Who Held Power?

Compare colonial governments and ways colonists governed themselves

SS24.6.4b "Differentiate among the various forms of colonial governments and identify examples of self-government in the colonies, including the Mayflower Compact, New England town meetings, and the Virginia House of Burgesses."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each form of colonial government and the words that tell who chose its governor. Circle the three named examples of self-government so you can compare what colonists did in each one.

Who Made the Decisions?

1. Imagine arriving in a colony and asking, "Who chooses the governor?" The answer depended on its form of government. In royal Virginia after 1624, the king appointed the governor. In proprietary Pennsylvania, a proprietor, a person granted the colony by the king, chose the governor. In charter Connecticut, eligible colonists elected a governor under a charter granted by the king. Each colony remained tied to England, but colonists had different amounts of control over their leaders. A governor was not the only person who could help make decisions.

2. In 1619, while Virginia was still run by a company, colonists elected representatives to the House of Burgesses. The representatives met to discuss and make laws, though the governor and other officials also had power. In 1620, men aboard the Mayflower signed the Mayflower Compact before settling at Plymouth. They agreed to form a government and follow laws made for the common good. Neither example meant everyone could vote. Still, each gave some colonists a voice in rules that shaped their daily lives.

3. In many New England towns, town meetings let eligible residents vote on local matters, such as paying for a road or choosing town officers. A town meeting handled nearby needs, while the House of Burgesses made laws for Virginia's colony-wide government. The Mayflower Compact was a written agreement to create a government, not an elected lawmaking group or a town meeting. These examples show self-government within colonies that remained under English rule. Voting and officeholding were limited, and women, enslaved people, and many other residents had no vote.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did choosing a governor differ in royal Virginia and charter Connecticut?

2. Which form of government let a proprietor choose the governor? How was that different from royal Virginia?

3. How was the Mayflower Compact different from the House of Burgesses as an example of self-government?

4. What kinds of decisions did New England town meetings make, compared with the House of Burgesses?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine an English colony where the king appoints the governor, but eligible residents vote at town meetings about roads. In three sentences, name its form of government, identify its example of self-government, and explain how both can exist at once.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 6 · SS24.6.4b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each form of colonial government and the words that tell who chose its governor. Circle the three named examples of self-government so you can compare what colonists did in each one. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did choosing a governor differ in royal Virginia and charter Connecticut?	**The king appointed Virginia's governor, while eligible colonists elected Connecticut's governor.**
2	Which form of government let a proprietor choose the governor? How was that different from royal Virginia?	**In a proprietary government, the proprietor chose the governor. In royal Virginia, the king chose the governor.**
3	How was the Mayflower Compact different from the House of Burgesses as an example of self-government?	**The Compact was a written agreement to form a government and follow its laws. The House of Burgesses was a group of elected representatives that helped make laws.**
4	What kinds of decisions did New England town meetings make, compared with the House of Burgesses?	**Town meetings voted on local matters, such as roads and town officers. The House of Burgesses helped make laws for Virginia's colony-wide government.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

This colony has a royal government because the king appoints its governor. Voting at town meetings about roads is an example of self-government. The king can choose the colony's governor while some residents make decisions about local needs.

For the marking job, accept underlines that pair royal, proprietary, and charter government with the person or group choosing each governor. Students should circle the House of Burgesses, the Mayflower Compact, and town meetings.