

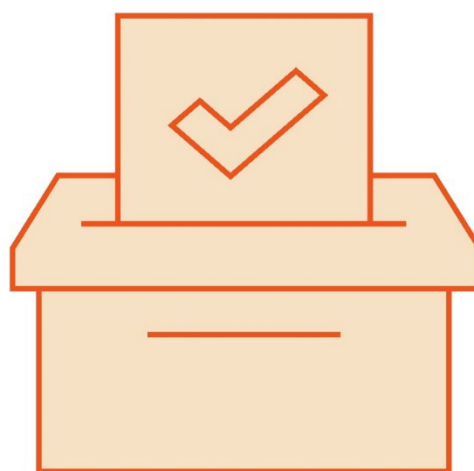


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UNIT 1

WHAT SORTS OF DEMOCRACY ARE WE TEACHING?





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UNIT 1: WHAT SORTS OF DEMOCRACY ARE WE TEACHING?

INTRODUCTION

ARE EDUCATORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SURVIVAL OF DEMOCRACY?

“To ensure a peaceful future for Western societies it is essential that all young people grow up with an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizens living in a democracy”.

“As educators in the European education system, do we assume that ‘liberal democracy’ is a ‘natural and permanent default’ condition for the organisation of power in our countries? Do we feel, therefore, that there is no particular imperative to prioritise learning about democracy over anything else in our crowded curricula?”

Most civics and citizenship courses have learning units describing how governing power can be transferred peacefully under democratic election procedures; most explain the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy. Some civics courses describe elections at local, regional, national and European levels and specify the different responsibilities and powers applying to each level of government. Mention of democracy, in contrast to alternative forms of government, may also appear in many other areas of the curriculum. Regime change through democracy is often seen as a peaceful alternative to revolution or military coup. In each case, how important is it to raise questions about the definitions of democracy or how it operates for different members of society? Do learners understand that all democracies are not the same?

In this unit we ask:

1. What assumptions about different definitions of democracy underpin our citizenship teaching?
and
2. What critical issues, about how democracy works (or doesn't work) in practice, need to be given more consideration in our teaching?
3. Do we assume that ‘liberal democracy’ is a secure, stable and permanent mechanism that will ensure that our rights and responsibilities will be preserved for the foreseeable future?



LEARNING OBJECTIVES At the end of this unit you will have:

1. Learned of the main definitions of democracy used in current academic thinking
2. Reflected on how these definitions influence or relate to your work
3. Decided which constitutional, cultural and social factors need to be in place (in a country) to protect and sustain your own favoured model of a functioning democracy
4. Identified relevant follow-up reading and website research for further study

STIMULUS QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS AND REFLECTION

Q1 What does 'democracy' mean to you?

- I. What words and associations do you think about first?
- II. How would you define the word?
- III. What are the current challenges and risks to democracy? (In your country or elsewhere)

Q2 Why teach democracy?

- I. Where and how do most people get their attitudes and knowledge about democracy?
- II. What contributions do the mainstream media in your country make towards informing and educating the population to assume their democratic rights and responsibilities?
- III. If a high percentage of citizens in a country leave formal education with minimal or no understanding of the workings of democracy, what are the long-term implications for the future of that country?
- IV. Can you think of identifiable groups in your country who are not effectively empowered to participate in democratic processes? Why and how are they excluded?

Q3 How do we teach democracy?

- I. How does learning about democracy feature in your work with your learners?
- II. Is the learning factual, theoretical, historical, experiential, issue-based, research-based, locally, nationally or globally contextualised...?
- III. What resources can you access to support this learning and how good are they?
- IV. What are your (and your colleagues) strengths and weaknesses in tackling this topic?



- V. What support or resources would you like?

TASK 1a: QUICK SKETCH – VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF A CONCEPT

Individually, or with one or two colleagues, (without looking anything up!) draft a short 'common sense' definition of the words: 'democracy', 'monarchy', 'dictatorship', 'theocracy' and 'national constitution'.

