



HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **9th Grade** | Unit 2

HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY 902

Our National Government

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Author:

Joseph A. Izzo, M.A.Ed.

Editor:

Richard W. Wheeler, M.A.Ed.

Consulting Editor:

Howard Stitt, Th.M., Ph.D.

Revision Editor:

Alan Christopherson, M.S.

Westover Studios Design Team:

Phillip Pettet, Creative Lead

Teresa Davis, DTP Lead

Nick Castro

Andi Graham

Jerry Wingo



804 N. 2nd Ave. E.

Rock Rapids, IA 51246-1759

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Our National Government

Introduction

“Proclaim liberty throughout *all* the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.” These words from Leviticus 25:10, which are inscribed on the side of the Liberty Bell, describe the greatness of the United States. American citizens are blessed with liberties that allow them to enjoy certain God-given rights. These liberties are provided for and protected by the strength of America’s national **government**. In this LIFEPAAC® you will study the purpose, beliefs, structure, and duties of that national government and learn that it is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAAC. When you have finished this LIFEPAAC, you should be able to:

1. Explain the purpose of our national government.
2. Explain the need for creating a government as described in the Constitution.
3. Outline the development of our national government.
4. Discuss the ideals of our national government.
5. Describe the function and structure of the legislative branch of government.
6. Outline the process used to make a bill into law.
7. Describe the function and structure of the executive branch of government.
8. Describe the structure and duties of the judicial branch of government.
9. Explain the role of citizens in the formation and authority of our national government.
10. Outline the basic structure of the Constitution.

Survey the LIFE PAC. Ask yourself some questions about this study and write your questions here.

A large rectangular area with horizontal lines for writing questions. The lines are evenly spaced and cover the entire width of the box. The background of the box is a light gray color, and the lines are a teal color.

1. THE IDEALS OF OUR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

The *Constitution* of the United States is considered by some to be the most successful **republican** plan of government currently in use. The reasons for this success are the *ideals* or beliefs that the U.S. Constitution contains. It provides the methods and organization of government to put these ideals into action. In this section you will study some of these ideals, which include government by the consent of the governed, government by representation, government in which powers are limited and separated, a system of checks and balances, and a Federal system of government.



| Liberty Bell

SECTION OBJECTIVES

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Explain the purpose of our national government.
4. Discuss the ideals of our national government.
9. Explain the role of the citizen in the formation and authority of our national government.

VOCABULARY

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

amendment (u mend' munt). A change made or offered in a law, bill, or motion by addition, omission, or alteration of language.

concurrent powers (kun kër' unt pou' urz). Powers that a state government shares with the Federal government.

Constitution (kon stu tü' shun). The plan of government for the United States; the supreme law of the land.

executive branch (eg zek' yu tiv branch). The branch of government that has the duty and power of putting laws into effect.

Federal (fed' ur ul). Having to do with the central government of the United States.

government (guv' urn munt). The ruling of a country, state, district, or other area.

judicial branch (jü dish' ul branch). The branch of government that administers justice; the system of courts of justice.

legislative branch (lej' u slā tive branch). The branch of government that has the power to make laws.

posterity (po ster' u tē). Generations of the future; a person's descendants.

republican (ri pub' lu kun). A representative government.

reserved powers (ri zèrvd' pou' urz). The powers not granted by the Constitution to the Federal government, but reserved for the states or people.

veto (vē' tō). The right or power of the president or governor to reject bills passed by a law-making body.

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAC appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are not sure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

Pronunciation Key: hat, āge, cāre, fār; let, ēqual, tērm; it, Īce; hot, ōpen, ōrder; oil; out; cup, pūt, rüle; child; long; thin; /FH/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /u/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.

PURPOSE OF OUR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Our lives are affected everyday by the decisions and actions made by our national **government**. When we read a newspaper or listen to a news report, we learn of many actions by our government that will affect our lives. Where does the authority for our government originate, and why do we need a government to rule us? What right does the government have to make us pay taxes or to put us in jail if we disobey its laws? The purpose of our government is explained in the pages of the Declaration of Independence and in the Preamble of the **Constitution** of the United States.

Declaration of Independence. The idea for government goes back to the beginning of civilization. Once men found themselves in large enough groups that decisions had to be made, governments were started. The government of the United States derived its beginning and purpose from the famous document, the Declaration of Independence. Concerning the reason for governments and the source of their authority, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that

among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...." Our government receives its authority to govern from the governed.

