

Lesson 1: The Structure of Government

Focus Questions:

What is the basic structure of the United States Government?

What is the U.S. Constitution and why it is important?

What are the powers of the federal, state and local governments?

Activity # 1 Who Makes the Rules?

Materials needed: For each student, a copy of *Who Makes the Rules?* (Handout #1.1) and, for the teacher, a document camera or a transparency or chart of Handout #1.1.

Procedure:

Explain to students that the rules and laws we follow are a part of our lives at home, in our classroom, and at school. Have students work in groups to complete the top section (above the shaded line) of *Who Makes the Rules?* (Handout #1.1)

Sample responses include:

	Who makes the rules? the laws?	Who enforces the rules? the laws?	Who determines if the rules/laws are fair?
Home	Answers will vary	Answers will vary	Answers will vary
Classroom	Teachers (and students)	Teachers	Teachers (and students)
School	Teachers, students (sometimes), principal, school board, state government, and the Federal government.	Teachers, (student council) principal, school board	State court and federal court

Discuss the student's responses and record their information on a large "class copy" of the *Who Makes the Rules?* (Handout # 1.1)

Activity # 2 Branches (Structure) of Government

Step 1: Define a *government* as a group of people who make and enforce the laws of a town, a city, a county, a state or a country.

Step 2: Explain to students that our government has a structure for deciding who makes the laws, who enforces the laws and who determines if the laws are fair and punishes wrongdoers.

The branches of government are called:

- **Legislative Branch:** makes the laws
- **Executive Branch:** enforces the laws
- **Judicial Branch:** determines if the laws are fair and punishes the wrong-doers

Our municipalities (cities), the county, the state (California), and our national or federal (the United States of America) each have different branches of government where people make the laws, enforce the laws, and determine if the laws are fair.

Step 3: On the matrix, *Who Makes the Rules?* (Handout # 1.1) begun during Activity # 1, help students complete in the following:

Branches of Government	Legislative Branch	Executive Branch	Judicial Branch
Local Level (City or Town)	City Council	Mayor and/or City Manager	Superior Court (merged with county court)
County Level (Riverside)	Board of Supervisors	Board of Supervisors	Superior Court
State Level (California)	State Legislature: <u>State Senate</u> (40 senators/ 4 year terms) <u>State Assembly</u> (80 representatives/ 2 year terms)	Governor	California Supreme Court – Appointed by the governor
National, or Federal, Level (United States of America)	Legislature: Congress <u>Senate</u> (50 senators – 2 per state/ 6 year terms) <u>House of Representatives</u> (435 members – 53 from California/2 year terms)	President – elected every 4 years for a maximum of 2 terms	Supreme Court- appointed by the President for life.

Step 4: Explain that the three branches of the government are all equal, with no one branch being more important than the other. To make laws, all three branches have to agree. (In later grades, students will learn about our government’s system of checks and balances).

Note: Identify the cities, unincorporated areas, towns and the Indian tribal reservations within your local region. For example, the cities in the Coachella Valley include Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs, Indian Wells, Indio, La Quinta, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, and Rancho Mirage. Unincorporated areas and towns include Bermuda Dunes and Thousand Palms in the west end of the valley; Indio Hills, Sky Valley, North Palm Springs and Garnet along the northern rim; and, Thermal, Valerie Jean, Vista Santa Rosa, Oasis and Mecca to the southeast. The Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians, Agua Caliente Band of Mission Indians and the Torres-Martinez tribe each have reservations in the Coachella Valley area. These tribes have the right to form sovereign governments on their land. In many ways they are considered their own nation.

Activity # 3 The Constitution of the United States of America

Materials needed: For each student, a copy of their textbook, 3 sheets of 8 ½ X 11 paper.
Note: Although reference is made to Harcourt’s *Reflections: California A Changing State*, the same activities and strategies may be completed using any of the state-adopted social studies textbooks.

Step 1: Explain to students that the United States Constitution was written in 1787. It is a written document that defines the structure and purpose of the U.S. government and describes the shared powers of federal, state, and local governments. The constitution describes the branches of government and tells what each branch does.

Step 2: Textbook Connection: Read correlated sections in the social studies textbook related to the branches of government. For example, Harcourt *Reflections*: Read Chapter 12, Lesson 1, pages 462 (The Constitution) and 464- 465 (The Federal Government).