(In your small group) Using simple speedy sketching, symbols or diagrams try to make a visual cartoon or image which represents each of these concepts. Can your sketch somehow show: Who has most power? Who serves whom? How is order maintained? How does power and control over the country change from one regime to another?

In sharing and debriefing the results consider:

What symbols or images were used to represent Power? Population? Voting? Control? Leadership? Etc.

What was most difficult about this exercise? Why?

NOTE: There is a version of this activity aimed at young learners in the CANDIICE learning materials called „Draw Democracy Dictatorship Monarchy“. Access from www.CANDIICE.com

TASK 1b

Democracy in quotes

- Have a look at the quotes cited below and choose three quotes that appeal to you most.
- Analyse the quotes: How is democracy described? What role do citizens play?
- For each of your quotes: Develop a mind map about the quote. How could it be developed further? What variations are there?

Proposed quotes:

- I. “Democracy is having the choice. Dictatorship means having to choose.”
(Jeannine Luczak-Wild)
- II. “I have learned that you are never too small to make a difference.”
(Greta Thunberg)



- III. “The most important title is not “president” or “prime minister”, the most important title is “citizen.”
(Barack Obama)
- IV. “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to death your right to say it”
(Evelyn Beatrice Hall)
- V. “It is the job of the opposition to demask the government while the show is still going on”
(Jacques Chirac)
- VI. “Every party is there for its people, not for itself”
(Konrad Adenauer)
- VII. VII. “A functioning, robust democracy requires a healthy, educated, participatory followership, and an educated, morally grounded leadership.”
- IV. "Peace cannot exist without justice, justice cannot exist without fairness, fairness cannot exist without development, development cannot exist without democracy, democracy cannot exist without respect for the identity and worth of cultures and peoples."
- VIII. Democracy means being involved in your own affairs.
(das Original: Demokratie heißt, sich in seine eigenen Angelegenheiten einzumischen)
Max Frisch

TASK 2: CAN YOU HAVE A BAD DEMOCRACY?

How could you describe the difference between a successful democracy that was working well and one that was working badly? Can you list three or four factors that would illustrate the difference?



TASK 3: WHAT DO YOUR LEARNERS UNDERSTAND

If you currently work with learners, guess or imagine what definitions they might come up with. Arrange to test your guesses by asking them in the near future.

TASK 4: ARE THERE REALLY DIFFERENT TYPES OF DEMOCRACY?

Individually or in your group read each of the definitions in resource: “Contrasting Definitions of Democracy”.

After reading each one, think or discuss:

- a) Is this a definition of democracy that you would support and one that SHOULD apply in your country? In all countries?
- b) In what ways does the working of democracy in your country differ from this definition?

ALTERNATIVELY IN GROUP OR WORKSHOP SESSION

Ask eight individuals or small groups to become advocates for the eight different suggested models of democracy. After a period of reading, thinking and planning either:

- a) Each makes a short presentation advocating their allocated model
or
- b) Each ‘definition group’ (or individual) is paired with another. They are given 15 minutes to debate the differences and similarities of their two models and report back to a plenary session.

Resource material for Task 4

For group work the following definitions should be printed and cut into separate pieces of paper for a discussion activity in small groups. This allows attention to be focused on one definition at a time.

Contrasting Definitions of Democracy

From: Sant, E. (2019), Democratic Education: A Theoretical Review (2006 – 2017) in *Review of Educational Research* October 2019, Vol. 89, No 5, pp. 655-696



ELITIST DEMOCRACY OR ‘TECHNOCRACY’

1. Governing and leading a country require high levels of knowledge and skill which most people do not possess. It is best done by highly trained administrators and ‘technocrats’.
2. Only some people need to be educated to this high level for a country to function well. The education system needs to select a proportion of the population to get this education.
3. Leaders can be held to account for their decisions through public elections in which other well-trained candidates could be chosen to replace them

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

1. Freedom of each individual is a central aim of Liberal Democracy, within democratically agreed limits. (E.g. A limit could be: exercising your freedom should not directly harm or reduce anyone else’s rights or freedoms)
2. All citizens should be considered of equal worth and have equal rights to stand for election
3. The main purpose of government is to organise efficient running of the country while ensuring each individual has their basic needs met and as much autonomy over all aspects of their life as possible, as long as they do not harm others in exercising this freedom

