Rights and Rules

How governments shape people's ability to use their rights

6.C.6 "Discuss the impact of major forms of government in Europe and the Americas on civil and human rights."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each form of government in the passage. Circle one example for each country that shows how government rules affect people's rights.

Can People Change the Rules?

1 Imagine three people asking their leaders to change a law. Their chances depend partly on how their government works. Civil rights include voting and equal treatment under a country's laws. Human rights belong to everyone, including the right to fair treatment. A government may promise rights in law, but people also need a real way to use them. Looking at the United States, the United Kingdom, and Cuba shows how government rules can open or limit those ways.

2 In the United States, a representative democracy in the Americas, voters choose lawmakers, and courts can reject laws that violate the Constitution. These checks give people ways to defend freedoms, yet they have not always protected everyone equally. For many years, laws in parts of the country blocked Black Americans from voting. People organized and pushed for changes, including the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In the United Kingdom, a constitutional monarchy in Europe, the monarch is head of state, but elected lawmakers make laws. Courts can review government actions.

3 In the United Kingdom, eligible people can vote in elections and criticize leaders, even though they do not elect the monarch. Cuba, an island in the Americas, has a one-party government led by the Communist Party. Its constitution recognizes some rights, but competing parties cannot freely seek national power, and the government restricts independent news and public protests. These limits make it harder for people to challenge leaders or demand change. Government form is not the whole story: laws, courts, and the actions of ordinary people also shape how rights work in daily life.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How can the U.S. system help people defend their rights? What example shows that its protections have not always been equal?

2. How can people in the United Kingdom influence laws and defend rights even though they do not elect the monarch?

3. How does Cuba's one-party system affect people's ability to demand change?

4. Why is a government's form not the whole story when it comes to rights? Use an example from the United States.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine an island country changing from one-party rule to a representative democracy. In 4 to 5 sentences, explain two specific changes to its rules that could strengthen civil or human rights and one reason the changes might not protect everyone right away.

ANSWER KEY

Rights and Rules

GRADE 6 · 6.C.6

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each form of government in the passage. Circle one example for each country that shows how government rules affect people's rights. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How can the U.S. system help people defend their rights? What example shows that its protections have not always been equal?	**Voters choose lawmakers, and courts can reject laws that violate the Constitution. Laws in parts of the country once blocked Black Americans from voting.**
2	How can people in the United Kingdom influence laws and defend rights even though they do not elect the monarch?	**Eligible people can vote for lawmakers and criticize leaders. Courts can review government actions.**
3	How does Cuba's one-party system affect people's ability to demand change?	**Competing parties cannot freely seek national power, and restrictions on independent news and protests make it harder to challenge leaders.**
4	Why is a government's form not the whole story when it comes to rights? Use an example from the United States.	**The United States is a representative democracy, but laws once blocked Black Americans from voting. People organized to change those laws, showing that laws and people's actions also shape rights.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The new government could allow several parties to run in elections, giving voters more choices about leaders. It could also create independent courts so people can challenge unfair arrests. These changes would help protect voting rights and fair treatment. Still, people who live far from polling places might struggle to vote unless the country makes elections accessible.

Accept other passage-supported explanations of how each government affects rights. For Your Turn, accept plausible rule changes and a specific reason that legal changes alone might not make rights equally usable.