Who Holds Power?

Read a local decision through two ideas about government.

9-12.GOV.10 "Define the concepts of democracy and republic and examine the relationship between the two."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways residents influence decisions, circle one limit on officials, and number two sentences that explain how democracy and a republic can overlap.

A Decision at City Hall

1 At a crowded meeting in Harborview, residents debate whether the public library should open on Sundays. Some want longer hours; others worry about costs. Residents can speak, sign petitions, and vote in the next city council election. The council, not the audience, will decide the budget. These actions illustrate democracy: political authority comes from the people, who can exercise it directly or through elected officials they can hold accountable. A majority vote alone is not the whole story. Open participation and meaningful choices help people influence public decisions, even when they disagree about the result.

2 Harborview is part of the United States, a republic. In a republic, public offices are not inherited from a monarch, and governing power is exercised by representatives chosen by the people under a framework of laws. The Constitution establishes elected national offices and limits what officials may do, even when a policy is popular. For example, city leaders cannot silence a resident simply for criticizing the library plan. Elections give officials authority to act, while legal limits and protected rights constrain that authority. A city council is one representative body within this larger constitutional system.

3 Democracy and republic describe different features of government, so the terms can overlap. Democracy asks where political power comes from and how people influence decisions. Republic describes a system without a hereditary ruler in which public affairs are handled through representatives and law. The United States is both: voters choose officials, and those officials operate within constitutional limits. A republic's name does not guarantee democracy if elections offer no real choice. Likewise, a direct public vote on library hours would be democratic participation inside a republic, not a replacement for its elected council.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How can Harborview residents exercise political power even though the council decides the library budget? Give one way they act directly and one way they act through representatives.

2. A resident says, "If the council makes the decision, Harborview is not democratic." Use the passage to explain why this claim is incorrect.

3. Why does an election not give city leaders unlimited power in the republic described in the passage?

4. Could a direct public vote on library hours take place within a republic? Explain how the passage supports your answer.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a fictional country and describe how it chooses a national leader and makes one public decision. In four or five sentences, explain how your system is both democratic and republican, including one limit on elected leaders.

ANSWER KEY

Who Holds Power?

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.GOV.10

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways residents influence decisions, circle one limit on officials, and number two sentences that explain how democracy and a republic can overlap. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How can Harborview residents exercise political power even though the council decides the library budget? Give one way they act directly and one way they act through representatives.	**Residents can speak at the public meeting or sign petitions directly. They can also vote for council members who decide the budget.**
2	A resident says, "If the council makes the decision, Harborview is not democratic." Use the passage to explain why this claim is incorrect.	**Democracy allows people to exercise power through elected officials they can hold accountable. Residents can vote in council elections and influence decisions through public participation.**
3	Why does an election not give city leaders unlimited power in the republic described in the passage?	**Officials must follow legal and constitutional limits. For example, they cannot silence a resident for criticizing a public plan.**
4	Could a direct public vote on library hours take place within a republic? Explain how the passage supports your answer.	**Yes. A direct vote would let residents exercise political power while the elected council and constitutional system remain in place.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In the island nation of Solara, citizens choose a president and lawmakers in competitive elections, and no leader inherits office. Lawmakers decide how to fund public transit after residents speak at hearings. A constitution protects speech, so officials cannot punish people who criticize the transit plan. Solara is democratic because voters can choose and challenge leaders, and republican because elected officials govern under a constitution instead of a hereditary ruler.

Accept other passage-supported examples of direct participation and representative government. For the open task, look for meaningful public influence, nonhereditary elected leadership, and a stated limit on officials.