NEOLIBERAL DEMOCRACY

1. Political decisions should be based on a majority view in which each individual has made a rational consideration of their personal interests and voted accordingly. In this way the greatest benefit for the largest number of people will be achieved.
2. Power is allocated to candidates who compete in the marketplace of ideas and can offer the most popular policies
3. The state should avoid intervening in the lives of individuals as far as possible
4. Maximising individual freedom means that the government should take only the minimum amount of tax which is essential to manage the country. Government should be as small as possible and provide only minimum essential services and state security.



MULTICULTURAL DEMOCRACY

1. Diversity and plurality are central features of modern society
2. Democratic systems need to adapt to accommodate the different needs of each group so that all groups participate fully in the democracy and are properly represented in government
3. Self-identified groups living in a country (such as religions, ethnic groups, minority language speakers) should be respected and guaranteed as much self-determination within a basic universal support system. Government should ensure that legislation and welfare support systems recognise and accommodate differences of custom, behaviour, language, social interaction, religious practice etc.
4. Special provisions must be made to ensure that all groups have equal access to and understanding of democratic rights and resources

PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

1. Emphasise the equal value of everyone's involvement and point of view in all important decisions.
2. Decisions and policy should be based on discussion across the widest range of the population as possible.
3. Laws, policies and education should encourage and reward popular involvement in community activities, local politics and national policymaking. Local participation should be easily accessible and an assumed responsibility of all who live in an area.
4. Social actions to improve communities, welfare and inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised people should be normalised as 'humanising practices'.
5. Detailed consideration of policies and problems should be conducted through 'citizens' juries'.
6. Education and popular media should work to increase access to skills and knowledge to enable informed debate and decision making.

CRITICAL DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE

1. Emphasis is on the empowering the less privileged to take increasing power over their lives and surroundings.
2. Education to build awareness of inequalities of power and wealth distribution is a central requirement.



3. Education should facilitate critical analysis of living conditions across society and develop understanding of the causes of inequality and types of effective political action which can reduce it.
4. Political action should centre on reducing inequalities.

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

1. Emphasis is on providing public forums where citizens debate decisions while committed to rationality and impartiality and aiming for collective decisions which bind all who take part.
2. Wide involvement and inclusion in the deliberative process will therefore increase acceptance of decisions because viewpoints will have been rationally considered.
3. Taking part in such deliberations and, in doing so, understanding the viewpoints of others is seen as an essential socialising and cohesion-building process for the groups concerned.
4. Learning the skills, rules and procedures of open but regulated communication is an essential part of socialisation.
5. Inclusive deliberation is guaranteed if no viewpoint is excluded, and no participant suffers discrimination or feels disempowered.

AGONISTIC DEMOCRACY

1. All processes of democracy are socially constructed and will change over time and across space
2. Dissent and disagreement are inevitable and to be welcomed and clarified
3. Participants must have equal entitlement as speaking beings. Through expression they may discover and perform deep personal meanings to contribute to the collective
4. Provisional agreements between different participants committing to solidarity with others can enact a way forward while acknowledging differences of interest and position
5. Knowledge is socially constructed and definitions will change
6. Rational, emotional and other forms of response are equally legitimate contributions to political communication (dance, visual arts, music....)
7. Personal and collective expression of meaning may be through non-verbal creative acts and may bring adversaries together and continually redefine 'we' and 'them'



TASK 5: WHICH TYPES OF DEMOCRACY WORK BEST FOR DIVERSE POPULATIONS?

When you have read all the 'Working definitions', look back at each one and consider implications for this type of democracy working in a culturally, religiously, linguistically and ethnically diverse country. Does the definition of democracy assume a homogeneous population? For it to work what do most citizens need to have in common?

TASK 6: WHAT HAVE FACTS AND KNOWLEDGE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Consider the role of education and information in each of the version of democracy. How will restrictions and distortions of information available to the population impact on the effectiveness of democracy in each case?