Step 3: Layered Look Book or Circle Book

To demonstrate their understanding of the Branches of government, have students construct a Layered Look Book

1. Stack two sheets of paper so that the back sheet is one inch higher than the front sheet.
2. Fold up the bottom edges of the paper to form four tabs. Align the edges so that all layers or tabs are the same distance apart.
3. When all tabs are the same size, crease the paper to hold the tabs in place and staple or glue the sheets together. (Glue the sheets together along the inner center fold or staple them along the top of the fold.)
4. Label the cover “Branches of Government” and each tab of the tabs the Legislative, Executive and Judicial Branch.
5. On each tab, students identify the function of one branch of government and other facts they have learned about that branch.

As an alternative, students may construct a Circle Book. Use a large circle template to cut three circles. Fold each circle in half. Glue half of the first circle back-to-back to half of the second circle. Glue half of the third circle back-to-back to the second circle and then to the first circle. On each circle, students identify the function of one branch of government and other facts they have learned about that branch.

Activity # 4 Levels of Government

Materials Needed: For each group of students AND for each individual student, a copy of *Sort Cards-Three Levels of Government* (Handout # 1.2), a large sheet of construction paper, glue and scissors; State-adopted social studies textbook

Step 1: Remind students that in addition to having three branches of government, the United States also has three levels of government – the federal, the state and the local level. The power to govern is shared among all three levels. (Note: The county level is not included in this activity)

Textbook Connection: Harcourt *Reflections*: Read Chapter 12, Lesson 1, pages 466-467 (Different Levels of Government) and 468- 469 (Sharing Responsibilities).

Step 2: Provide each group of 3 to 5 students with a copy of *Sort Cards-Three Levels of Government* (Handout # 1.2), a sheet of construction paper, and scissors. Explain that the cards include vocabulary and phrases related to different levels of government (**Handout #1.2**).

Fold the construction paper into thirds. Label each section with one of the levels of government: local government, state government, federal government. Students cut apart the note cards and sort them into appropriate categories.

Note for the Teacher: Some of the categories overlap and may vary according to your local community. For example, “Helps pay for public education” is listed as a state level function but may be categorized as “Federal” since federal funds also support education. “Provides roads, parks, hospitals, water” is listed as the local level but may be listed as federal if you have an interstate highway, a Veteran’s Hospital, or national park in your community. Note: Refer to the next page for a *sample* answer key.

Sample answer key for Sort Cards – Three Levels of Government

Federal Level	State Level	Local Level
Prints and coins money Runs the armed forces and provides national defense	Makes laws for the state	Makes laws for counties, cities and towns
Deals with other nations	Helps fund public education	Provides law enforcement, fire protection
Meets in Washington D.C.	Meets in the state capitol	Provides roads, parks, hospitals, water
Runs the Postal Service	Issues drivers licenses	Meets at City Hall
President	Governor	Mayor

Step 3: Once each group has completed their sort, conduct a *gallery walk* where the students walk around the room from group to group to observe how the other groups sorted their cards. Show the students the route they will take. On a signal have the students move to the next group. Give them about a minute to view each group’s card sort and then signal them to move to the next group.

Upon return to their seats, students may resort their cards as needed. Discuss the similarities and differences of the various classification systems. Discuss the responsibilities of each level.

Step 4: As an individual follow-up, provide each student his/her own copy of *Sort Cards-Three Levels of Government* (Handout # 1.2) and have them independently sort the cards into the different levels of government, glue the cards into place on a sheet of construction paper, and label each level.

Activity # 5 A Plan for Government

As you read the following sentences, have students show you a thumbs-up if the answer is the first response and a thumbs-down if the answer is the second response. To provide “think time,” students should wait to show their selection until the teachers asks them to “Show” their answer.

1. The first ten amendments to the United States Constitution are known as the **Bill of Rights** / Preamble.
2. Congress is the **legislative** / judicial branch of the federal government.
3. The federal government is located in Sacramento/ **Washington D.C.**
4. The United States Congress makes laws for the entire **nation** / state of California.
5. The cabinet is a group of the President’s most important **advisors** / senators.
6. Supreme Court Justices are appointed for 10 years/ **life**.
7. Trade between states is managed by the **federal** / state government.
8. Both the federal and state governments are divided into two/ **three** branches.
9. The United States House of Representatives has 100/ **435** members.
10. The state with the most representatives in the United States House of Representatives is **California** / New York.

