



Lesson 18.12 “Comparing Forms of Government”

Unit 18: Civics and Government Today

Lesson Objectives

- Students will distinguish between different types of government in the modern world
- Students will apply understanding of government types by creating a government structure for a hypothetical country
- Students will collaborate with classmates to determine the ideal structure of government

Lesson Competencies

- I can identify, explain, and analyze the core civic practices and foundational principles that guide governments and communities. (Moose SS)
- I can analyze, interpret, evaluate, and use information delivered orally or visually. (ELA 7)
- I can present grade-appropriate information that is supported with evidence, elaborating when elicited, and respond to questions with relevant ideas or comments. (ELA 7)

Essential Questions

How has New Hampshire come to be the way it is?
How have New Hampshire’s people shaped its government?

Focus Questions

How do people act as good citizens in a democracy?
How is a balance of power part of our democracy?

Estimated Time

One 45-minute class session

Materials & Equipment

Unit 18: Learn It! “[Government and Democracy](#),” pages 4-6
Single set of “Government Sort” cards and country list
Class set of “New Government Structure”



Educator Introduction & Rationale

For thousands of years, people have lived together in communities. People have learned that by working together they can protect one another from dangers, help one another overcome hardships, and inspire one another to accomplish great things. These three ideas—of working together, sharing burdens, and respecting each other’s rights—are why people form governments. American communities are governed under a system known as democracy. A government is a set of rules, known as laws, that we all agree to live by so that we can get along with one another and work together to accomplish things that we couldn’t do alone. Governments come in many different forms. Some countries’ governments are new, while other countries have the same government for centuries. Governments can also change over time as the needs of people and societies change.

This is the first lesson for middle schoolers in Unit 18: Civics and Government Today. In this lesson, students first review the distinguishing factors of constitutional government and dictatorial governments by sorting countries into the categories of “Democracies,” “Constitutional Monarchies,” and “Dictatorships.” Next, they will work in small groups to scaffold what they see as the best form a government. They conclude the lesson by practice compromise to create the government structure of their classroom’s new country. An extension activity provides a chance for students to think about what happens when people disagree with them and how structures need to adapt over time as the needs of the citizens change.

Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom. Please note, lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of the document. You may wish to preview these with your students.

Before the Learning Activity

Student reading and comprehension questions

What are the different types of government? Direct students to read from Unit 18 Learn It!, "[Government and Democracy](#)," pages 4-6. Before this lesson, students should be able to answer:

1. What are the two main different types of governments in the world today?
2. What is a constitution and what are the different types of constitutional government?
3. How are democracies different from authoritarian governments?

While pages 4-6 cover the two main types of governments in the world today, pages 7-12 may also be useful as students consider why government is necessary and how democracy works.

Learning Activity

Activation

Government sort. Place the "Democracies," "Constitutional Monarchies," and "Dictatorships" signs in separate locations around the rooms. Tell students when you call out a country, they should go stand near the sign that best represents the type of government that country has. If students need help, "hints" are included in the worksheet file.

Teaching Tip: The included list consists of countries that are included in the Unit 18 reading noted above, as well as some common modern examples. If students are familiar with particular countries or historical governments from prior lessons, add those governments onto the list for review.

Direct Instruction

Why do we have governments and how do they change?

Government is a form of social contract in which the people give up some rights in return for the protection they receive from the government. Ideally, in a democracy, representatives from both the minority and the majority would compromise to find the best solution for all the people in a country. People may never agree on everything, but hopefully they will find enough common ground that their representatives can find solutions for the country's problems. Constitutions can limit a government's power to ensure that people's rights are protected. In other forms of government, however, these limits do not exist. Dictatorial governments, for example, often do not respect people's rights and the people do not have the ability to voice what rules and laws they want.

This does not mean that all democracies are the same. (American democracy has six main characteristics that can be explored more in the lesson "Identifying Foundational Principles in the Declaration of Independence.") Governments can also change over time as the needs of the people change. Remind students that when the United States



was still a collection of American colonies ruled by Britain, government was led by a king, because Britain was a monarchy. When the colonies revolted against Britain and joined together to form their own country, they decided to create a government different from Britain's.

Guided Practice

Create your own country. Explain to students they will be creating their own country and deciding together how it should be governed. Together, come up with a name for the class's country and tell students they will need to work together to decide what rights they are giving up, what rights are protected, and what the limits on the government are.

Split the class into smaller groups and distribute "New Government Structure". Instruct each group to fill out the worksheet together and nominate someone to present their ideas to the class. After about 10-minutes of brainstorming, ask each group to present and use chart paper or a white board to mark down a few bullet points from each presentation. Ask students to identify what they agreed on and where there are areas of disagreement.

Students will now need to compromise on the final form of government. Facilitate discussion between students to come to a consensus about the final details of their government's structure. Cross out/erase and add new bullet points until there is a majority vote in favor of the government structure.

Extension/ Reflection

Put the government to the test. Now that the students have come to a decision about how their government will function, present them with a scenario that challenges the structure they created. For example,

News outlets are reporting that there are major protests happening in [country's name] city center. Citizens have joined together to demonstrate their disappointment in the way the government has handled recent negotiations with neighboring countries. They believe that it is their right as citizens to directly vote on what their representatives do and say when talking to leaders of other countries and are demanding an election be held to nominate a spokesperson who will oversee drafting statements for review by the people before any future meetings.

Ask students to write a brief reflection about how they would respond to the protestors. Would they justify the decisions they made and tell the protestors the government is acting in their best interest? Would they punish the protestors for speaking out against the government they created? Would they change anything about their government to make everyone happy?



Standards

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ Civics and Governments: The Nature and Purpose of Government (SS:CV:8:1.2)
- ✓ Civics and Governments: Structure and Function of United States and New Hampshire Government (SS:CV:8:2.1)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- ✓ Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance
- ✓ Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Civic and Political Institutions (D2.Civ.2.6-8, D2.Civ.3.6-8, D2.Civ.6.6-8)

Common Core ELA:

- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration (SL. 8.1)
- ✓ Key Ideas and Details (RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.2)
- ✓ Craft and Structure (RH.6-8.4)
- ✓ Production and Distribution of Writing (WHST.6-8.4)

Lesson Vocabulary

citizen	(noun) A member by law of a nation or group
compromise	(verb) The process of coming to a solution that works for everyone
consensus	(noun) When a group of people come to agreement about an issue
democracy	(noun) A government ruled by majority vote of the people
election	(noun) When people vote for a person for office or other position
government	(noun) A group of people that have the power to make and carry out laws for a community
law	(noun) A rule that regulates the actions of members of a community
monarchy	(noun) A form of government led by a king, queen, or emperor who holds the leadership position for life
representative	(noun) A person selected by a group of people who will communicate their views and make laws for them
social contract	(noun) An agreement between people and their government to give up some rights in exchange for security and law and order