



Government: Compare and Contrast
High School Level (2012)

Written for the National Student/Parent Mock Election

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High School Lesson Plans

Government – Compare & Contrast

Overview

In this lesson students compare and contrast government in one of the following ways: local and/or state to national government; U.S. government to a foreign government; U.S. government to a government in fiction.

Big Idea

Our Government was founded upon basic principles articulated in the Charters of Freedom (the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights). The purpose of our constitutional government is to protect the rights of individuals and promote the greater good; and the powers of our government are limited, and organized by a division of powers among the legislative, executive and judicial branches, and between cities, states and the nation.

Essential Questions for Students

- What is government?
- How does the government of the United States, established by the Constitution, embody the purposes, values and principles of American democracy?
- What are the distinctive characteristics of our government?
- How do governments differ? How are they similar? What makes this so?

Outcomes

- Students will be able to draw comparisons between various levels of government, or between different national governments.
- Students will be able to make connections between the nature of governments and the policy implications for its citizens.
- Students will be able to participate effectively as part of a research team.
- Students will be able to present their findings, citing supporting evidence.

Targeted Content Standards

- [McREL Civics Standards](#):
 - What Is Government and What Should it Do? (all standards)
 - How Does the Government Established by the Constitution Embody the Purposes, Values, and Principles of American Democracy?
 - Understands how the United States Constitution grants and distributes power and responsibilities to national and state government and how it seeks to prevent the abuse of power

- Understands issues concerning the relationship between state and local governments and the national government and issues pertaining to representation at all three levels of government
 - What is the Relationship of the United States to Other nations and to World Affairs?
 - Understands how the world is organized politically into nation-states, how nation-states interact with one another, and issues surrounding U.S. foreign policy
- [Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts](#):
 - English Language Arts: Reading, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (RI9-10.9, RI11-12.7 and 8))
 - English Language Arts: Speaking & Listening, Comprehension and Collaboration, and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas (SL9-19.1, SL9-10.4, SL11-12.1, SL11-12.4)

Community Connections

- Research current issues in local government.
- Invite members of City Council or the School Board to join in student collaborative activities.

Preparation

- Prepare student copies of Handout.
- Preview recommended Web Resources.
- Select a work of fiction for Anticipatory Set.
- Provide students with Web access for collaborative research.

Concept Vocabulary

There is a wealth of civics vocabulary that may be addressed over the course of the lesson. Please refer to these glossaries for complete definitions of civics terms:

- [Center for Civic Education](#)
- [U.S. Senate Glossary](#)
- [Kids in the House U.S. House of Representatives Glossary](#)

Anticipatory Set (20 min)

Read-Aloud — Read an excerpt from a work of fiction that depicts a government in action (or lack thereof), such as an excerpt from W. Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*. Ask students to compare the government (or lack of government) in the work of fiction with our government. Facilitate student opinion and discussion about the nature and necessity of government. Encourage students to draw comparisons between levels of government, our government and foreign governments. How do government principles and values impact the welfare of its citizens?

Guided Instruction (one class period)

Instructions & Exemplars — Build upon student knowledge from the Anticipatory Set. Provide each student with a copy of the Handout for detailed instructions. Share with students their assignment options as well as the research and presentation elements required. Have students choose which forms of

government they will research, compare and contrast:

1. National government to state and local governments
2. U.S. government with a foreign government
3. U.S. government with that in a work of fiction

Give students examples for the political issues they will research. For example, students could compare and contrast:

- Your state's policy with the national government policy (or proposed policies) regarding healthcare coverage for the uninsured. What is role of each level of government? Do governments agree on those roles? Do they agree on principles?
- U.S. government's guaranteed rights of individuals (as defined in Bill of Rights) to that of another government.
 - Define the treatment of the right to free speech for each government. How does each government define this right? Is there a gap between ideology and reality of these rights for citizens?
- How U.S. government handles the national debt, voter reform policies, etc., vs. how it might be handled in your chosen work of fiction (e.g., the world of Hunger Games) handle the national debt, or voter reform policy for felons?

Collaborative Learning (three to four class periods)

Have students work in small groups. Provide students with Web access for group research. Once students have completed their research, provide them with time to evaluate, prepare presentations, and share with class.

Independent Learning (time varies)

Additional time to research information for group projects

Student Assessment

Review student presentations. Does student work reflect understanding and application of key concepts?

Extension Activities & Service Learning Opportunities

- Visit a local government office to gather additional information on subject of research.
- Create a Constitution for a government in a work of fiction.
- Compare and contrast additional political issues.

Suggestions for Differentiated Instruction

- Assign students only one part of collaborative activity.
- Detail current political issues to get students started.
- Create graphic organizers for each part of the collaborative activity.

Family Connection

Send an informative letter or email to students' families outlining student learning.

Lesson Evaluation

Did students master the stated outcomes? What evidence of learning can you cite? How might you alter lesson for next time to increase effectiveness?

Handouts

- [Our Government](#)