Source: Harcourt *Reflections* Homework and Practice Book, page 127.

Activity # 6 Summary Writing: Structures, Functions and Powers of Government

Materials needed: For each student, a copy of *Summary Writing: Structures, Functions and Powers of Government* (Handout # 1.3); Harcourt’s *Reflections: California A Changing State*, page 468, or any of the state-adopted social studies textbooks.

Prompt: Write a summary to compare and contrast the structures, functions and powers of local, state and federal government. Include at least ten academic content vocabulary words from the list below.

Rubric

Indicator: Academic Content Language
 Indicator: Supports the Topic with Accurate Details
 Indicator: Uses Multiple Perspectives

Recommended Correlation: Summary Writing Rubric

List of Academic Content Vocabulary:

amendments	duties	nation
Assembly	Executive Branch	petition
bill	Federal Government	power
Board of supervisors	government	President
Branches of government	Governor	recall
budget	House of Representatives	referendum
Cabinet	initiative	responsibilities
California	Judicial Branch	Senate
City Manager	jury trial	sovereign
Congress	Legislative Branch	Special district
constitution	legislature	Supreme Court
County	laws	Tax
County seat	levels of government	United States
Democracy	municipal	veto

Assessment

Standard	Lesson	Title	Teacher Directions	Handout for students with the prompt and rubric
4.5	1	Compare and Contrast the Structures, Functions and Powers of Local, State and Federal Government	pages 4- 5	page 10, Handout # 1.3

Additional assessment of this lesson is integrated with the instruction and occurs throughout the lesson rather than just at the end. The focus questions provide a framework for the evaluation of the lesson.

- Work in a group to complete the “Who Makes the Rules” matrix (Handout #1.1)
- Construct a layered look book or a circle book and one each layer or circle, identify the function of one branch of government and other facts learned about that branch.
- Sort phrases related to government into local, state, and national categories (Handout #1.2)

Who Makes the Rules?

	Who Makes the Rules? Laws	Who Enforces the Rules? Laws	Who determines if the rules/laws are fair?
Family			
Classroom			
School			
Branches of Government	Legislative Branch	Executive Branch	Judicial Branch
Local Level (city) of government			
County Level of government			
State Level of government			
National, or Federal Level of Government			

Sort Cards - Three Levels of Government

Runs the postal service	Helps pay for public education
Provides roads, parks, water, hospitals	Runs the armed forces and provides national defense
Issues drivers licenses	Provides law enforcement, fire protection
Governor	Mayor

Meets in the state capitol	Meets in Washington D.C.
Makes laws for the state	Makes laws for counties, cities and towns
Prints and coins money	Deals with other nations
Meets at City Hall	President

Summary Writing: Structures, Functions and Powers of Government

Prompt: Write a summary to compare and contrast the structures, functions and powers of local, state and federal government. Include at least ten academic content vocabulary words from the list below.

List of Academic Content Vocabulary:

amendments	duties	nation
Assembly	Executive Branch	petition
bill	Federal Government	power
Board of supervisors	government	President
Branches of government	Governor	recall
budget	House of Representatives	referendum
Cabinet	initiative	responsibilities
California	Judicial Branch	Senate
City Manager	jury trial	sovereign
Congress	Legislative Branch	Special district
constitution	legislature	Supreme Court
County	laws	tax
County seat	levels of government	United States
Democracy	municipal	veto

INDICATORS	ADVANCED	PROFICIENT	BASIC	BELOW BASIC
USES ACADEMIC LANGUAGE ACCORDING TO POLITICAL CONTENT	Student shows a deep understanding of political language that is woven in an interesting way whether written or oral.	Student shows an effective use of political language that is woven in an interesting way whether written or oral.	Student shows a limited use of political language whether written or oral.	Student shows little or no use of political language whether written or oral.
SUPPORTS THE TOPIC WITH ACCURATE EXAMPLES	Student supports the topic with insightful examples.	Student supports the topic with several accurate examples.	Student supports the topic with limited examples.	Student has few or no examples.
USES MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES	Student uses many politically accurate examples to compare/ contrast multiple perspectives.	Student uses several politically accurate examples to compare/ contrast multiple perspectives.	Student uses limited politically accurate examples to compare/ contrast multiple perspectives.	Students uses few or no politically accurate examples to compare/ contrast multiple perspectives.