Jefferson stated first that all men have natural, God-given rights. The late President Kennedy in his 1960 inaugural address stated that "...the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God." This belief, therefore, was not limited to the eighteenth century. Since these rights are not granted by man, man must see that they are protected. He accomplishes this task by forming governments that are strong enough to insure that his rights will be preserved.

Jefferson also told us that a government receives its power and authority from the consent of the governed. The role of the citizen is to provide the authority that will enable the government to protect his individual rights. The government of the United States, therefore, is a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people" since our Constitution delegates

to the people of the United States authority for our national government.

Preamble to the Constitution. The Preamble to the Constitution explains further why our national government was established. It states, “We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our **posterity**, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.” The Preamble states six reasons for forming our present government to:

1. Form a more perfect Union, a union of states that are joined together to form a better government.
2. Establish justice or equality under the law.
3. Insure domestic tranquility, meaning peace within our country.
4. Provide for the common defense, protecting its citizens from fear of foreign aggression.
5. Promote the general welfare or well-being of its citizens.
6. Secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our future generations.

For these reasons, the United States is a great country, a country where we can all profit from our political, economical, and spiritual liberties.



Complete these activities.

- 1.1 According to the Declaration of Independence, who is responsible for giving our government its authority? _____
- 1.2 According to the Declaration of Independence, the purpose of a government is to protect _____.
_____.
- 1.3 The Preamble to the Constitution gives us six reasons for _____.
_____.
- 1.4 List the six reasons the Preamble gives for our government:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
 - f. _____

CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY

“We the People of the United States” are the words that introduce our Constitution. These words represent the backbone of our government and declare to the world that the United States is a democratic nation. In other words, in the United States all the parts of our government are given their power by the citizens. A representative government receives its authority from the people. This **Federal** government is a form of democracy; the people control their own affairs.

Representative government. Different forms of democracy are found throughout the world. One form is called a *pure* or *direct democracy*. In this form of democracy, all the people meet together in one place to make the laws and to decide on the actions their government will take. Direct democracy is the purest and most direct form of democracy. This form of democracy was found in ancient Greece. In some parts of the United States, today, it may be found in small towns and villages; but, for most areas of our country, direct democracy would be impractical.

Since direct democracy grew impractical, another form of democracy was developed.

This form of democracy is called *representative democracy*. As nations grew larger and populations increased, the pure form of democracy became impossible; therefore, people selected others to go and speak for them. These representatives would attend government meetings and represent the opinions of those who selected them. This representative democracy is the form of government in the United States today.

As citizens of the United States, we elect those who we believe will best represent our views in the government. We elect representatives to make our laws, to enforce the laws, and to interpret the laws. However, our representatives are limited and our individual rights are protected through the Constitution. The Constitution guarantees that the rights or freedoms of religion, press, and speech cannot be taken from any citizen by the actions of the representatives in our government. Therefore, in the United States we have a constitutional democracy, and those who run our government are limited by what the Constitution says.



Complete these statements.

- 1.5 A *direct democracy* is _____

_____.
- 1.6 A *representative democracy* is _____

_____.
- 1.7 A *constitutional democracy* is _____

_____.
- 1.8 The words “We the People of the United States” represent the backbone of our government because _____
_____.



Project. Compare the democratic forms of government in the United States and Great Britain.

TEACHER CHECK

_____ initials

_____ date

Federal system. The Constitution provides for the existence of two separate governments in the United States. The first is the national, or Federal government, which governs the entire country; and the second is the state governments, which govern each individual state. Article IV of the Constitution recognizes the existence of these state governments by stating that the Federal government will guarantee every state in the Union a republican form of government. The Tenth **Amendment** assigns the state governments their powers by stating, “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.” This amendment means the states have the right to pass laws that promote the welfare of their citizens. Laws regulating intrastate commerce, providing education, establishing local governments, and conducting elections are granted to the individual states by the Federal government. These rights reserved for the states are called **reserved powers**, but states also have **concurrent powers** that they share with the Federal government. These

powers include collecting taxes, establishing courts, borrowing money, enforcing laws, and providing for the health and welfare of the people.

What is the relationship then between our Federal government in Washington, D.C., and the governments that are found in each state? In establishing our Federal system of government, the Founding Fathers set up the Federal government to be stronger than the state governments. The Constitution and the laws of the Federal government are the supreme law of the land. If a state law or action disagrees with the Constitution or with a Federal law, the state must give way to the Federal authority. Our Founding Fathers knew from experience that the Federal government must have enough power to compel the states to support it and to obey its laws. Under our first plan of government in the United States, called the Articles of Confederation, the states had more power than the Federal government; and, as you will learn later in this LIFE PAC, this plan caused much trouble for our country.