TASK 7: VIDEO RESOURCES (EXAMPLES FOR ENGLISH-SPEAKING LEARNERS)

View some short educational videos that are designed to teach about democracy. Links are at the end of this unit.

- 7.1 Discuss each video and try to analyse which kind of democracy is assumed in each of these teaching resources.
- 7.2 Can you find any mentions in these videos that democracy might not work well for any groups or sectors of society?
- 7.3 Do any of the videos mention the possibility that democratic rights may be reduced by the actions of a 'democratically' elected administration?
- 7.4 How might you use any of these resources in your teaching? What additional resources, questions or tasks could you add to improve the learning?

LINKS FOR TASK 7

YouTube videos

[What is democracy? – with Danny Wallace](#)

Length 6:20

British parliamentary system. Made in 2009 but still relevant. Humorous presenter acts out differences between dictatorship and democracy while wandering around London. Explains



some democratic terms and structures e.g. Houses of parliament. Jokes and irony may not work for all children or limited English speakers.

[Democracy | Educational Videos for Kids](#)

Length 4:57

Brief historic summary of world origins and development of democracy. Simple animation with some useful historical facts and an attempt to show democracy does not work for all people and ethnic groups in all countries. A rather annoying patronising voice-over and lots of irrelevant happy smiling faces for some reason.

[Democracy - A short introduction](#)

Length 3:09

Written by Peewara Sapsuwan

American cartoon 'whiteboard' animation explaining concepts of democracy

Simple descriptive start "it's about everything to protect the best interests of the people no matter what is their race, gender or political opinion..." independence of Legislature,

Executive, and Judiciary branches of government explained. Good mention of the need to protect minorities rights at the end. This could act as a good starter for more analytical discussion

[An introduction to Parliament \(primary\)](#)

Length 7:37

History of UK democracy aimed at primary ages. .Uncritical "Life Peers [in the UK house of Lords] are chosen for their knowledge and experience..." No mention of party political donations etc.

[Democracy, Authoritarianism, Capitalism and China](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7dTDjRnBqU>

Length 15:32

John Green gives a lecture illustrated by cartoon graphics. Issues raised: Contrasts between western democracies and authoritarian capitalist states (China, Singapore...) which appear to be more economically successful. Benefits include ability to focus on long-term planning.



Western democracy election system requires short-term promises to electorate. Fast talking economic arguments may be difficult to understand for learners under 15 years of age?

TASK 8: INGREDIENTS OF A WORKING DEMOCRACY

For further information see 'Global State of Democracy'

<https://www.idea.int/qsod-indices/about#Clean%20Elections>

Discuss each of the following conditions / features, which may or may not be present in a country, and explain how much it will affect how well democracy works in that country. What are the risks to a fair election if that feature or ingredient is missing?

- A. Secret voting: no one else knows who you voted for
- B. A spending limit on election campaigning – rich candidates cannot over-shadow poorer candidates by spending a lot on advertising and leaflets, campaign staff, TV productions, marketing gifts etc.
- C. Independent national media that are free to investigate corruption and can publish findings without fear of intimidation or suppression
- D. Freedom of information, transparency, public access to all public spending accounts
- E. Thorough citizenship education that ensures that all learners can critically evaluate policies
- F. A constitution that limits the powers of elected leaders (for example, so that terms of office cannot be extended)
- G. Judges who are not appointed by the leaders in power, can prevent the elected leader from breaking the national constitution.
- H. A system of 'citizens juries' to involve diverse groups of people in debating and researching important issues
- I. Can you think of other important 'ingredients'?

TASK 9

Taking any of the ingredients above, try to work out a storyboard, cartoon strip, visual presentation or a drama that will illustrate, for learners, what might happen in a country or an election if that ingredient was missing.



