Who Decides?

Compare government systems through a shared city problem.

USG.1.4 "Compare and contrast types of government including representative democracy, monarchy, oligarchy, totalitarianism, and anarchy."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one clue about who holds power in each of the five systems. Circle two details that show how the public can, or cannot, influence decisions.

Who Gets the Water?

1. After a severe storm, the fictional city of Harbor Point must decide who gets clean water first. Imagine five different systems governing the same city. In a representative democracy, residents elect lawmakers who debate a distribution plan and can be voted out if people disagree with their decisions. The public may organize and criticize the plan. Under a monarchy, a king or queen holds the position by inheritance. In an absolute monarchy, that ruler might set the water rules directly. In a constitutional monarchy, elected officials might make those rules instead, while the monarch's powers are limited by law.

2. An oligarchy puts governing power in the hands of a small group, such as a few wealthy families who control the city's wells. Those families could set rules that favor their own neighborhoods, even if most residents object. A totalitarian government seeks control over nearly every part of public and private life. Its leaders could order a water plan, block news of shortages, and punish people for organizing protests. Unlike ordinary disagreement within a representative democracy, opposition under totalitarian rule may be forbidden. Both systems can have leaders, but they differ sharply in public choice and freedom to challenge decisions.

3. In anarchy, no government has recognized authority to make or enforce a citywide water plan. Neighbors might voluntarily share supplies, or rival groups might dispute them. Anarchy describes the absence of government, not a guarantee of violence or cooperation. Compare the source of authority across the five systems: voters choose representatives; inheritance identifies a monarch; a small group governs in an oligarchy; totalitarian leaders claim sweeping power; and anarchy has no governing authority. A monarchy and an oligarchy might both limit public influence, but one centers on an inherited office while the other centers on a small group.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does a representative democracy differ from a monarchy in how people gain governing authority?

2. How do an oligarchy and a totalitarian government differ in the kind of control described in the passage?

3. Compare how residents could respond to an unpopular water plan in a representative democracy and under totalitarian rule.

4. How is anarchy different from the other four systems when the city needs a water plan? What might residents do without a government plan?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A city must decide whether to open its library at night during a heat wave. In 4 to 5 sentences, compare how two government types from the passage could make that decision, who would have authority, and how much influence residents might have.

Who Decides?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one clue about who holds power in each of the five systems. Circle two details that show how the public can, or cannot, influence decisions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does a representative democracy differ from a monarchy in how people gain governing authority?	**Residents elect representatives, while a monarch inherits the position. In a constitutional monarchy, elected officials may still make governing decisions.**
2	How do an oligarchy and a totalitarian government differ in the kind of control described in the passage?	**An oligarchy places governing power with a small group. A totalitarian government seeks control over nearly all public and private life and may forbid opposition.**
3	Compare how residents could respond to an unpopular water plan in a representative democracy and under totalitarian rule.	**In a representative democracy, residents may criticize the plan, organize, and vote lawmakers out. Under totalitarian rule, leaders may block news and punish protests.**
4	How is anarchy different from the other four systems when the city needs a water plan? What might residents do without a government plan?	**Anarchy has no recognized government authority to make or enforce a citywide plan. Residents might share water voluntarily or dispute supplies.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In a representative democracy, elected council members could decide whether to open the library at night during a heat wave. Residents could speak against their decision and vote them out later. In an oligarchy, a small group with governing power could decide the hours instead. That group might ignore residents' requests, although its decision would not necessarily differ from the council's.

Accept comparisons that accurately identify who holds authority and distinguish a system's defining features from outcomes that are only possible. Students may choose any two of the five systems for Part 3.