The Viability of Contemporary Liberalism

Chapter

12

KEY SKILLS

Evaluating personal assumptions and opinions to develop an expanded appreciation of an issue

KEY CONCEPTS

Exploring how well the principles of liberalism provide a framework for addressing challenging contemporary issues

Key Terms

Consumerism
Environmental change
Extremism
Pandemics
Postmodernism

Why I Am Not a Postmodernist by Edward R. Friedlander, M.D.

I'm an honest doctor. I have chosen science over prejudice, health over disease, opportunity over slavery, and love and kindness over mean-minded make-believe.

There was a time when people were openly grateful to scientists and physicians who dedicated their lives to making us healthier and happier. There was a time when it was fashionable to express appreciation for the system of government and the practice of dispassionate inquiry which have brought us the unparalleled health, freedom, and prosperity that we enjoy today.

There was a time when people thought that a proposition was "valid" or "true" if, and only if, it ultimately squared with the observable world around us.

There was a time when people thought that respecting the beliefs and experiences of others, even when they differed from your own, was the mark of an educated, decent person.

There was a time when people enjoyed discovering how much we all have in common, and how most of us wanted the same things despite the superficial differences. There was even a time when we thought the best way to overcome misunderstanding, prejudice, and hate was by means of reason, common sense, clear-thinking, and good-will.

We called this being scientific. *We called this being* rational. *We called this being* enlightened. *We called this being* liberal.

We called this being modern.

—Edward R. Friedlander, Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences, "Why I Am Not a Postmodernist." *Kairos*, vol 3, issue 1, Spring 1998
http://www.technorhetoric.net/3.1/index.html

In this quotation, Dr Friedlander launches a defence of modernism, a philosophical school of thought closely associated with liberalism. He laments the current attitude against modernism, which he refers to as **postmodernism**—a movement that largely began as a reaction to modernism after the First and Second World Wars. Friedlander, later in his article, quotes philosopher Michael Fegan's definition of postmodernism:

Postmodernism calls into question enlightenment values such as rationality, truth, and progress, arguing that these merely serve to secure

Classical liberalism allowed for the rampant economic growth of the Industrial Revolution. The structures of modern liberalism attempt to find solutions to many of the problems caused by economic growth. Seen here are former US president Bill Clinton and Canadian prime minister Paul Martin addressing the 2005 UN Conference on Climate Change.

the monolithic structure of modern capitalistic society by concealing or excluding any forces that might challenge its cultural dominance.

—Michael Fegan, quoted in James Gerrand, "Feminist amnesia." ***The Skeptic*** **18, 1 (Autumn, 1998): p. 37.**

According to Friedlander, to what extent are modern liberal values being challenged and is this challenge appropriate? Postmodernism is developed more fully and given context on pages 408–410.
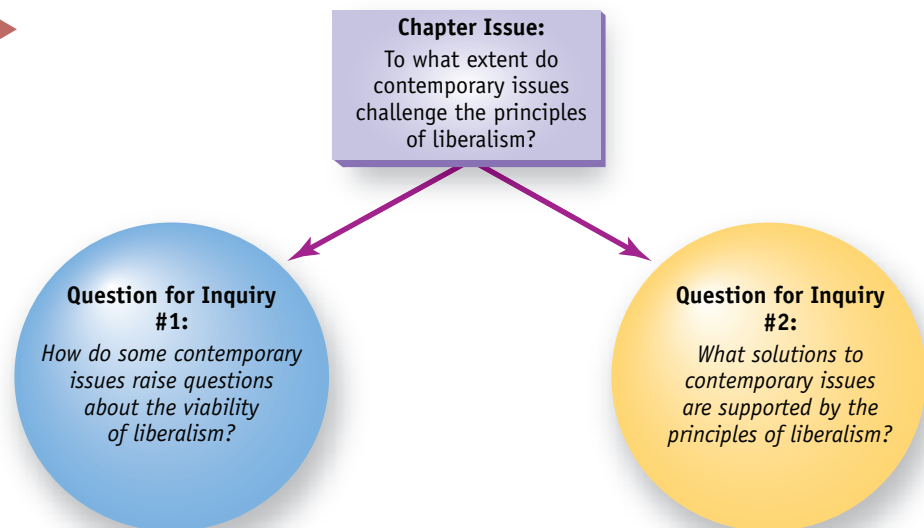
Chapter Issue

In this book you have explored the ideology of liberalism, from its conceptual beginnings to its practice in modern-day society. Throughout its long history, certain principles of liberalism have remained the same—individualism, economic freedom, and political freedom, to name a few. However, as the social, environmental, political, and technological conditions of liberal democracies have changed over time, as you saw in Chapter 6, liberalism has shifted with them. Many issues facing liberal democracies in the 21st century did not exist when the ideology was first conceived. Those issues create new challenges for both individuals and governments. Exploring how liberal principles provide a framework for addressing contemporary issues as well as examining various perspectives on that framework will help you address the Chapter Issue, ***To what extent do contemporary issues challenge the principles of liberalism?***, and the Related Issue for Part 3, ***To what extent are the principles of liberalism viable?***

It can be argued that the contemporary Western world is a product of early liberal principles in action, which makes the modern industrialized world also the result of the implementation of liberal principles. But the **modern industrial complex** (that is, the structure of industry in our Western society) has given us disparity as well as the gifts of scientific and technological progress. Access to resources, health care, and the subsequent quality of life available to individuals varies greatly in liberal societies and throughout the world. This modern industrialized world is faced with environmental issues and must deal with the impact of economic development. Debt and poverty exist amid wealth within liberal democracies, and there is significant disparity among countries. Not all individuals and groups are treated equally in liberal democratic countries—racism and censorship exist in some form in all countries. If liberal principles have resulted in the modern industrialized world, can they also be harnessed to solve the problems of the industrialized world?

In this chapter you will examine examples of how liberal democracies respond to contemporary challenges and determine how effective liberalism has been in adapting to these challenges.

Figure 12-2 ▶

Chapter Issue:
To what extent do contemporary issues challenge the principles of liberalism?

Question for Inquiry #1:
How do some contemporary issues raise questions about the viability of liberalism?

Question for Inquiry #2:
What solutions to contemporary issues are supported by the principles of liberalism?

The Horseshoe Debate

We have a long way to go before we are able to hear the voices of everyone on earth, but I believe that providing voices and building bridges is essential for the World Peace we all wish for.

— Joichi Ito (American-educated Japanese activist, entrepreneur, and venture capitalist), "Season's Greetings and Global Voices," December 25, 2004.
http://joi.ito.com/weblog/2004/12/25/seasons-greetin.html

If you have lived your entire life in a liberal democracy, it may be difficult for you to imagine any other form of government or ideology. Discussion and debate with others, especially those whose views differ from yours, can be important for gaining insight and understanding. Engaging in an informal debate, one with structure yet without the formality of competitive debates, is important for developing the essential skills for appraising information from multiple perspectives. Debate is like entering a "marketplace of ideas." This Skill Path is designed to assist you in using evidence skilfully in an argument. It will help you explore the various perspectives on the challenges facing the principles of liberal democracies. In addition, you will have the opportunity to examine the possible means of addressing those challenges, as an individual, and a citizen of a liberal democracy.

Your Task: Responses to two different issues are presented as horseshoe debate topics (at the top of the right-hand column). Half the class will debate Issue 1 and the other half will debate Issue 2. For your issue, independently research the different sides of the debate and prepare your own informed response to the issue. Each individual in the group will present his or her position and will also have the opportunity to modify that position. A horseshoe debate is a non-confrontational, open-forum arrangement where each participant is seated along a large U-shaped arrangement of desks facing his or her classmates. After the debate, you will independently prepare a written reflection on the issues that were explored in the debate.

Issue 1: Be it resolved that the liberalism of the West is responsible for global terrorism.

Issue 2: Be it resolved that human beings will be able to control and reduce global warming.

Steps:

1. Thoroughly research your issue using appropriate information sources.

2. Share your information and conclusions on a "meeting board" (electronic or paper). This board will allow all group members to better examine the issue.

3. After examining the information other students have posted on the meeting board, prepare a personal position or opinion on the issue for sharing. This sharing will occur in a horseshoe debate in which you will present your information and opinion *one time*. You will present only once because this format gives each opinion or position the same presence and weight in the debate. Listen carefully to the information and positions of others to make an informed decision about the issue.

4. An important characteristic of an informal debate or sharing of information is the opportunity for participants to change their positions based on what they hear from others. Confirming your position or opinion is also an important characteristic of an informal debate. When you have confirmed your position, you can prepare a written summary of the debate and your own position for submission to your teacher. You can use the Questions to Guide You to reflect on your experience.

Questions to Guide You

1. What reasons have participants provided to support their points of view in response to the issue?

2. Other than your own initial point of view, what responses did you hear during the process that most strongly influenced your original position?

3. In a debate, what are the benefits of considering the views of others when forming or modifying your response to an issue?

The Viability of Liberalism

> • **How do some contemporary issues raise questions about the viability of liberalism?**

Even though modern liberalism is imperfect, as you have read about in previous chapters, many people in liberal democracies consciously or unconsciously assume that the principles of liberalism themselves are beyond criticism. People who live in liberal democracies generally have a bias in favour of such liberal concepts as the worth of every individual, the power of human reason, the limits of a government's reach into individual lives, and a belief in human progress. This type of conscious or unconscious bias could be considered normal for a person living in a society or a community that is based on a particular liberal democratic ideological system of beliefs. Nonetheless, modern liberalism is not necessarily embraced by all peoples or groups living within liberal democracies or by everyone living outside of liberal democracies.