TASK 10

Using the ideas in this unit as a guide, review the content of teaching about democracy if it exists in your learning setting. Write three recommendations to make the learning more relevant to the current and future status and survival of democracy in your country

Extraction of concepts and key quotes or recommended reading abstracts from Levitsky and Ziblats “How democracies die”

1. *“American politicians now treat their rivals as enemies, intimidate the free press, and threaten the results of elections. They try to weaken the institutional buffers of our democracy, including the courts, the intelligence services, and ethics offices” American states, which were once praised by the great jurist Louis Brandeis as “laboratories of democracy”, are in danger of becoming laboratories of authoritarianism as those in power rewrite electoral rules, redraw constituencies, and even rescind voting rights to ensure that they do not lose.” (How democracies die, Ziblatt and Levitsky, p.2)*

What is the signal effect of the (American) democracy being threatened in the way that is described by the quote?

What could be meant with “laboratories of democracy”?

*This concept explains how within the federal framework, a system of state autonomy exists where state and local governments act as social laboratories, where laws and policies are created and tested at the state level of the democratic system, in a manner similar (in theory, at least) to the **scientific method**. An example today would be the legalization of marijuana in Colorado despite the fact that it is illegal federally.*

Questions to steer thinking about any current examples of corrupt democracy
(based on “How democracies die” (Levitsky and Ziblat, pp. 28-29)

Can you think of the following tendencies in your own country? And in any other (European) country?



1) Rejection of (or weak commitment to) democratic rules of the game

- Is the constitution rejected or threatened to be rejected?
- Are certain organisations banned or civil / political rights constrained?
- Is the legitimacy of elections doubted?

2) Denial of the legitimacy of political opponents

- Are opponents characterized as hostile to the state?
- Are opponents characterized as a threat to the current way of living?
- Are opponents characterized as steered by a foreign force that is driving them?
- Are opponents characterized as incapable of filling in the respective office?

3) Toleration or encouragement of violence

- Have violent acts been glorified?
- Are there connections to violent groups?

4) Readiness to curtail civil liberties of opponents, including media

- Has the freedom of opponents been threatened?

Have repressive measures of other governments towards their opponents been glorified

REFERENCES

Democracy in quotes: background information on authors and examples

- I. "Democracy is having the choice. Dictatorship means having to choose."
(Jeannine Luczak-Wild)

Jeannine Luczak-Wild (b. 1938, born in Basel), worked as a translator and literary scholar. She is best known for her publications on Polish modernism and the Polish poet Cyprian Norwid.



Corruption rating declined from 2.00 to 1.75 due to the misuse and abuse of the state's anticorruption apparatus to neutralize President Lukashenka's political opponents, namely, Viktor Babaryka and Valery Tsapkala.

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/belarus/nations-transit/2021>,
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+IM-PRESS+20060321STO06569+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN> , Belarus
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/be-heard/elections>

- II. "I have learned that you are never too small to make a difference."
(Greta Thunberg)

Greta Thunberg (b. 2003, born in Stockholm) is a Swedish climate change activist who was awarded the Alternative Nobel Prize for her efforts on behalf of the planet and achieved worldwide fame. The Fridays for Future movement was founded by her.

[Fifteen-year-old Greta Thunberg has been protesting for more than a month.](https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-fifteen-year-old-climate-activist-who-is-demanding-a-new-kind-of-politics)

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-fifteen-year-old-climate-activist-who-is-demanding-a-new-kind-of-politics>

[Germany will have to improve its emissions targets from 2031 following a complaint by a coalition of climate activists, including Fridays for Future.](https://www.dw.com/en/german-climate-law-is-partly-unconstitutional-top-court-rules/a-57369917)

<https://www.dw.com/en/german-climate-law-is-partly-unconstitutional-top-court-rules/a-57369917>

- III. "The most important title is not "president" or "prime minister", the most important title is "citizen."
(Barack Obama)

Barack Obama (b. 1961, born in Honolulu), is a politician of the Democratic Party and the 44th President of the United States, whose terms lasted from 2009 - 2017. He continues to experience much public popularity and has been an author, among other things, since the end of his term.



