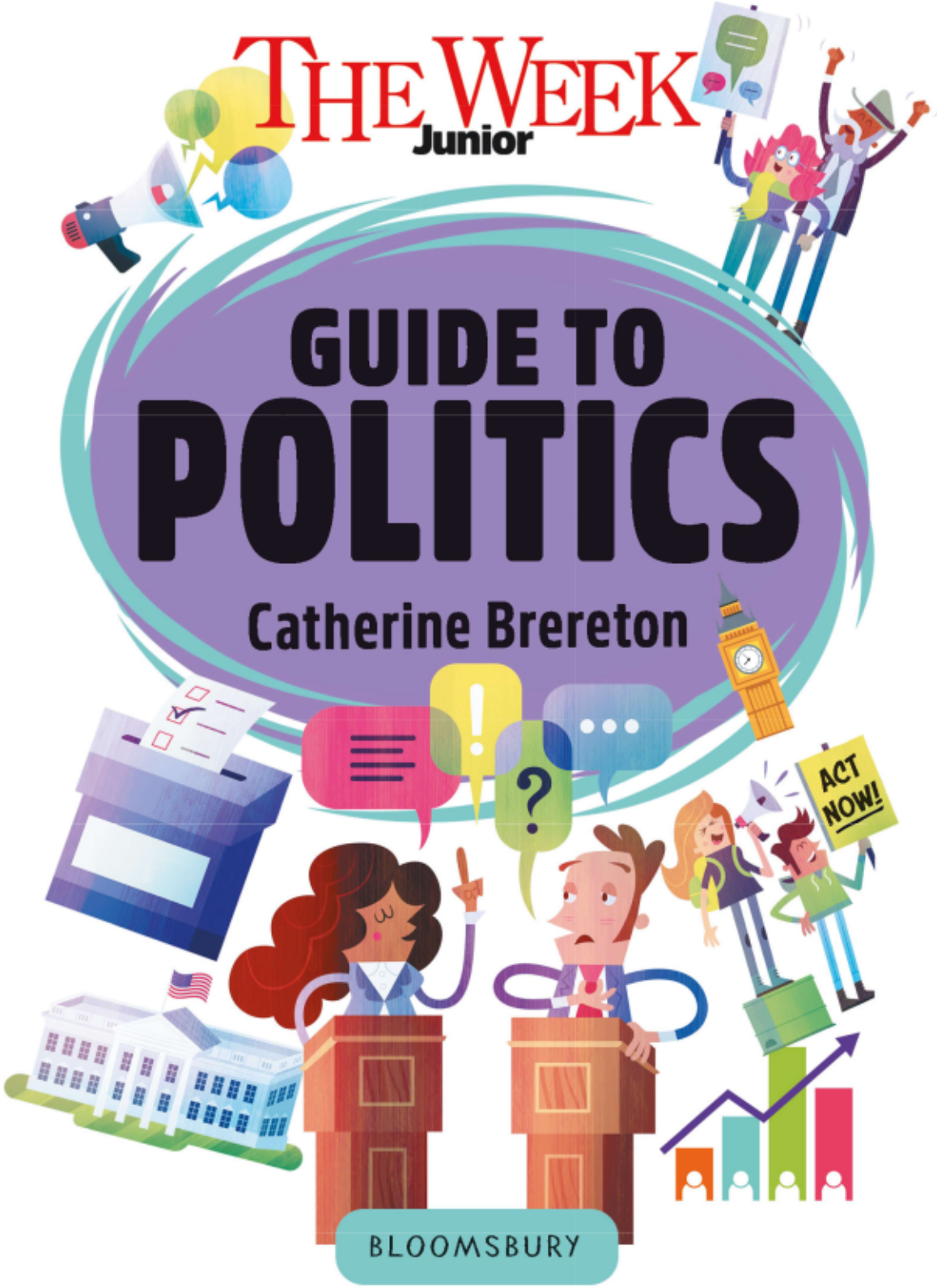
THE WEEK Junior

GUIDE TO POLITICS

Catherine Brereton



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Catherine Brereton

Illustrated by Tim Bradford

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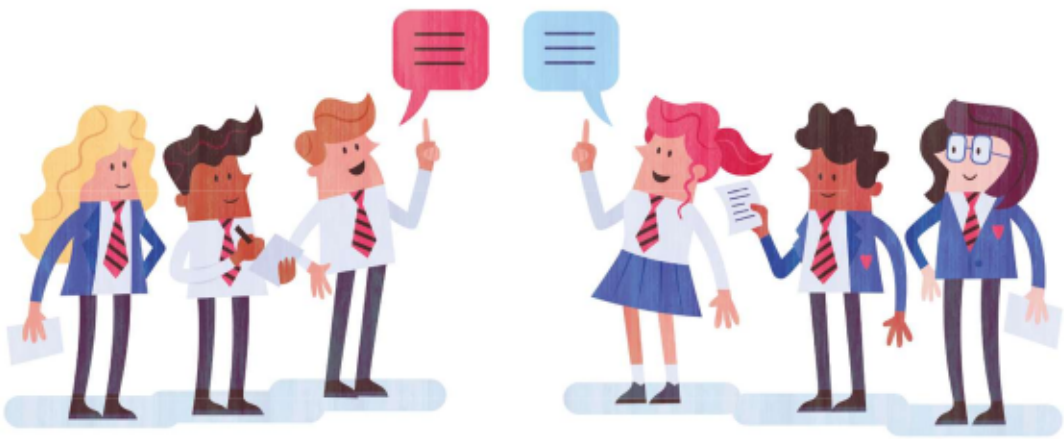
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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

An explanation of a key concept

A fun fact

A brief introduction to an important person

A key word defined in the glossary at the back of the book



A way for you to get involved and make a difference

A quote from an important person

WHAT IS POLITICS?