For example, as you examined in Chapter 8 (and to some extent in Chapters 9 and 10), modern liberalism and its ideological principles can sometimes be challenged by alternative thought, such as environmentalism, Aboriginal collective thought, religious perspectives, and neo-conservatism. Additional challenges to liberal principles can be found in the examples of postmodernism and extremism. These two additional examples of alternative thought will be examined in this Question for Inquiry.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is another ideological school of thought that challenges liberalism. You will recall that you were introduced to postmodernism at the beginning of this chapter.

> *Up till now the car and the house, and various "commodities" have somehow or other succeeded in soaking up the disposable physical and mental capacities of individuals. What would happen if all disposable wealth was redistributed amongst them? Quite simply, the bottom would drop out of their lives—they would lose the fabric and even tempo of a well-tempered economy, lose a sense of self-interest and of purpose…*
>
> *We are in a universe where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning…*

> —**Jean Baudrillard,** *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities* **(Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983).**

PAUSE AND **R**EFLECT

What aspects of contemporary life does Baudrillard critique in these quotations? How does his criticism mirror the quotation at the beginning of this chapter by Michael Fegan? What challenge do these two thinkers pose for liberalism?

Postmodernism is the period that follows *modernism* in the fields of art, literature, and philosoph, largely in Western societies. It is also a school of thinking that questions and rejects the principles of modernism and liberalism. Some of the central concepts of modernism, which began during the Enlightenment, include the following:

- Science provides universal and eternal truths.
- Knowledge will lead to progress.
- Freedom consists of obedience to laws that are based on reason.
- Reason and rational thinking are the ultimate means of establishing what is true.

Modernity, then, is about order, universal truths, reason, and rationality. In this view, by using science and rationality to establish truths, an organized society can emerge.

Postmodernism calls into question the central ideas of modernism. It argues that, rather than a process for discovering truth, modernism has constructed "governing narratives" that tell us stories about our modern society and provide us with ideas around which we can organize society. Postmodernism claims that most of us are under a "veil of deceit" that hides alternative ways of thinking from us. Postmodernism does not necessarily deny any of the claims of modernism, but it does see many of the "truths" of modernism—and liberal ideology—as mere constructions— as convenient "lies" we tell ourselves so we do not have to think too much.

Although many see postmodernism as a mixture of related ideas rather than any sort of organized ideology or belief system, there are recurrent themes in postmodernist thinking. Some of these are:

- a belief that there is no set of moral or political ideas that can dominate cultural, ethnic, and gender differences. For example, postmodernists criticize what they see as the dominance of modern liberal ideology over many aspects of life to the exclusion of other ways of thinking.
- skepticism about the modern liberal idea that society can be "improved," that there is "progress" in civilization
- a critique of the nature of knowledge: knowledge claims are relative to linguistic, social, and historical contexts. A simple example of this is the idea that Columbus "discovered" the New World. Another example is that we are often unaware of our own prejudices or biases until we step outside of our normal lives, such as when we travel to another country.
- a concern for issues of gender, race, and other parts of culture previously marginalized by the "grand governing narrative" (that is, the mainstream line of thinking in society). Groups that have traditionally been left out of the dominant social structure have their own legitimate ways of making sense of the world, and these ways of making sense may make more sense than those prescribed by liberal tradition.

Figure 12-3 ▲

Etch-a-Sketch portrait of French thinker Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007). Baudrillard, a major postmodern thinker, believed there is no "true" reality in Western liberal culture. What we think of as reality is actually constructed for us by our culture and our media, and can be changed, just as the Etch-a-Sketch portrait can be changed, to create new versions of reality and truth.

Voices

Examining Postmodernism

Postmodernist critiques of our society's governing narratives generate many questions. At times, the answers to these questions threaten the values on which modern liberal democracies are based. Central to the postmodernist challenge is the following question: If we claim that there are no universal truths that transcend cultural boundaries and traditions, how can we expect all members of society to adhere to a dominant set of (liberal) principles?

American political scientist Peter Berkowitz suggests that the postmodern challenge of the authority of liberal values is an inevitable outcome of liberalism itself—that liberalism contains the seeds of its own destruction.

At every turn, the spread of freedom emboldens the liberal spirit's inclination to expose and overthrow the claims of arbitrary authority. However, as the claims of freedom themselves acquire authority in a free society, the liberal spirit has difficulty limiting its campaign against authority to that which is arbitrary. Or rather, with each new success, the liberal spirit comes closer to viewing all authority as arbitrary. Eventually, the liberal spirit turns upon the authority of freedom itself, attacking the very source of its moral standing. Thus does postmodernism arise out of the sources of liberalism.

—**Peter Berkowitz, "Liberal Spirit in America,"** *Liberalism for a New Century* **eds. Neil Jumonville and Kevin Mattson (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), p. 25.**

Francis Fukuyama raises the concern that the idea of valuelessness associated with postmodernism will challenge the grand governing narrative of liberalism.

…the rise of relativism [the belief that no absolute standards of rightness or wrongness exist and that all beliefs and value systems are equally defendable] has made it impossible for postmodern people to assert positive values for which they stand, and therefore the kinds of shared beliefs they demand as a condition for citizenship. Postmodern societies, particularly those in Europe, feel that they have evolved past identities defined by religion and nation and have arrived at a superior place. But aside from their celebration of endless diversity and tolerance, postmodern people find it difficult to agree on the substance of the good life to which they aspire in common.

—**Francis Fukuyama, "Identity, Immigration and Democracy,"** *Journal of Democracy* **17, 2 (April, 2006): pp. 18–19.**
http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/gratis/Fukuyama-17-2.pdf

1. What, according to Fukuyama, is postmodernism's weakness? How might this weakness affect a multicultural country such as Canada?

2. In what ways can believers in the principles of modern liberalism respond to the criticisms of postmodernism?

Extremism

What is objectionable, what is dangerous about extremists is not that they are extreme, but that they are intolerant. The evil is not what they say about their cause, but what they say about their opponents.

—Robert F. Kennedy, quoted in Thomas A. Hopkins, ed.,
Rights for Americans: The Speeches of Robert F. Kennedy
(Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), p. 237.

Unlike other terms related to the subject of ideology, such as *democrat*, *socialist*, or *anarchist*, the term *extremist* is normally used to refer only to other people, usually in a pejorative sense. Whereas someone might readily call himself or herself an environmentalist, those who are considered extremists by others generally do not see themselves as extremists.

In common parlance, *extremism* refers to a belief system that is outside the mainstream spectrum of beliefs, and it may advocate actions that are considered socially or morally unacceptable, such as the violent targeting of those perceived as innocent civilians. Sometimes the mainstream absorbs extremist views, however, and views that were considered extreme in one era become conventional in another (for example, women's right to vote and desegregation). Thus the judgement of "extremist" depends entirely on one's point of view. A group that violates the moral codes of a segment of society as a means to an end is judged as "extremist" by that social segment, but not necessarily by others.

- Can you think of other ideas related to individual or collective rights that are now part of liberal democracies but were once considered extreme?

It is important to note that extremists avoid referring to themselves as extremists not because they do not view their actions as intolerant or extreme but rather because they believe that they are acting out of principled beliefs. There can be extremist views on both the right and the left of the political spectrum, but in many cases, labelling a group or ideology as extremist is a political act to make a group's beliefs appear to challenge the status quo. An example of this might be labelling people as eco-terrorists if they threaten to spike trees (that is, embed metal spikes that will damage forestry equipment in large trees; an action that can also injure loggers) that are to be logged in an environmentally sensitive area. For some, this is an act of desperation in defence of a principle; for others it is an act of extremism.

Terrorism as practised by groups such as al Qaeda, however, is clearly extremist. Even the supporters of al Qaeda may agree that their organization uses extreme measures. They might claim, however, that in a world of injustice where military, political, and economic power is

Figure 12-4 ▲

A rejection of liberalism? Members of Bangladeshi group Ahaly Babeya burn an American flag during their anti-US rally in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on September 26, 2001. The protesters were condemning the idea that the US would invade Afghanistan following the September 11 attacks.

concentrated in the hands of a small group (Western powers) and used to keep others powerless, extreme measures are the only way to arrive at justice. They may argue that systemic injustice leads inevitably to extremism. How should liberalism respond to this argument?

As suggested by the earlier quotation by Robert Kennedy, extremism is perceived as intolerance. A religious ideology may be declared extremist if it is intolerant of and advocates violence against those who follow other belief systems. Extremism does not have to be religious, however. The *Front de libération du Québec* (Quebec Liberation Front) kidnappings and bombings in Québec during the October Crisis of 1970 are considered by many people to be examples of extremism. Nonetheless, the individuals involved in such actions normally believe that they are acting on principle.

One major challenge that extremism presents to modern liberalism is that governments threatened by extremist actions may curtail civil liberties of all citizens in an effort to maintain security. This may include limiting such rights as the freedom of association, the freedom of expression, and the right to privacy. Examples of this are the use of the War Measures Act in Canada during the October Crisis in 1970 and the creation of the USA PATRIOT Act in the United States, which was discussed in the previous chapter. In the case of the October Crisis, the limiting of individual rights was temporary. Most of the provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act, however, eventually became permanent. Some would argue that such limits on liberal values are necessary for the preservation of public security. Others claim that by limiting some liberal values in response to extremist threats, governments encourage extremists by giving them what they want.

