Who sits where? Groups at the UN

Ages 14 and up, politics and geography

Students compare countries inside a group (G7, BRICS, a regional group) and discover that groups are less uniform than their names suggest.

BEFORE THE LESSON

Open the group brief for the G7 countries. Print the PDF.

STEPS

1. Predict: which G7 country votes least like the rest at the UN? Collect votes by show of hands. (5 min)
2. Open the group brief for the G7 countries. Read the closest and most distant pairs and the line of voting positions. (10 min)
   https://nationsrelations.org/brief?c=CAN,FRA,DEU,ITA,JPN,GBR,USA
3. Open 'Where the group splits at the UN'. Pick one resolution where members voted differently and find the reason in the UN record. (15 min)
4. Repeat with another group, for example BRICS, and compare how spread out the voting line is. (10 min)
   https://nationsrelations.org/brief
5. Close by asking what a group's name can and cannot tell you. (5 min)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR WRITING

Was your prediction right? What surprised you?

Why might close allies still vote differently on a specific text?

Does a more spread-out group act less like a group? What else would you need to know?

KEEP IN MIND

A split vote is one text on one day. Read the resolution before drawing conclusions.

Pages used: Group brief https://nationsrelations.org/brief; Compare many countries https://nationsrelations.org/compare; Where the world stands https://nationsrelations.org/world

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