"People really see online petitions as a tool to help them fix something that is systemically broken,"

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2014/09/23/most-important-title-citizen-president-obama-importance-civil-society>

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/12/22/us/top-petitions-decade-change-trnd/index.html>

<https://www.findlaw.com/voting/my-voting-guide/can-noncitizens-vote-in-the-united-states-.html>

- IV. "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to death your right to say it"

(Evelyn Beatrice Hall)

Evelyn Beatrice Hall (b. 1868 in Shooter's Hill, † 1956) was an English writer. She is especially known for her biographical works about Voltaire. The quote just mentioned is therefore often wrongly attributed to Voltaire, even though it was written by her.

The European Union's executive said on Thursday that risks to media freedom in Poland persisted despite a decision by the Polish regulator to extend a broadcasting licence for TVN24, a U.S. Discovery-owned news channel critical of Warsaw.

<https://www.euronews.com/2021/08/12/poland-government-in-chaotic-parliamentary-tussle-over-disputed-media-ownership-bill>

<https://www.euronews.com/2021/09/24/us-poland-democracy-media-tvn>

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/charter-application_en.pdf

- V. "It is the job of the opposition to demask the government while the show is still going on"

(Jacques Chirac)

Jacques Chirac (b. Paris, 1932, †2019) was a former French president who governed from 1995-2007. Although he received much acclaim in international politics, his actions were not without controversy.



“Young people (58 %) attach less importance to issues such as the freedom of opposition parties to criticise the government than older age groups do (70 % of people aged 54–64 years and 69 % of people aged 65 or older).” (FRA, 2020, p.13)

VI. “Every party is there for its people, not for itself”

(Konrad Adenauer)

Konrad Adenauer (b. 1876 in Cologne, †1967) was the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1949 to 1963. He was a staunch supporter of European unification and, during the Cold War, advocated an anti-communist course and the Westward annexation of the Federal Republic of Germany.

“The majority of people in the EU (60 %) agree or strongly agree that mainstream parties and politicians do not care about them. The sense that “mainstream parties and politicians don’t care about people like me” is heightened among people who struggle to make ends meet with their household income, those who have completed at most lower secondary education, as well as people who face severe long-standing limitations in their usual activities (due to disability or long-term health problems).” (FRAU, 2020, p.14)

https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-fundamental-rights-survey-human-rights_en.pdf

VII. VII. “A functioning, robust democracy requires a healthy, educated, participatory followership, and an educated, morally grounded leadership.”

Chinua Achebe was a Nigerian novelist, poet, and critic who is regarded as a dominant figure in modern African literature.

<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2099>

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2015/11/27/brits-know-less-about-the-eu-than-anyone-else/>



<https://www.statista.com/statistics/300427/eu-parlament-turnout-for-the-european-elections/>

IV. "Peace cannot exist without justice, justice cannot exist without fairness, fairness cannot exist without development, development cannot exist without

democracy, democracy cannot exist without respect for the identity and worth of cultures and peoples."

Rigoberta Menchú Tum is a K'iche' Guatemalan human rights activist, feminist, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate (1992). Menchú has dedicated her life to publicizing the rights of Guatemala's Indigenous peoples during and after the Guatemalan Civil War (1960–1996), and to promoting Indigenous rights internationally.

<https://www.ilga-europe.org/rainboweurope/2021>

At the moment, EU law protects people against discrimination based on sexual orientation – as well as age, disability, religion and belief – in the area of employment

(Employment Framework Directive 2000/78). Unfortunately, EU law does not at present contain an explicit prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of a person's gender identity and gender expression.

<https://www.ilga-europe.org/what-we-do/our-advocacy-work/campaigns/equality-all/legal-situation>

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210304IPR99219/parliament-declares-the-european-union-an-lgbtiq-freedom-zone>

In response to the backsliding of LGBTIQ rights in some EU countries, notably Poland and Hungary, MEPs declared the EU an "LGBTIQ Freedom Zone"

VIII. Democracy means being involved in your own affairs.
(das Original: Demokratie heißt, sich in seine eigenen Angelegenheiten einzumischen)



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Max Frisch

Max Frisch (1911 b. Zurich – † 1991) was a Swiss playwright and novelist. Frisch's works focused on problems of identity, individuality, responsibility, morality, and political commitment.



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www.candiice.com