- Why might some people adopt positions and actions that are so far from what is considered acceptable by most people? How does this challenge liberalism?
- To what extent is the use of the label *extremism* dependent on one's ideological point of view on a given situation?
- Under what circumstances would you define an act as *extreme*?

Extremism and Intolerance

Extremism challenges liberal beliefs about the structure of society, interpretations of history, and even liberal visions of the future. Extremism also challenges liberalism's tolerance. A liberal belief in freedom of expression is challenged when extremists profess intolerant views that sometimes promote hatred toward others. Sections 318 and 319 of the Criminal Code of Canada define promoting hate as a crime. In the United States, the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights protects people's freedom of expression.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees (among other things) the freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression "subject only to such reasonable limits" that "can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society." In your opinion, is it acceptable for a liberal democracy to enact laws that prevent intolerance at the expense of freedom of expression? Which specific values of modern liberalism are in potential conflict here?

Economic Extremism

Extremism is also used by some people to characterize economic activities that strictly adhere to a set of principles despite their perceived adverse effects on a population. For example, during the Cold War, the economic practices of communist countries were seen as extremist by the United States government and some other free-market countries.

More recently, critics of free-market policies have claimed that some forms of capitalism have become extremist forms of economics. Canadian author Naomi Klein sees the ideas of economist Milton Friedman (about whom you read in chapters 6 and 8) of the Chicago School of Economics as central to this "economic extremism": "Friedman dreamed of depatterning societies, or returning them to a state of pure capitalism, cleansed of all interruptions—government regulations, trade barriers and entrenched interests." (Excerpted from *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* by Naomi Klein, p. 50. Copyright © 2007 Naomi Klein. Reprinted by permission of Knopf Canada.)

According to Klein, the Chicago School of Economics, supported by the American government, educated many economists from less developed countries—the countries most likely to lean toward communism. When these economists returned to their native countries, they would then introduce "extreme" free-market economic policies, such as mass privatizations of public companies, agencies, and educational institutions; government deregulation; unrestricted free-market access for foreign corporations; and large cuts in social spending.

Sometimes these policies had devastating effects on local economies, while benefiting entrepreneurs: "Friedman's free-market rule book…[has] made some people extremely prosperous, winning for them something approximating complete freedom—to ignore borders, to avoid regulation and taxation and to amass new wealth." (Source: Klein, p. 59.) Friedman encouraged such policies because he was convinced that they were the most effective way to increase economic prosperity and political freedom.

- Milton Friedman considered his thinking to be classical liberalism. What specific values of modern liberalism do Friedman's ideas challenge?

Explore the Issues

Concept Review

1 a) Summarize what postmodernism is and how it seems to question the viability of modern liberalism.

b) Describe briefly the forms of extremism discussed in this section. How do the beliefs and values of extremism seem to challenge the viability of modern liberalism?

Concept Application

2 Debate the following in small groups: Be it resolved that liberalism is the ultimate evolution in economic and political development. Identify a specific location (for example, your community, Canada, or globally), time period (for example, today or over a particular period in history), and context or events to help guide your research into this topic and to focus your response to the issue. You may also use the Skill Path to help you.

3 Review examples of alternative thought that challenge modern liberal principles provided in chapter 8 (for example, environmentalism, Aboriginal collective thought, religious perspectives, and neo-conservatism) and in this section of chapter 12 (postmodernism and extremism). Create a collage that depicts liberalism on one side and alternative thought or forces in the 21st century that challenge the principles of liberalism on the other. Which example of alternative thought do you believe provides the strongest challenge to modern liberal principles?

4 Identify what you believe to be the most important issue in the world or in Canada, today. What principles of liberalism and/or aspects of alternative thought do you believe might best shape a response to this issue? Does this issue raise questions about the viability of liberalism?

Contemporary Issues and Liberalism

Consumerism, a product of the success of following classical liberal principles, apparently poses another challenge to liberal principles. Like postmodernism and extremism, consumerism calls into question the viability of liberal principles. As the charts on consumption patterns show (Figures 12-5 and 12-6), the values and beliefs of liberalism may not necessarily lead to reasonable outcomes.

In this second section of this chapter, we will extend the discussion beyond postmodernism and forms of extremism that challenge the viability of liberal thought. We will explore some of the solutions liberal governments have proposed to address other contemporary issues that challenge the principles of liberalism. We will also explore the continuing tension between the principles of classical and modern liberalism and the different beliefs and values that guide their differing responses to issues in the world today.

Classical liberalism can be seen as the original engine for economic growth while modern liberalism can be seen as an attempt to suggest solutions to the problems caused by laissez-faire principles and economic growth. First, we will look at some of the unanticipated consequences of liberalism and the effects they have had on less developed countries as well as on industrialized liberal democracies. Then, we will also explore a few of the solutions proposed by liberal governments to address several global issues, including concerns with resource use and development; debt and poverty; the environment; and pandemics.

Consumerism as a Liberal Issue

The following table shows the annual expenditures on various products around the world.

The table on the following page shows an estimate of how much money it would cost, on top of what is already being spent, to achieve universal access to the certain social services in all less developed countries.

The impacts of consumerism, both positive and negative, are very significant to all aspects of our lives, as well as to our planet. But equally important in discussing consumption patterns is the underlying system that promotes certain types of consumption and not other types.

Figure 12-5 ▼

Compare the figures in Figure 12-5 to the estimates of the additional costs of achieving universal access to basic social services in Figure 12-6.

Area of Spending	US$ Billions per year
Cosmetics in the United States	8
Ice cream in Europe	11
Perfumes in Europe and the United States	12
Pet foods in Europe and the United States	17
Business entertainment in Japan	35
Cigarettes in Europe	50
Alcoholic drinks in Europe	105
Narcotic drugs in the world	400
Military spending in the world	780

Figure 12-6 ▶

Compare the figures in Figure 12-5 to the estimates of the additional costs of achieving universal access to basic social services in Figure 12-6.

Source: both tables adapted from United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report* (New York: United Nations and Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 37. http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1998_en_chap1.pdf By permission of Oxford University Press, Inc. www.oup.com

Area of Spending	US$ Billions per Year
Basic education for all	6
Water and sanitation for all	9
Reproductive health for all women	12
Basic health and nutrition for all	13

- What do the dollar amounts in Figure 12-5 and Figure 12-6 tell you about consumption priorities? Is there anything wrong with spending money on cosmetics or pet food?
- Do you think the principles of liberalism helped create the disparity that is apparent in the tables? Do you think liberal governments should do something to address this disparity?

Liberal democracies do take some actions to address issues related to consumerism. Since 2005, Albertans buying new televisions and computers pay a provincial electronics recycling fee of $45 per new television and $12 for computer components. The fees cover the costs of collection, transportation, recycling, public awareness programs, and electronics-related research. Each year, Albertans throw out over 200 000 televisions and 100 000 computers. The electronic trash contains harmful chemicals and few facilities exist that can properly dispose of those chemicals. In this case, the government has chosen a policy of charging a fee to the consumer. While the fees collected assist in addressing some negative consequences of consumerism, government actions do not directly discourage or prohibit the purchasing of goods by individuals.

We will further explore some of the solutions liberal governments have proposed to address contemporary issues that challenge the principles of liberalism. First, we will look at some of the unanticipated consequences of liberalism and the effects they have had on less developed countries as well as on industrialized liberal democracies. We will also explore some of the solutions liberal governments have proposed to address environmental issues and pandemics.

Unanticipated Consequences of Liberalism

In the brief history of liberal democracies, economic freedom has helped create some very powerful individuals and companies. Beginning with the colonization of Africa, Asia, and South America, consumers in liberal democracies were given greater access to increasing varieties and amounts of goods. Bananas, coffee, chocolate, silk, and cotton are examples of such goods. In more recent decades, companies from liberal democracies have entered into economic relationships with countries such as China, Japan, Korea, and Mexico

PAUSE AND REFLECT

Are such actions of liberal democratic governments a workable means of addressing issues such as consumerism, use of resources, and disposal of associated waste products? What other actions might governments take to address these issues more directly?

to make technological gadgets, toys, and entertainment goods available in large quantities at relatively low cost. The pursuit of economic freedom in liberal democracies has brought increased personal choice for consumers in some countries but not in all. And within most countries these benefits are not equally distributed.

Therefore, unanticipated consequences of economic freedom and development have developed within countries and on a worldwide scale. First, the wealth and resource development produced by economic liberalism did not benefit many of the people in former colonies in Asia, Africa, and South America to the same degree as they benefited people in more industrialized countries. In fact, many colonized countries were forced to reduce their own food production in order to grow cash crops such as coffee and bananas for export. These crops provided little benefit to most of the citizens of the countries where they were grown. As many of these countries became independent, they were faced with world markets dominated by trade arrangements among liberal democracies, making it difficult for them to participate in the economic gains from world trade. This, and many other factors, led to greater debt and poverty on a large scale for less developed countries.

Second, citizens of colonized countries were not treated in ways that reflected the principles of liberalism. Differential laws governing ownership of property and land, access to education and health care, and other aspects of life often restricted the pace of development in these countries. Such treatment led to negative sentiments within these countries between members of various races or ethnic groups. A legacy of racism, alienation, instability, and anger resulted.

