

About *How to Build Your Own Country*

How to Build Your Own Country is based on a simple premise: given the choice, how would kids run their own country? This humorous book on civics breaks down the task into three simple steps: staking out an identity, running the country and meeting the neighbors. It covers all the big questions, from choosing a name to choosing representatives in a democracy. Most importantly, *How to Build Your Own Country* inspires youth to get politically engaged and encourages them to think like global citizens.



About the Author

Valerie Wyatt is an award-winning editor and writer. She is the author of thirteen nonfiction children's books, including *Who Discovered America?* and *The Science Book for Girls*. In 2004, she received the Tom Fairley Award for Editorial Excellence. Valerie lives in Victoria, British Columbia, with her husband, Larry, and her dog, MacPherson.

About the Illustrator

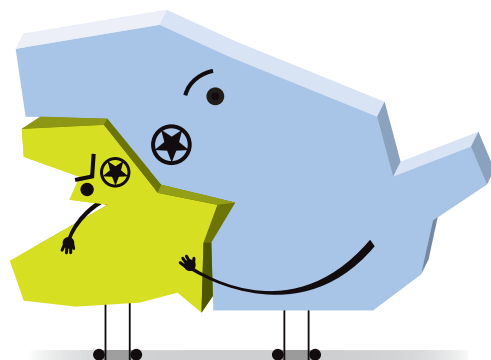
Fred Rix illustrates from her home in FredRixstan, where the only other citizens are her husband, two whippets and four parakeets. Fred Rix's illustrations have appeared in the *New York Times*, *InformationWeek* and *Scientific American*.



Turn Your Classroom into a Micronation

How to Build Your Own Country is a civics lesson that is also a step-by-step guide for nation building. It can be used as a manual to help children turn their classroom into a micronation — an imaginary country. The following activities are recommended for use in primary school classrooms, grades 4–8. They can be used on their own or they can be used together in a cross-curricular micronation simulation.

Note: In the following activities, “country” refers to the students’ real country — Canada, the U.S. and so on. “Micronation” refers to their imaginary country.



Choose a Name (pages 8–9)

Ask your class to research the origins of other countries' names. Have them explore the origin of their own country's name. Then ask the students to brainstorm a name for their classroom micronation. Have students think about what they want the name to say about their micronation.

Design an Emblem and Motto (pages 11 and 13)

Bathmatia's emblem is a rubber duck and its motto is "Free and Glorious Lint." Those both make sense for a country that's the size of a bathmat. Ask students to choose an emblem that best represents their classroom micronation. Many countries have a motto that consists of just three words. Have students come up with three words that sum up their hopes for their micronation.

Design a Passport (page 11)

Have each student fold an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper three times to get eight pages, then staple the spine and cut the folded edges into pages. On the front cover, have them draw their micronation's emblem and write its name. On the first two pages, they should include some of the components of a real passport, such as name, sex, nationality, birth date. They might draw a self-portrait in lieu of attaching a photograph. Stamp the passports when students meet a goal you have set. Discuss why the citizens of some countries must carry passports or identity papers at all times. Discuss why passports are sometimes stolen. What value do they have to thieves?

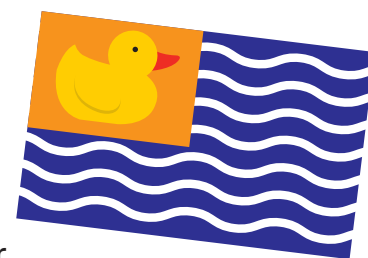


Write a National Anthem (page 14)

Analyze the words of your country's national anthem. What do they mean? Have a contest in which students complete the fill-in-the-blanks micronation anthem on page 14 of *How to Build Your Own Country*. Stage an American Idol-style contest for the best rendition of the new anthem.

Design a Flag (page 12)

Give each student an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper, and assign him or her a country. Their job is to draw the flag of that country and present it to the class, explaining the various elements in the flag. Hang the flags around the classroom. Then have students work in groups to design a flag for their micronation. After they have presented their work, ask the class to vote for the flag that they feel best represents their micronation.



Choose a Form of Government (pages 16–17)

How to Build Your Own Country outlines five main forms of government, including dictatorships. Ask your students how they will choose one for their classroom micronation. Discuss the options — does one person or a small group get to decide on a form of government? Or does everyone have a say? Which seems fairest?

Hold an Election (pages 18–19)

Have students vote for their micronation's President or Prime Minister. Ask volunteers to create a platform, assemble a campaign team and run for this office. Assemble an election team and a ballot-counting team. Ask the election team to choose a day to hold the election and prepare a voters' list, ballot boxes and ballots listing the names of the candidates. On election day, students will go to the polling station, present ID, have their names checked off the voters' list and cast their votes. Then have the ballot-counting team count the votes and announce the winner.

Write a Constitution (pages 20–21)

Have students read the opening parts of their country's constitution, and brainstorm a constitution for their micronation. What rights do they want citizens to have? (For example, they might have the rights to life, security, religion, speech, freedom, association with others, etc.) Discuss what their micronation would be like without, say, the right to free speech or one of the other rights.

Make the Laws (pages 22–23)

A country is governed by its laws, but sometimes laws are broken. Ask students to decide how their new micronation will handle law-breakers? How will it decide if a law has been broken? What will it do with a law-breaker? What happens in their real country?



Tax Time (pages 24–25)

Your micronation wants to build fancy new government buildings, but it needs money to do so. The answer: tax citizens. But how? Have students read about the forms of taxation on page 25. Discuss which method sounds fairest.

Making Money (page 27)

Have students bring in currency from other countries to show-and-tell. Ask students to design a currency for their micronation. What should this currency be called? What is one unit worth in, say, American dollars? How many units would it take to buy a pair of sneakers? Have students set prices for several common items using their made-up currency.

Take a Holiday (page 28)

What state, province or country holidays do you celebrate? Ask students to come up with a holiday that combines the best parts of existing holidays (fireworks, a day off school, special foods), and name it as their new micronational holiday.

Join the United Nations (page 33–35)

Discuss why countries join the United Nations? What are the advantages? How does the United Nations help to resolve conflicts and wars? Have students prepare a scrapbook of newspaper and Internet clippings on one United Nations peacekeeping effort currently underway.

Prepare a Fact File (page 38)

Have students prepare a fact file for their micronation and post it on the blackboard for all to see.