INTRODUCTION

What is politics? You might think it's all about **elections** and **politicians**. You might even think it's all about arguing. However, the reality is that politics is all around you.

Politics is about how people make decisions about how they will all live together in a group, or society, and work to achieve common aims. Not everyone will agree about what those aims are or how to get there.



Politics makes a difference in all our lives.

> **'For politics ought to be the part-time profession of every citizen who would protect the rights and privileges of free people...'**
>
> DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, former US President

A SOCIETY is a group of people who live alongside each other, with rules (**laws** and **customs**) about how to do this in an organised way, and so that people know what happens if they break those rules. A society might be any size and made up in any way: for example, it could be made up of people across the world, in a city or country, at a school or even just in a family.



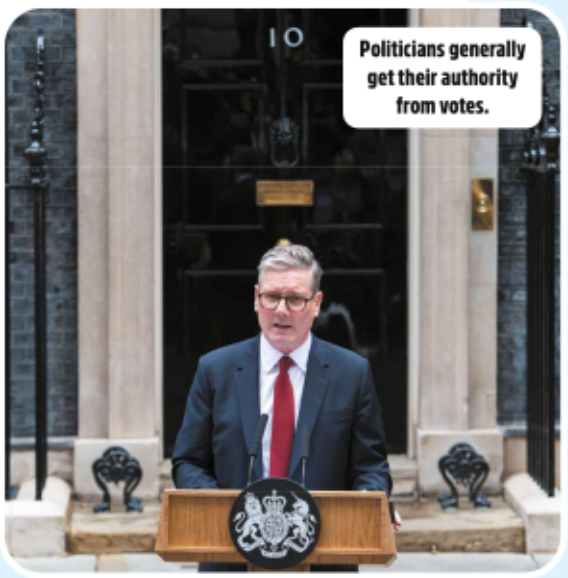
Which societies do you belong to?

Imagine your class wants to raise money for charity. How will you do this? A sponsored swim? A bake sale? A dress-up day? Classmates will have different ideas and they'll need to put across their views about what is best. How will you all decide? Will your teacher have the **authority** to decide in the end? Or will you all have a **vote**? What if someone says their parents can donate a big prize so they should have more say? Is that fair?



Voting is one way to make decisions.

AUTHORITY is what gives decision-makers the right to be in charge. In many societies, these people are in charge because lots of people have voted for them, or perhaps they are experts at running organisations. Sometimes people gain authority through force – for example because the army is on their side.



Politicians generally get their authority from votes.



Who are politicians?

Politicians are people whose job it is to take part in politics. You've probably heard of some of them – like the **prime minister** or **president** of your country. Politicians debate ideas about how to govern society and come up with new laws and policies. Laws are rules that everyone in a society must follow. Policies are ideas for what the politicians hope or plan to achieve.

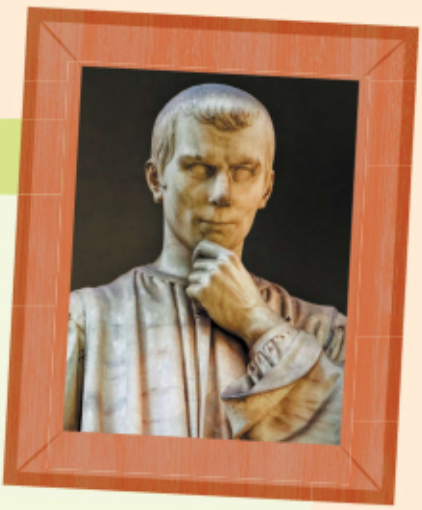


Politicians work in a **parliament** – a formal group that meets to work together. Most countries have parliaments, or similar groups known as senates, assemblies or councils. For example, the UK has the Houses of Parliament, the US has Congress, Japan has the Diet and Germany has the Bundestag. Often they meet in grand buildings.

In a **democracy**, politicians join the parliament by being chosen in an election. In many other societies, throughout history and today, it is because they are born into ruling families, control the army or are leaders of the religion that controls the country.

OLD THING

The world's oldest surviving parliament is the Althing of Iceland, founded in 930CE.



? WHO'S WHO

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) argued that a politician should appear kind and caring but act cunning and hard-hearted, doing whatever they think best to keep a country safe. He thought it was more important for a leader to be strong, clever and scheming than good. He said it was 'far safer to be feared than loved'.

YOU CAN DO IT!

What politicians can you name? Search 'find your MP' or 'find your local councillor' on the UK Parliament website to find out who represents you in your area.

Find out more: parliaments page 14, elections page 50