Third, such feelings have also created conditions that support violence, illiberalism, and terrorism. The unequal treatment of some countries and their citizens by liberal democracies—especially those most closely associated with the principles of democracy—has left a troubling legacy in many former colonies. Liberal democracies have become targets of this dissatisfaction. The United States, Great Britain, France, and other European Union countries have experienced terrorist threats and attacks. Canada has also been included in the group of liberal democratic countries whose policies and practices have been criticized.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

What particular aspects of liberalism helped create these unanticipated outcomes? Do you think leaders of liberal democracies have learned anything from the decisions and issues related to past liberal leaders?

Environmental Change and Activism

A $120 000 lawsuit filed by Syncrude Canada Ltd. [see Figure 12-7] earlier this month aims to financially cripple the environmental group and intimidate other oilsands critics, charged a Greenpeace activist yesterday.

But a company spokesman is defending the legal proceedings, saying the lawsuit is a way to preserve safety at the massive Aurora oilsands operation near Fort McMurray.

Figure 12-7 ▶

Greenpeace activists entered Syncrude's Aurora North oil sands facility in July 2008 and erected a banner that transformed the opening of a tailings pond pipe into the mouth of a giant skull. The pipe was transporting bitumous waste into the same tailings pond where 500 migrating ducks died earlier in 2008.

Eleven Greenpeace members were each handed a $287 fine at the time for trespassing at the company's mine site.

Activists said they were planning to block a pipe which flows into a toxic tailings pond where 500 ducks died in April.

—Source: "Syncrude suit 'punitive': Greenpeace."
***Edmonton Sun*, August 30, 2008.**
© 2008 The Canadian Press.
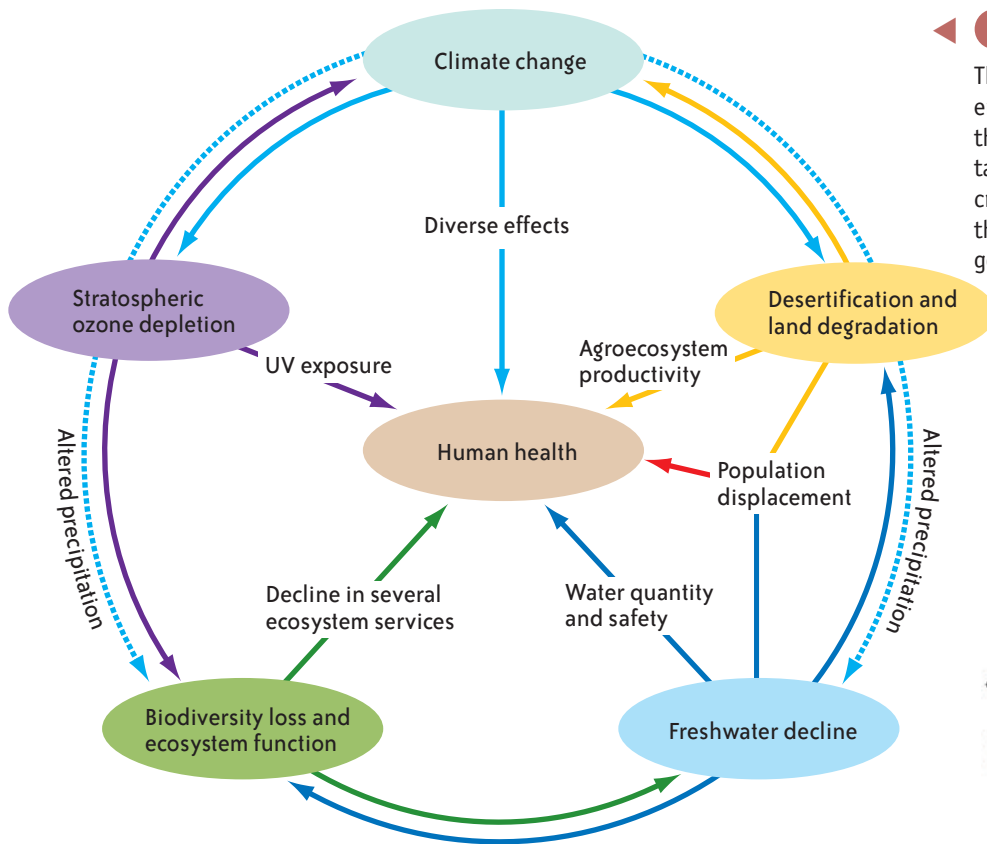http://www.edmontonsun.com/News/Alberta/2008/08/30/6614991-sun.html

How might environmental direct action campaigns and companies' protection of workers' safety and rights be viewed both as an expression of liberalism and a solution to some of the problems caused by liberalism?

In response to **environmental change** (that is, the changes in the natural world around us) many individuals and groups have resorted to activism to focus media attention on problems caused by industry and societal practices (for example, air pollution from cars and consumerism). Environmental groups have been exposing some of the offences that threaten the well-being of our planet.

We each share a significant relationship with all other people on earth through the environment. The environment is a shared system; changes in one part of the world affect all other parts. As noted in Figure 12-8, the interconnections between human health and water, air, vegetation, animal life, and climate mean that each region of the earth is dependent on all others. During the latter part of the 20th century, scientists, environmental activists, and other groups began to place increasing pressure on governments around the world to consider the quality of the environment and to limit the human impact on the environment. Liberal democracies now face a dilemma: How can they

● PAUSE AND REFLECT

How do you think liberal governments should address the issue of protecting the environment? Which principles of liberalism does your answer challenge? Why is this challenge acceptable to you?

Figure 12-8

The interconnected nature of the world's environment links all individuals in ways that are not always obvious. Actions taken by one person will affect all people, creating conditions of interdependence that may strongly influence how governments address issues.

Figure 12-9

The 3Rs—"Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle"—has become a symbol of conscientious response to waste in a consumer society. When the concept was originally introduced, however, people were resistant. Even today, because of economic considerations or longstanding customs, some communities do not consider environmental efforts a priority. In some cases poverty and other issues take precedence. In 2008, for example, economic turmoil affected many countries and environmental considerations took a back seat for many. To what extent are efforts at environmental stewardship consistent with liberal principles? How can green choices be balanced with economic sustainability and convenience in order to better safeguard global and environmental success?

support principles of liberalism such as economic and personal freedom while also promoting the modern liberal principle of a high quality of life for all members of society?

While there is a long-standing tradition among some citizens of liberal democracies of promoting care for the environment and treating nature with respect, the environmental movement began to be influential only during the 1970s. Several notable publications, scientific and popular best sellers, and significant environmental disasters served to increase public awareness and pressure on governments to make changes. Oil spills off the Pacific Coast, an increasing awareness of water shortages, and the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989 brought environmental concerns to the forefront for the governments of Canada and the United States. Since the 1970s, governments have passed legislation concerning clean air, water, endangered species, the Arctic, forests, and disposal of toxic substances other forms of hazardous waste.

There is, according to Greenpeace, approximately a 30-year delay in the impact of emissions. In other words, we are only now feeling the effects of the greenhouse gas emissions of the 1970s. (**Greenhouse gas emissions** are gases, from both natural and artificial sources, that are released into the earth's atmosphere. They change the way the earth's

atmosphere absorbs and emits radiation, which affects the temperature of earth.)

The views of politicians, ecologists, environmental activists, their supporters, and critics all contribute to the range of perspectives on environmental issues. All these perspectives affect the roles of individuals and governments and social expectations during the early part of the 21st century. How have the principles of liberalism provided people with a way of addressing the issue of environmental change?

Voices

Environmentalism through the Years

Before 1985, mankind will enter a genuine age of scarcity…in which the accessible supplies of many key minerals will be facing depletion.

—Paul Ehrlich, American biologist, environmentalist and author of *The Population Bomb* (1968), speaking at Earth Day, 1976.

Traditional people of Indian nations have interpreted the two roads that face [European settlers] as the road to technology and the road to spirituality. We feel that the road to technology…has led modern society to a damaged and seared earth. Could it be that the road to technology represents a rush to destruction, and that the road to spirituality represents the slower path that the traditional native people have traveled and are now seeking again? The earth is not scorched on this trail. The grass is still growing there.

—William Commanda, Algonquin (Mamiwinini) leader and elder, 1991.

I want to argue that it is now time for us to make a major shift in our thinking about the environment, similar to the shift that occurred around the first Earth Day in 1970, when this awareness was first heightened. We need to stop the mythic fantasies, and we need to stop the doomsday predictions. We need to start doing hard science instead…It's time to abandon the religion of environmentalism, and return to the science of environmentalism, and base our public policy decisions firmly on that.

—Michael Crichton (medical doctor and novelist), from "Environmentalism as Religion" speech, September 15, 2003.

http://www.crichton-official.com/speech-environmentalismaseligion.html

1 Does each speaker present a distinct view of environmental issues? Are there similar themes?

2 Which principles of liberalism are challenged by the speakers' views?

3 There are many other points of view, opinions, and ideas related to this issue. How might we address the variety of responses to this challenge?

The Kyoto Protocol

As environmental issues are not limited by national borders, international co-operation and joint approaches seem essential. Yet all countries are careful to protect their sovereignty and promote national interests. In addition, various individuals and groups within countries express their desires, demands, and preferences to their own governments and to those of other countries. The **Kyoto Protocol**—an agreement reached at an international convention at which world leaders met to discuss climate change and create a plan for reducing greenhouse gases—is an example of how liberal democracies and other countries have approached the challenges of **climate change** (that is, the change in global weather patterns). The concept of climate change was, up to the early 2000s, rejected by neo-conservative governments and business leaders. It has recently been almost universally supported by scientific studies and is now no longer a matter of much debate. Science has shown, beyond reasonable doubt, that human economic activities are affecting the climate of the earth.