Complete these statements.

- 1.9** The two governments that the Constitution provides for are the a. _____ government and the b. _____ governments.
- 1.10** Article a. _____ of the constitution recognizes the existence of state governments by guaranteeing every state a b. _____ form of government.
- 1.11** *Republican* means _____
- _____ .
- 1.12** In a federal system of government the _____ government is stronger than all other governments.

LIMITED GOVERNMENT

To insure that the Federal government did not become totalitarian or autocratic, a system of checks and balances was developed. Our government is divided into three separate branches: the **executive**, the **judicial**, and the **legislative**. Each branch has separate, individual powers that are checked by the powers of the other two branches.

Separation of powers. With the Federal government stronger than the state governments, our Founding Fathers set limits on it to prevent it from becoming too powerful. The Constitution provides for three separate branches or divisions in the Federal government. This three-way division of power among the branches is known as the *separation of powers*. The powers were divided to prevent any leader or small group of men from trying to take over all the power of the government. These three branches are the legislative branch, which makes the laws; the executive branch, which enforces the laws; and the judicial branch, which interprets the laws.

Checks and balances. To be doubly sure that no one branch of government becomes too powerful, a system of *checks and balances* was

provided for by the Constitution. This means each branch of government has powers that check or limit the powers of the other two branches of government. In this way the powers of our government are balanced or equally divided three ways.

How does this system work? The legislature, which has the power to make the laws, is checked by both the executive and judicial branches of the government. The executive branch can check the legislature by use of the presidential **veto**, which will stop a bill the legislature has passed. If the president and the legislature both pass a bill and it becomes law, the judicial branch has the power to review that law and determine if the law is in agreement with the Constitution. The legislature has the power to check the president by overriding his veto with a two-thirds vote in each house. The legislature can also check the judicial branch by proposing amendments to make its law constitutional. Although each branch uses its powers carefully, the checks over their powers are a good safeguard of our freedoms. The illustration shows the extent of the checks-and-balances system.

UNITED STATES CHECK AND BALANCE SYSTEM



| United States Check and Balance System



Complete these activities.

1.13 The powers of our government were divided to prevent _____
_____.

1.14 Briefly describe the system of checks and balances. _____

_____.

1.15 The three branches that make up our government are
a. _____, b. _____, and c. _____.

1.16 Explain why the system of checks and balances is important to the government. _____

_____.



Review the material in this section in preparation for the Self Test. The Self Test will check your mastery of this particular section. The items missed on this Self Test will indicate specific areas where restudy is needed for mastery.

SELF TEST 1

Match these items (each answer, 2 points).

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1.01 | _____ direct democracy | a. guarantees individual liberties |
| 1.02 | _____ representative democracy | b. supreme law of the land |
| 1.03 | _____ constitutional democracy | c. citizens' direct government |
| 1.04 | _____ checks and balances | d. writers of the Constitution |
| 1.05 | _____ Federal system | e. states reserved powers |
| 1.06 | _____ Tenth Amendment | f. select others to speak for them |
| 1.07 | _____ Constitution | g. republican government in states |
| 1.08 | _____ Article IV | h. powers shared by the states and
Federal government |
| 1.09 | _____ Founding Fathers | i. limits government power |
| 1.010 | _____ concurrent powers | j. strong Federal government |
| 1.011 | _____ Articles of Confederation | k. first plan of government in United States |
| 1.012 | _____ Declaration of Independence | l. Thomas Jefferson |

Complete the following activities (each answer, 4 point).

1.013 List six reasons stated in the Preamble for government.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

1.014 The purpose of government is _____

1.015 According to the Declaration of Independence, _____ are responsible for giving government its authority.

1.016 A government that is controlled by the people is called a _____ .

1.017 List four ideals of the U.S. government.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

1.018 List the functions for each of the three branches of the Federal government.

- a. executive branch _____
- b. legislative branch _____
- c. judicial branch _____

1.019 Tell how each branch of the government can check the power of the other.

- a. executive branch _____
- b. legislative branch _____
- c. judicial branch _____

	SCORE _____	TEACHER _____	initials	date
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HIS0902 - May '14 Printing

ISBN 978-0-86717-582-0



 **Alpha Omega**
PUBLICATIONS

804 N. 2nd Ave. E.
Rock Rapids, IA 51246-1759

800-622-3070
www.aop.com