Who Holds Power?

Compare five ways governments make decisions

6.C.5.1.A "Define and describe the characteristics of limited governments (constitutional republic, constitutional monarchy) and authoritarian systems (dictatorship, oligarchy, absolute monarchy)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline who holds power in each of the five systems. Circle words that show whether that power has effective limits.

Who Decides on a Bridge?

1. Imagine a country deciding whether to build a bridge across a busy river. The first question is not just who wants the bridge, but who has the power to approve it. In a limited government, laws place real limits on leaders, and people have ways to challenge their decisions. In a constitutional republic, voters choose representatives to make laws, including rules about public projects. A constitution sets basic rules and protects rights. Courts can review laws that may break those rules, so elected officials cannot simply do whatever they want.

2. A constitutional monarchy also limits power, even though it has a king or queen. The monarch's authority is restricted by a constitution or other established laws, while elected leaders usually make government policy. A bridge plan might be debated by an elected parliament rather than ordered by the monarch. A dictatorship works differently. One ruler holds most political power and faces few effective checks. That ruler might order the bridge built without allowing citizens or lawmakers a meaningful way to block the plan. A dictator may claim to act for the public.

3. Other authoritarian systems place power in different hands. In an oligarchy, a small group rules, perhaps wealthy families or military leaders. This group could choose a bridge site that benefits its own businesses, with few effective checks from the public. In an absolute monarchy, a king or queen inherits the position and holds nearly all governing power. The monarch could approve the bridge without an elected legislature's consent. Some authoritarian governments have written laws or hold elections, but these do not make power truly limited if leaders can ignore challenges to their decisions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In a constitutional republic, what can representatives and courts each do when a bridge is proposed?

2. What limits a monarch's power in a constitutional monarchy, and who usually makes government policy?

3. Who holds power in a dictatorship and in an oligarchy? What do these systems have in common?

4. How does a monarch's authority differ in a constitutional monarchy and an absolute monarchy?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent an island facing a shortage of drinking water. In four sentences, describe how one limited system and one authoritarian system from the passage could make a water-sharing decision. Name both systems, identify who holds power and whether an effective check limits that power, and explain one possible difference in the decisions.

ANSWER KEY

Who Holds Power?

GRADE 6 · 6.C.5.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline who holds power in each of the five systems. Circle words that show whether that power has effective limits. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In a constitutional republic, what can representatives and courts each do when a bridge is proposed?	**Elected representatives can make laws about the project. Courts can review laws that may violate the constitution.**
2	What limits a monarch's power in a constitutional monarchy, and who usually makes government policy?	**A constitution or other established laws restrict the monarch's authority. Elected leaders usually make policy.**
3	Who holds power in a dictatorship and in an oligarchy? What do these systems have in common?	**One ruler holds power in a dictatorship, while a small group rules in an oligarchy. Both have few effective checks on their power.**
4	How does a monarch's authority differ in a constitutional monarchy and an absolute monarchy?	**A constitutional monarch's authority is restricted by laws. An absolute monarch inherits the position and holds nearly all governing power.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

On Coral Island, leaders must decide how to share water after a drought. In a constitutional republic, voters elect representatives to set water rules, and a court can reject a rule that violates protected rights. In an oligarchy, a small group of well owners sets the rules with few effective checks from the public. The well owners might give their businesses extra water, while the elected representatives must follow constitutional limits when making their rule.

Accept different plausible water-sharing decisions if the response correctly names one limited and one authoritarian system, identifies their power holders and checks, and explains a possible difference.