There is new evidence that climate change is a reality. The North Pole was an island for the first time in 2007, with alarming rates of sea ice melt. Low-lying inhabited islands in the Pacific and Indian oceans have had to be evacuated because of flooding caused by climate change and increased melting ice at the poles. Closer to home, the spread of the mountain pine beetle in British Columbia and Alberta is attributed to climate change. The insect is now better able to survive our milder winters, which is a problem because the beetle eats the bark of many trees, devastating whole forests.

The Kyoto Protocol is the first, and to date the only, binding international agreement that includes specific goals for individual countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. It came into effect on February 16, 2005, but the countries ratifying the protocol have undertaken their goals with varying approaches and degrees of commitment.

In 2004, the government of Canada, led by Liberal prime minister Paul Martin, announced a broad plan for dealing with greenhouse gases, one that was based on voluntary participation and tax incentives for companies that complied. The plan also included mandatory emissions reductions for factories and power plants, improved fuel efficiency in Canadian vehicles, a climate fund to purchase emission reduction credits, and funding for infrastructure projects that would decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

One of the complicating factors in most liberal democracies is that when different political parties come to power, changes to international agreements can and do occur. Such a situation occurred in Canada in 2006 when the newly elected Conservative government, led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, altered funding to climate change programs

and instituted a new climate change plan focusing on additional consultations with industries and businesses, two groups that are traditionally not very enthusiastic about government guidance or restrictions. It is highly unlikely that Canada will meet its **Kyoto targets** (that is, the reduced levels of greenhouse gas emissions for each country set by the Kyoto Protocol). Canada's emissions in 2004 were 27 percent above our 1990 level, and our Kyoto target for 2008 was 6 percent below the 1990 level. Since the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, very little progress has been made by either political party leading Canada.

Friends of the Earth is an international non-profit environmental group that was founded in 1978. It focuses on many issues, one of which is the campaign to stop **global warming**, which is an increase in the average temperature of the earth's atmosphere and a potential indicator of climate change. Friends of the Earth Canada has a three-point plan that addresses this global issue:

1. the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act Lawsuit
2. the Climate Protection Plan (a carbon tax for big polluters)
3. the Energy Greenbox Program (the donation of energy-saving devices to underprivileged households through food bank Greenbox donations)

The Friends of the Earth Lawsuit against the Government of Canada, first launched in the courts in June, 2008, is described as follows:

The Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act (KPIA) is a federal law that requires the Government of Canada to take serious action on climate change. This law set out a series of legal requirements and deadlines with which the government must comply, including the creation of a climate change plan and enactment of regulations that ensure that Canada meets its international obligations.

The federal government did not comply with these requirements or meet the deadlines set out in the Act.

On behalf of Friends of the Earth, Ecojustice and lawyer Chris Paliare launched legal proceedings in September 2007 for a Judicial Review of the government's non-compliance with the Act. We are seeking a declaration from the Court that the government has not complied with the law and an order in the nature of mandamus (a court order) requiring it to do so.

The application was heard in Federal Court in Toronto in June and a decision was released on October 20, 2008. The Court ruled that the legislation itself is not justiciable—meaning it is not an issue the courts can resolve.

The same parties launched an appeal on November 25, 2008, seeking to have the Federal Court decision set aside and asking the Court of Appeal to declare that the Minister of the Environment and the Governor

PAUSE AND REFLECT

One of the ironies of liberal democracy is that its liberal principles are directly responsible for the level of economic development, abundance, and the consumer lifestyle we enjoy. Yet it is the uncontrolled consumerism of countries such as Canada and the United States that results in, among other things, disproportionate amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Can those same principles of liberalism somehow control the damage our lifestyle is causing the planet?

in Council are violating the KPIA. A hearing is expected in Summer 2009.

—Source: "Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act Lawsuit", Ecojustice Canada.

http://www.ecojustice.ca/cases/kyoto-protocol-implementation-act-lawsuit

On December 11, 2008, Canada's environment minister, Jim Prentice, addressed a UN climate summit in Poznan, Poland. He said that Canada wanted to work with other countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2050.

"Canada, like the rest of the world, worries about the health of our planet, and is already living with the impacts of a changing climate," Prentice said in a prepared address to the conference. "We must bring to these negotiations a sense of urgency and a shared vision for long-term co-operation that places us on the path to a low carbon future. And we must ensure that our vision is informed by the best science and also by the traditional knowledge and voices of Aboriginal people."

Scientists and governments from around the world have reached a consensus that heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere from human activity are causing potentially irreversible changes to the climate that could damage the earth's ecosystems and cause billions of dollars worth of losses to the global economy.

Delegates at the conference from other countries as well as environmental groups have suggested that Canada is causing delays in negotiations by refusing to endorse targets recommended by scientists that industrialized countries must cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25 to 40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020 in order to avoid dangerous climate change. Although the Harper government has proposed to cut domestic emissions by three per cent below 1990 levels by 2020, Prentice said that Canada was willing to take actions "comparable with those of other developed countries."

"We believe that effective global measures regarding climate change and the economy can only occur with the commitment and contribution of all

major economies," Prentice said in the speech. "In the meantime, we must increase our support for the poorest and most vulnerable countries to help them become more resilient to climate change and to adapt to its worst effects." …

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who met privately with Prentice, also urged delegates at the conference to push for a "Green New Deal" by ensuring that global stimulus measures for the economy would also address pollution from fossil fuels and spur growth in clean energy technology…

—**Source: Mike De Souza, "Canada urges climate-change battle",**
Canwest News Service, December 11, 2008.
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http://www.canada.com/topics/news/national/story.html?id=1062783

- What does economic expansion mean for the environment? Is economic expansion necessarily harmful to the environment?
- To what extent do the Canadian government's responses above reflect liberal principles and a willingness to address climate change?

Voices

Perspectives on Green Policies in Canada

As you read in Chapter 8, a carbon tax is one proposed strategy to fight climate change that Canadian politicians and other interested parties have discussed. Read the following viewpoints on the carbon tax and other climate change strategies.

The Liberal Party of Canada's "Green Shift" and Carbon Taxes

Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion revealed his party's carbon tax plan in June of 2008, telling reporters that Canada needs to make a "green shift" to help save the environment.

At the heart of the energy plan is an energy tax on carbon fuels, which will be based on consumption.

New taxes are expected to generate about $15.4 billion annually in revenue in four years. But the Liberals say their plan will be revenue neutral because it will cut income taxes and increase family support payments.

Alberta Conservative MP Jason Kenney claimed new taxes on jet fuel, diesel, and home heating will hurt average Canadians.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper accused Dion of making a tax grab and of flip flopping on a commitment against a carbon tax. "Mr. Dion has already broken his promise," Harper told reporters following a press conference in Huntsville, Ontario. Dion said "he would not have a carbon tax…when he gets into office he'll put a carbon tax on gasoline and everything else. And it will not be revenue neutral," Harper said.

Figure 12-11 ▲

Following his speech about the carbon tax plan, Stéphane Dion wears a Green Shift baseball cap while greeting supporters on Parliament Hill.

Jack Layton of the NDP dismissed the Tories' intensity-based approach, which the party says won't reduce carbon emissions. Layton has also rejected the concept of a carbon tax. Instead, the NDP has called for a "cap and trade" system that puts a strict limit on greenhouse gas emissions by "big polluters."

—Source: "Dion introduces 'green shift' carbon tax plan." CTV.ca, June 19, 2008.
http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/
20080619/dion_green_plan_080619

Sophisticated economic liberalism would consider the total picture of real costs including environmental cleanups, additional health-care costs due to unfettered pollution, and actually, in the long run, the economic benefit of cleaner power generation.

—William Lehtinen, design engineer in Montréal, interview with author, September 2008.

We may soon have no choice but to move away from an oil-obsessed economy.

Shot in 13 countries over a four-year period, Oil Apocalypse Now? *reveals the myths and conspiracy theories surrounding the future of our world's oil supplies. It includes interviews with over 30 of the most influential people on both sides of the argument to examine if the oil age is coming to an end.*

—Source: Andrew Evans, "New peak oil film on CBCNewsworld."
***Energy Bulletin*, August 21, 2008.**
http://www.energybulletin.net/node/46332

Is there a conspiracy of silence to keep the truth from us? In the last four years world oil prices have tripled. Alberta is being looked to as a new source of oil as it moves from 20th position to 2nd position (behind Saudi Arabia) on the world oil production charts. The US in particular, which burns a quarter of the world's supply, is desperately seeking new sources of oil as the pressure is on to try to sustain the "American way of life" while world supplies reach their peak.

—Source: "Supply and demand: World oil markets under pressure." CBC News, April 28, 2005.
http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/oil/supply_demand.html

But our oil takes up to ten times more energy and money to produce than "cheap" Saudi oil extracted from traditional oil wells. Alberta's oil then stands as a perfect example of an economic miracle that is also a huge environmental problem that requires a solution.

—Mike Hudema, Greenpeace Canada campaigner stationed in Alberta, interview with author, October 3, 2008.

1 What are some of the issues around climate change being identified in these excerpts? What are some of the solutions being proposed? Which solutions seem to be most in keeping with the principles of liberalism?

