Who Gets the Vote?

Compare two ways people make government decisions.

5.SS.4.12 "State the difference between direct democracy and the constitutional republic of today's United States."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one sentence showing who decides in a direct democracy, circle one showing who decides in today's United States, and write 1 beside a sentence explaining the Constitution's role.

A Trail, a Vote, and a Law

1. Imagine a plan to build a new trail in a national park. Should the federal government pay for it? In a direct democracy, eligible voters would decide that question themselves. They could study the plan and cast votes on it. The result would depend on those votes. Voters would not choose lawmakers to make that decision for them.

2. Today's United States is a constitutional republic, not a direct democracy at the national level. Voters elect people to represent them in Congress. Congress decides whether to approve federal spending, such as money for a park trail. People can share opinions with their representatives, but they do not all vote on each spending decision. Elected representatives debate and vote instead.

3. The Constitution sets rules for the United States government and protects rights. Elected officials must follow those rules when making laws. A direct democracy can also have a constitution, so having one is not the main difference. The key question is who decides a proposal: voters themselves or elected representatives. Some state and local ballots let voters decide issues directly, but Congress votes on national laws.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Who would vote on trail spending in a direct democracy? Who would vote on it in today's United States?

2. Is having a constitution the main difference between the two systems? Explain using the passage.

3. If a town ballot lets voters decide an issue directly, does that mean voters decide national laws that way in the United States? Explain.

4. How can people influence the trail plan in today's United States? How would their role differ in a direct democracy?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a proposed national law to reduce plastic waste in national parks. Write 3 or 4 sentences comparing how people would decide on it in a direct democracy and in today's United States. Include one way citizens can take part today and the Constitution's role.

ANSWER KEY

Who Gets the Vote?

GRADE 5 · 5.SS.4.12

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one sentence showing who decides in a direct democracy, circle one showing who decides in today's United States, and write 1 beside a sentence explaining the Constitution's role. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Who would vote on trail spending in a direct democracy? Who would vote on it in today's United States?	**Eligible voters would vote on it themselves in a direct democracy. Elected members of Congress would vote on federal spending in today's United States.**
2	Is having a constitution the main difference between the two systems? Explain using the passage.	**No. A direct democracy can also have a constitution. The main difference is whether voters or elected representatives decide proposals.**
3	If a town ballot lets voters decide an issue directly, does that mean voters decide national laws that way in the United States? Explain.	**No. Some state and local ballots allow direct votes, but elected members of Congress vote on national laws.**
4	How can people influence the trail plan in today's United States? How would their role differ in a direct democracy?	**Today, people can elect representatives and share their opinions with them. In a direct democracy, eligible voters would vote on the plan themselves.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In a direct democracy, eligible voters would vote on the proposed park law themselves. In today's United States, elected members of Congress would debate and vote on it. Citizens could contact their representatives to share their views. Congress must follow the Constitution when making laws.

Accept answers that distinguish a direct vote by eligible voters from a vote by elected representatives. Students should not claim that a direct democracy cannot have a constitution.