Systems in Focus

Compare how governments distribute power and shape participation.

9-12.GOV.56 "Compare the different forms of domestic and foreign political systems, electoral systems, economic systems, and civil societies including presidential vs parliamentary, unitary vs federal, and autocracy vs democracy."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each contrast between two systems. Circle the phrases that describe what civic groups can do.

An Election Night Report

1. On election night, a reporter watches two contests. In the United States, voters cast ballots in a presidential election separate from elections for Congress. The president leads the executive branch and does not need Congress to select or retain that office. In the United Kingdom, voters elect members of Parliament. The party or coalition that can command a majority in the House of Commons forms a government, led by a prime minister. If that government loses Parliament's confidence, it may have to resign.

2. The reporter also asks where power sits. In the United States, the federal Constitution divides authority between the national government and the states. States have powers the national government cannot simply take away. In the United Kingdom, Parliament remains legally supreme, even though Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland exercise devolved powers. This makes the United Kingdom unitary rather than federal. A system can be parliamentary and federal, or presidential and unitary, because choosing a government and dividing power across territory are different questions.

3. The reporter checks who can compete and speak. In a democracy, opposition parties can seek office through meaningful elections, and independent civic groups can criticize leaders. An autocracy restricts meaningful competition and may censor civic groups. Electoral rules differ too: a single-member district elects one representative, while proportional representation awards seats roughly by parties' vote shares. Market-based economies rely mainly on private choices; state-directed economies rely more on government plans. Political rules, economic choices, and civic freedoms do not always match in the same way.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does a president's path to office differ from a prime minister's path in the passage?

2. How is power divided differently in the federal United States and the unitary United Kingdom?

3. Compare what opposition parties and civic groups can do in a democracy and an autocracy.

4. Compare how seats are awarded under the two electoral rules, then compare who makes most decisions in the two economic systems.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a three-sentence election scenario in a country that elects its president separately but uses proportional representation for its legislature. Include party vote shares, who wins the presidency, and one challenge the results could create for passing laws.

ANSWER KEY

Systems in Focus

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.GOV.56

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each contrast between two systems. Circle the phrases that describe what civic groups can do. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does a president's path to office differ from a prime minister's path in the passage?	**Voters cast ballots in a separate presidential election, while a prime minister leads a government formed by the party or coalition that can command a majority in the House of Commons.**
2	How is power divided differently in the federal United States and the unitary United Kingdom?	**The U.S. Constitution divides authority between national and state governments. In the United Kingdom, Parliament remains legally supreme despite devolving powers to parts of the country.**
3	Compare what opposition parties and civic groups can do in a democracy and an autocracy.	**In a democracy, opposition parties can compete in meaningful elections and independent civic groups can criticize leaders. An autocracy restricts competition and may censor civic groups.**
4	Compare how seats are awarded under the two electoral rules, then compare who makes most decisions in the two economic systems.	**A single-member district elects one representative; proportional representation awards seats roughly by party vote share. Private choices drive a market-based economy, while government plans play a larger role in a state-directed economy.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In Riverton, the Blue Party wins 60 percent of legislative votes, so it receives about 60 percent of the seats. The Red Party's candidate wins the separate presidential election. The president may need to negotiate with Blue Party legislators to pass laws.

Accept equivalent contrasts grounded in the passage. For Part 3, look for a plausible vote-share-to-seat relationship, a separate presidential result, and a challenge that follows from those results.