2 Based on these sources and your own past research and experience, how do you believe Canada can best work towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and addressing climate change?

China and India: 21st Century Economic Miracles

As Western civilization contends with the looming world oil crisis and the environmental by-products of an oil-consuming society, in other parts of the world things are just starting to take off. China and India are rapidly modernizing and have recently experienced tremendous economic growth. They have both experienced remarkable reductions in poverty and increases in the numbers of people in the middle class.

However, China and India are not travelling the same development path. While China has introduced reforms quickly, India has been more deliberate. China has followed the traditional route, becoming a centre for low-wage manufacturing and exporting clothing, toys, electronics, and other goods. Because of its large, relatively well-educated English-speaking labour force, India has concentrated on providing services, such as call centres and data-processing operations.

Today's rapid globalization has been vital to the countries' climb up the income ladder. As they opened their economies and began to grow, both saw trade boom and became magnets for foreign investment. China's surging goods production laid the foundation for a rapidly expanding export sector, while India built up its niche in the global services market…

…India expects even greater success selling its services in the future. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the country's largest business group, estimates services exports will more than triple in the next five years, growing much faster than goods shipments and reaching more than 50 percent of total exports in 2012.

—Source: "Economic Letter—Insights from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas." *Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas* **3, 8 (August, 2008).**
http://dallasfed.org/research/eclett/2008/el0808.html

Figure 12-12 ▼

Since 1978, when reform began opening up the communist economy to more free market practices, China has been rapidly modernizing, changing the cityscape of many of its largest industrial centres.

Both countries have had to face similar political, social, and environmental problems as a result of their accelerated economic expansion.

India has also created Special Economic Zones (SEZs) that provide new infrastructure and a tax holiday to foreign companies making products for export using Indian workers. Today, India has more than 200 SEZs, which generate more than US$15 billion in annual exports and provide jobs for more than half a million Indian workers. The vitality of these SEZs is partly responsible for India's soaring economic growth rate of 9 per cent a year, second only to China among comparable market economies.

Some downsides to this miraculous economic expansion include loss of farmland and traditional ways of life, the exploitation of underpaid workers, and environmental issues. The most pressing environmental and health problems in China and India are caused by automobiles and urban air pollution. There is increasing evidence that motor vehicles are now the primary source of urban air pollution in China, which was not the case even in the late 1990s. Heating, cooking, power generation, and industrial coal consumption were formerly the main contributors to urban air pollution, but in the biggest cities coal was mostly replaced by natural gas for residential uses during the 1990s. Seven of the ten most polluted cities on earth are located in China: a statistic that is largely caused by growing auto emissions.

For decades India was subject to an embargo from the members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, an international body that controls the export of nuclear materials. This prevented India from obtaining commercial nuclear fuel, nuclear power plant components, and services from the international market. Now that this embargo is lifted, India hopes to increase its nuclear power generation and decrease its reliance on "dirty" coal-powered thermal plants.

India now is going to be the home of making cheap cars for the rest of the world. But every car then requires land, which is grabbed from tribals, peasants. It requires aluminum and steel, which needs to be mined. It requires coal, which needs to be mined.

And just as when the first colonization took place, it was assumed that the earth was empty, terra nullius, no matter how many indigenous people existed. India, a land of 1.2 billion people, is being treated as an empty land for global capital, making 80 per cent of India redundant.

But people are fighting back. And place after place, in Dadri, in Nandigram, in Singur, people are just getting together in a new earth democracy and saying, "This land is our land. We will decide what we do with it. You cannot force a polluting industry on us. Globalization cannot force it."

—Source: Vandana Shiva Decries the "Outsourcing of Pollution to the Third World", Democracy Now!, September 14, 2007.

http://www.democracynow.org/2007/9/14/vandana_shiva_decries_the_outsourcing_of

According to a report from China's official news agency, the Chinese State Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) is set to evaluate the environmental impact of development plans in five

Figure 12-13 ▲

With the completion of India's new Golden Quadrilateral superhighway, which connects the country's four largest cities, there has been a surge in automobile manufacturing and sales. This increase in car culture has also contributed greatly to air pollution.

regions and five heavily polluted industries: the steel, petrochemical, power, paper making, and the coal chemical industries.

> *"China has started to pay the price for industrial development entered into without taking account of the environmental impact,"* said Pan Yue, deputy director of SEPA.
>
> *…Pan said that 26 of the 75 largest steel plants in China are located in cities with population of more than 1 million. "The conflict between the development of steel plants and cities is more and more obvious. There is an urgent need to adopt environmental impact evaluations on regional and industrial development plans. Some industries and local governments oppose implementing such a policy, based on their own interests, which made our work harder,"* Pan said.

> **—Source: "China to evaluate environmental impact of development plans." Xinhua News Agency, November 4, 2007.**
> http://www.china.org.cn/english/MATERIAL/230762.htm

As with China, India seems to be facing an ongoing conflict between economic development and environmental degradation. Sustainable economic development and environmental protection are luxuries that these developing countries do not think they can afford. India may have a slight advantage over China with its focus on a service-based economic expansion as this economic sector tends to pollute less.

The push to grow each country's economy has created increased competition for resources and international markets for goods and services. In many cases, this push for economic growth has been at the expense of the environment.

- What solutions has economic liberalism brought to each country? What problems have resulted from such liberalism?

Pandemics

A **pandemic** is an outbreak of a disease on a global scale. It is another example of how the principles of liberalism may be challenged but how, at the same time, they may also offer solutions. From the Greek *pan* (all) and *demos* (people), a pandemic is a rapidly spreading, highly virulent disease that creates a borderless path of infection from which people have little or no immunity and for which there is presently no vaccine. Pandemics usually spread easily from person to person, cause serious and sometimes fatal illness, and infect a country, continent, or even several continents in a relatively short time. You have likely heard of historical pandemics such as the Black Plague, which occurred in the 1350s in Europe. More recent examples, such as the avian (bird) flu and SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), have also threatened modern societies. While mass communication has increased our awareness of pandemics, the ease of international travel has also precipitated their spread.

Figure 12-14 ▲

Air quality was a major concern for athletes competing in the 2008 Summer Olympics, held in Beijing, China.

Liberal democracies are faced with a difficult situation when attempting to address pandemics. On the one hand, limiting travel and restricting visitors, tourists, and new immigration to a country can provide greater protection against pandemics. On the other hand, such actions will hamper trade and development, severely restrict the basic freedoms of citizens and potentially create other issues related to human rights violations. Determining the best course of action is a complex matter because of the need for international co-operation, negotiation, and compromise. Each country must work with others for a common purpose, forgoing some aspects of its own national interests for those of the world community.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, 31" x 48", Ed. 30, 1995. Artist - Daniel O. Stolpe

International health organizations such as the **World Health Organization (WHO)** as well as national health organizations (such as Health Canada and the Centers for Disease Control in the United States) monitor established protocols and work on disseminating the most up-to-date information regarding pandemics and other forms of disease. The dissemination of information, tracking of outbreaks, and establishment of means of treatment become a shared responsibility for all countries under this system, regardless of their form of government. While globalization of business and international travel are both important activities for millions of people, and though countries may seek to support personal and economic freedom of movement, restricting the movement of human beings is one important step in addressing pandemics and limiting their spread.

Our greatest concern must always rest with disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. These groups are often hidden, live in remote rural areas or shantytowns and have little political voice.

—Margaret Chan (director-general of the World Health Organization), quoted in *Working for Health: An introduction to the World Health Organization* (Geneva, Switzerland: WHO, 2007), p. 1.
http://www.who.int/about/brochure_en.pdf

In the 21st century, health is a shared responsibility, involving equitable access to essential care and collective defence against transnational threats.

—Source: "World Health Organization." Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition. http://www.gainhealth.org/world-health-organization

- How can liberal democracies and organizations such as WHO balance people's freedoms with the need to curb the spread of disease?

Figure 12-15 ▲

Societies have often used metaphor and symbols to explain the negative forces of nature and humankind; for example, the spread of disease or pandemics. The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse depicted in this image—Famine, Pestilence, War and Death—is one such example. What does the symbol of the four horsemen convey about the negative forces facing humans? To what extent can the principles of liberalism combat these forces?

PAUSE AND REFLECT

Should all countries be equal partners in decisions related to the control of pandemics, or should one or more countries take the lead? Do you think there is a point at which individual freedom should be restricted by governments in dealing with pandemics?

SARS in Toronto

Something to Think About: Pandemics spread rapidly in the modern world, because individuals and groups travel freely throughout most countries. Canada faced a potential pandemic in 2003 with the confirmation of SARS cases in Toronto. The response of health-care professionals and their preparedness illustrate the challenges pandemics pose to liberal societies.

An Example: **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)** is a new disease with no evidence of spreading within the general population of Canada. Although it is understood as a respiratory disease spread through close contact with an infected person, much about the disease remains unknown. The only known risk factors for developing SARS are recent travel to areas where SARS is spreading locally, or recent close contact with someone who has SARS or is ill and has been in an area where SARS is spreading locally. The symptoms of the disease include a fever of 38.0 degrees Celsius or more, and respiratory problems such as coughing, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing. Other symptoms may include muscle aches, headaches, a sore throat, or diarrhea.

In March 2003, the first Canadian cases were identified in people who had travelled to Hong Kong. The WHO briefly issued a travel advisory warning for Toronto, as it believed the city was a hotspot for the spread of the disease (the travel advisory was lifted approximately a week after it was issued). Although most cases were identified in Ontario, cases were also reported in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. By September 2003, 438 cases of SARS had been reported in Canada.

Figure 12-16 ▼

Canada's Response:

When SARS was first detected in Canada, health officials responded by isolating individuals with the disease and by issuing public announcements about preventative measures that individuals could take. In Toronto, where most SARS cases were reported, hospitals and medical facilities instituted strict rules to minimize the risk of further spreading the disease. All visitors or patients were required to have their temperatures taken and to wash their hands before entering, and were given a face mask to wear while inside the building. For a brief time, doctors and nurses were required to wear full protective clothing while they were at work.

Even with these preventions in place, the disease continued to spread during April and May 2003, causing many to criticize health officials' inability to contain the disease quickly enough. The SARS outbreak in Toronto helped teach health officials how to deal with highly infectious diseases and forced them to develop better emergency preparedness plans for the future.

Highlights of Steps Taken by Governments since SARS:

There has been significant progress in public health since the SARS outbreak in 2003, particularly in the areas of networks and collaboration, planning and emergency preparedness, infectious disease surveillance and response, and laboratory capacity. Officials claim that Canada is better prepared today to respond to a public health emergency than it was in 2003.

A key accomplishment has been the establishment of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), and the appointment of this country's first chief public health officer, Dr David Butler Jones. Progress is also being achieved through increased partnerships and collaboration. And since public health challenges do not respect borders, PHAC participates in various international forums to advance its public health agenda.

The federal government also committed $1 billion over five years to support Canada's avian and pandemic influenza preparedness efforts. Further, multi-disciplinary health emergency response teams have been set up to be deployed across the country to provide extra medical services in the event of a public health crisis.

In addition to emergency preparedness, preventative measures have also been put in place. In particular, greater surveillance of global health concerns has become increasingly important. The Global Public Health Intelligence Network, a system that tracks thousands of media stories in multiple languages in order to quickly identify and monitor potential emerging public health events around the world, has been established. In Canada, PHAC has developed a cutting-edge web-based framework of applications and resources called the Canadian Network for Public Health Intelligence (CNPHI). CNPHI has the capability to gather information from various sources, such as pharmacy sales, emergency room visits, and various other surveillance systems; analyze the information; and provide alerts when significant trends emerge.

Furthermore, a new Quarantine Act, enacted in December 2006, established quarantine services at airports in Halifax, Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver, where 95 per cent of international air travellers arrive to or depart from Canada. The purpose of these quarantine services is to reduce and prevent the spread of serious infectious diseases from ill travellers by identifying them before they actually enter or leave the country.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Canada has taken a series of steps to address the potential outbreak of a pandemic. SARS, like other pandemics, presents a serious (but not necessarily immediate) risk to individuals and countries. What steps has Canada taken to address the outbreak of a pandemic? In what ways do these steps reflect liberal principles? To what extent do these steps support the common good as the more important value than individual rights and freedoms?

2. Is there a possible danger to individual privacy with the increased surveillance of citizens under systems such as CNPHI? Is the potential for abuse of this information by governments a challenge to liberal principles? Is this an acceptable risk, given the potential danger?

3. Two important principles of liberalism are social autonomy and protection of individual rights and freedoms. How might our federal, provincial, and municipal governments be challenged to demonstrate these principles when addressing pandemics in Canada?

4. What role should liberal democracies play in addressing pandemics that arise in other countries? Should liberal democracies ever engage in practices that restrict the principles of liberalism to protect their own societies' interests and their citizens?

Water Shortages

A dried-up river in the United States, a dried-up reservoir in Australia, and a nearly dried-up area in China.

You often hear that water is life…We can find simple life in a remarkable range of environments. The only place we've never found it is in the absolute absence of water…To provide enough water for our future, we must choose between two fundamental strategies. We can build more things: *more dams and reservoirs, more impoundments and river diversions, more aqueducts and canals and pipelines, more wells, and more recycling plants or desalination facilities. Or we can change how we have now:* we can manage our watersheds differently, choose more ecologically sound appliances and irrigation techniques, and change how our markets, bookkeeping and laws treat the one asset that underwrites every other. Assuming hopefully that we will choose to do anything at all, we'll probably choose some of both. But either strategy takes time.*

—Chris Wood, *Dry Spring: The Coming Water Crisis of North America* (Vancouver, BC: Raincoast Books, 2008), pp. 17–18, 21.

Living in Canada, you probably do not think much about the idea of a **water shortage**. There are thousands upon thousands of lakes and rivers throughout our country. Yet many people worry about an impending worldwide water shortage, even in places such as Canada.

The oil sands development in Northern Alberta involves processes that are very water and energy intensive. Three to five barrels of fresh water are required to produce one barrel of oil. In Alberta, the Muskeg and the Athabasca rivers in particular are threatened by overuse. Part of the oil sands extraction process involves injecting superheated water into the ground, which ends up as contaminated water in large, toxic holding ponds. As you have seen in earlier chapters regarding economic and environmental issues, migratory birds, other wildlife, and the lands surrounding the oil sands have experienced adverse effects due to contact with this contaminated water.

Indigenous communities at Fort Chipewyan in Alberta are suffering from a rare form of cancer that is thought to be related to the high levels of arsenic in their water supply and the biomagnified mercury and other contaminants in the fish they eat.

George Poitras, community contact for the Chipewyan [chip-uh-WY-un] First Nation made the following comments about the oil sands and how their development relates to water pollution and the threat to his community:

The management of the tar sands development is out of control. The government is not taking into consideration the thresholds of what the Athabasca River can support with the multitude of projects being approved. Polluted water is being discharged into the river. Effluent is leaching into the water table…oil, grease, treated sewage. The environmental impact assessments that have been done are weak, the standards are low…there has been a minimum requirement for assessment. The tailings ponds used to contain the contaminated water from the tar sands extraction process are a huge health hazard for humans and wildlife.

The community at Fort Chipewyan has been experiencing an increase in health problems related to the contamination of Lake Athabasca. In an independent environmental assessment that we commissioned, high levels of mercury, arsenic, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) were found in the fish and the water. For a community of 1200 inhabitants, there have been unusually high rates of lymphomas and bile duct cancer, among other diseases. PAHs are carcinogenic and they are by-products of tar sand extraction.

We live within 125 kilometres of these developments. There was no consultation with our community when the government approved the plans. Now, finally, we can be involved in project hearings but it feels like a formality. Can anything good come from this industry? Well, our water is being polluted, greenhouse gas emissions are increasing to a critical point, the environmental degradation is having a detrimental effect on our health, the social structure of our community (our traditional diet, our commercial fishing)…the only good to come out of it is money.

**—George Poitras, interview with author, October 7, 2008.**

- To what extent should economic development of a country be balanced with health concerns of a small group within that country?
- In what ways can liberal principles provide a solution to the problem of water pollution and shortages?

Water: A Political Issue

Until recently most people never thought about water as a political issue. Water seemed to be all around us—a renewable resource. We were told that three quarters of the earth's surface is water. We have long heard about regions such as the Sahara growing in size, but more immediately, we now read stories of the demand for Canadian water from areas such as California. Should Canada sell its water resources to other countries?
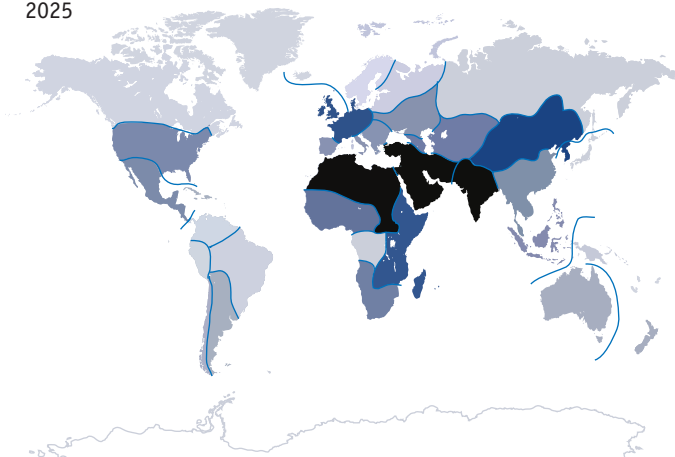
Water Availability

1950
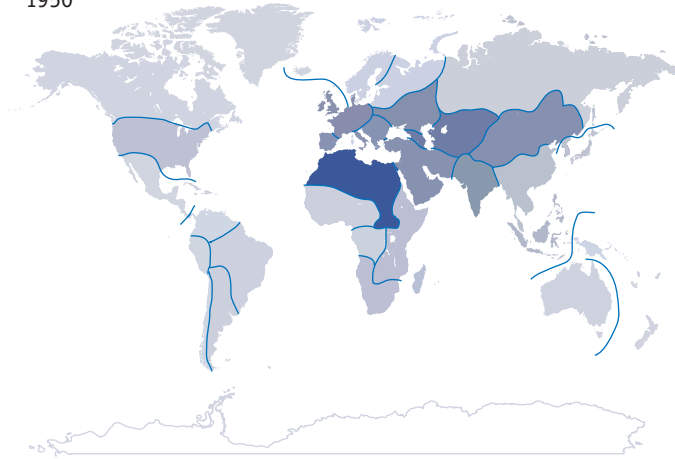
1995
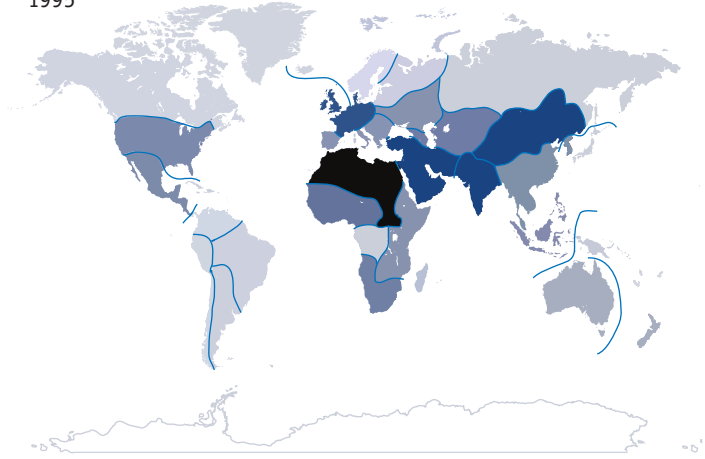
2025

Cubic metres per person per year
(in thousands)

■ < 1.0	=	catastrophically low
■ 1.1–2	=	very low
■ 2.1–5	=	low
■ 5.1–10	=	middle
■ 10.1–20	=	high
■ > 20	=	very high

Source: Graph on Water Consumption, website of UN
International Year of Freshwater, 2003. © United Nations.
http://www.un.org/events/water/

Figure 12-18 ▲

Consider the changes shown in the three maps. What other sources of information would be helpful when investigating this issue? What other factors are important in this issue?

Like oxygen, water is an essential resource to life on earth. In 2003, the United Nations focused world attention on the growing problem of fresh water availability. As you can determine from the maps in Figure 12-16, that availability has decreased over the past 50 years. Within your lifetime, if the trend continues, access to fresh water could become one of the most pressing global issues. How have liberal democracies addressed this issue in the past decade?

You have read about the competing rights of individuals, groups, and the larger society throughout this text. The regulation and control of water represent a dilemma—whose rights take precedence and who makes decisions? Land owners, farmers, municipalities, and businesses all need readily available, consistent sources of fresh water. The growth of cities as well as changing precipitation patterns over the past several decades have placed increased demands on water supplies. You may live in a community where the use of fresh water is controlled through

water meters, non-watering days, low-flow fixtures, restrictions on car washes, and other regulations designed to limit consumption. For several regions of Canada, including southern Alberta, the threat of **drought**—a severe lack of precipitation in a given area, which often affects crops—is an ongoing concern. Water management by governments can create issues and tensions over who owns, and controls, the flow of and access to fresh water. In addition, agreements with the United States over access to fresh water by states bordering Canada complicate matters regarding water management.

One such example can be found in Manitoba with the Garrison Diversion project. This project includes a proposal to transfer treated water from the Missouri River to Minot, North Dakota, and from there to have it flow into the Red River Basin with eventual dispersal into Hudson Bay. The project involves the movement of water from one water basin to another, diverting the natural flow of water. It also presents environmental concerns with the likely introduction of foreign species into Canadian waters. This project could create a precedent for future large-scale water transfers from other parts of the United States into Hudson Bay or other water basins. The potential disruption to plant and animal life (since new plant and animal life not native to the Hudson Bay Basin could be introduced), as well as the changes to water levels, are of great concern to Canada.

The damming of the Old Man River in Alberta has also been discussed for a number of years. Some believe that this may be part of a long-range plan to sell Alberta water to the United States under the North American Free Trade Agreement. In what ways could this be a challenge to liberal principles in Canada and to Alberta in particular?

The issues related to water in other countries have different causes and circumstances. In China, the rapid industrialization and growth of the economy has put tremendous pressure on clean water. The Yangtze River has provided the surrounding population with more than a sufficient supply of water for consumption and hydroelectric power. Yet the use of the river to dispose of industrial, human, and animal waste is creating an unhealthy water source. Throughout much of Africa and Asia the green revolution that began in the 1970s to provide more food for famine-stricken areas has saved millions of lives, but it has also strained the water sources to drought conditions. India faces a different problem. The priority placed on the creation of dams to irrigate crops has turned almost 90 per cent of India's water over to farms. Obtaining clean water for other uses is difficult, and reducing agricultural dependency on water means switching to crops that use less water. For many in the Middle East, the supply of water is very limited. This limitation is further complicated by the flow of underground water that crosses national boundaries and can be

Figure 12-19 ▲

As you read in Chapter 6, a massive drought in the Canadian Prairies and the Great Plains of the United States set in during the 1930s, resulting in the **Dust Bowl** (so named because of the dust storms that swept the area). The economic effects of the drought deepened the Great Depression, which had just begun. In 2002, drought conditions were also faced by farmers and others in the Western provinces in Canada. To what extent could liberal principles be used to support a response to issues related to drought in Canada?

◀ **PAUSE AND REFLECT**

What do you think the Canadian government should do when it comes to moving water between countries? Who are the parties that would be most affected by a project such as the Garrison Diversion? In what ways are liberal principles being challenged by this issue?

accessed only by the countries in which the water collects in underground reservoirs. Political tensions and scarcity add to pressures over control and access to water.

- What actions might countries take to improve the accessibility of fresh water for more people?
- What solutions to world water shortages and the control over Canada's fresh water resources can liberalism offer?

Explore the Issues

Concept Review

1 a) Identify five contemporary world issues that present challenges to liberalism.
  b) Identify the solutions that liberalism proposes to the issues you identified in question 1a.

Concept Application

2 Debate the following: *Be it resolved that liberalism offers the means to address contemporary issues.* Use the Skill Path to guide your debate.

3 Please read the following quotation and respond to the questions that follow:

The global financial crisis, brewing for a while, really started to show its effects in the middle of 2007 and into 2008. Around the world stock markets have fallen, large financial institutions have collapsed or been bought out, and governments in even the wealthiest nations have had to come up with rescue packages to bail out their financial systems.

On the one hand many people are concerned that those responsible for the financial problems are the ones being bailed out, while on the other hand, a global financial meltdown will affect the livelihoods of almost everyone in an increasingly inter-connected world…

Many blame the greed of Wall Street for causing the problem in the first place because it is in the US that the most influential banks, institutions and ideologues that pushed for the policies that caused the problems are found.

The crisis became so severe that after the failure and buyouts of major institutions, the Bush Administration offered a $700 billion bailout plan for the US financial system.

This bailout package was controversial because it was unpopular with the public, seen as a bailout for the culprits while the ordinary person would be left to pay for their folly. The US House of Representatives initially rejected the package as a result, sending shock waves around the world…

In Europe, starting with Britain, a number of nations decided to nationalize, or part-nationalize, some failing banks to try and restore confidence. The US resisted this approach at first, as it goes against the rigid free market view the US has taken for a few decades now.

Eventually, the US capitulated and the Bush Administration announced that the US government would buy shares in troubled banks.

This illustrates how serious this problem is for such an ardent follower of free market ideology to do this…

Perhaps fearing an ideological backlash, Bush was quick to say that buying stakes in banks "is not intended to take over the free market, but to preserve it."

—Source: Anup Shah, "Global Financial Crisis 2008" December 07, 2008.
http://www.globalissues.org/article/768/global-financial-crisis

Reflect in writing on the point of view shared by the author regarding the global financial crises in 2008. According to this author, to what extent has following the ideological principles of liberalism been able to successfully guide proposed solutions to global economic issues in 2008? In your response, consider to what extent the United States and Britain have strayed from the liberal ideals of a free market economy in order to address the issues created by debt and some free market practices.

Reflect and Analyze

In this chapter you have explored some ideologies that question liberalism. You have seen how liberalism has promoted economic growth and individual rights. You have also seen how liberalism has caused major social and environmental problems for which we now seek solutions. Ironically, liberalism is, in some cases, providing solutions to the very problems it helped create. These observations will hopefully give you some insight into the Chapter Issue: ***To what extent do contemporary issues challenge the principles of liberalism?***

Respond to Ideas

1 Explain, in your own words, why liberalism can be seen as a solution to a lot of the world's problems. This may take the form of a fictional piece, such as a story or poem, or a non-fiction piece, such as a newspaper article or a blog entry.

Respond to Issues

2 Debate the following response as a class: Be it resolved that liberalism is a failed ideology due to all the challenges it creates. Use the chapter examples to support and inform your position.

Recognize Relationships among Concepts, Issues, and Citizenship

3 Suppose you had to pass an exam to earn full-fledged Canadian citizenship with all its rights. New Canadians must prove that they have learned things about Canada before being sworn in. So, in this instance, all 18-year-old Canadian teenagers would be required to pass a citizenship exam.

The real citizenship exam tests prospective citizens' knowledge of Canada. Thus, our citizenship exam in this chapter will let you demonstrate your understanding of liberalism and its viability. Please respond to the following questions:

a) What is the most critical question that you would ask on a citizenship exam? Consider the following aspects when you develop your answer:
  - identifies a specific issue in Canada that needs to be addressed
  - reflects a clear link to the viability of the principles of liberalism
  - reflects active and responsible citizenship

b) Share your question with the class.

c) Rank the questions shared to identify what you believe to be the most critical question. Share your rankings and come to consensus as a class as to which question is the most critical, based on the criteria provided above.

d) Respond individually to the question that was identified as the most critical. Choose the best format for your response.