Voices and Limits

Compare how citizens participate and constitutions limit government.

6.P.2.1 "Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of government, the benefits of democratic systems, and their responsibilities as citizens. Compare and analyze civic virtues and democratic principles in historic and global settings..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one way citizens take part in each country, and circle one constitutional limit on government officials in each country. Use your marks to compare the two systems.

Who Gets a Say?

1. At a school forum, students ask who should decide what happens when a government closes a public meeting. In a democracy, people can speak about decisions, but officials also need rules for making them. A constitution sets basic rules and protects rights. The rule of law means leaders, like everyone else, must obey the law. Citizens show civic responsibility when they check facts, listen to others, and speak up peacefully. These habits help voters judge leaders and help leaders hear concerns before making decisions.

2. In the United States, voters choose members of Congress, who make federal laws. Voters also choose electors, who then choose the president. The president carries out federal laws, and courts can rule that a law violates the Constitution. The First Amendment protects peaceful assembly, so officials cannot simply ban a meeting because they dislike its message. Citizens can vote, contact lawmakers, and join peaceful gatherings. Still, free speech does not give anyone permission to threaten others. These limits keep both the government and citizens accountable.

3. South Africa offers another path. Under apartheid, government laws separated people by race, and most Black South Africans could not vote in national elections. In 1994, citizens of all races voted in a national election. Today, voters choose the National Assembly, which elects the president. South Africa's Constitution protects peaceful assembly, and its Constitutional Court can strike down laws that violate the Constitution. Compared with apartheid, more people can now challenge unfair decisions through voting and the courts. Yet citizens must act responsibly, and officials must obey constitutional limits.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the way South Africa chooses its president differ from the way the United States chooses its president?

2. If lawmakers pass a law banning peaceful meetings, what could limit that law in each country?

3. Compare voting under apartheid with voting in South Africa's 1994 national election. How did the change affect people's political voice?

4. How can checking facts and listening to others help a democracy? Why must elected leaders still follow the law?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In 5 sentences, propose how a new student council should choose leaders, protect a right, limit leaders, and ask students to act responsibly. Use one detail from each country's government to explain two of your choices.

ANSWER KEY

Voices and Limits

GRADE 6 · 6.P.2.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one way citizens take part in each country, and circle one constitutional limit on government officials in each country. Use your marks to compare the two systems. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the way South Africa chooses its president differ from the way the United States chooses its president?	**South Africa's National Assembly elects the president. In the United States, voters choose electors, who choose the president.**
2	If lawmakers pass a law banning peaceful meetings, what could limit that law in each country?	**The U.S. First Amendment protects peaceful assembly, and courts can rule that a law violates the Constitution. South Africa's Constitution also protects peaceful assembly, and its Constitutional Court can strike down laws that violate it.**
3	Compare voting under apartheid with voting in South Africa's 1994 national election. How did the change affect people's political voice?	**Under apartheid, most Black South Africans could not vote in national elections. In 1994, citizens of all races voted, giving more people a way to influence the government.**
4	How can checking facts and listening to others help a democracy? Why must elected leaders still follow the law?	**Checking facts and listening help voters judge leaders and help leaders hear concerns. The rule of law requires elected leaders, like everyone else, to obey the law.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Students should vote for council members, who would elect a chair like South Africa's National Assembly elects its president. Our charter should protect peaceful student meetings, as the First Amendment protects peaceful assembly in the United States. A review group should reject any council rule that violates the charter. Council members should not ban meetings just because they dislike a message. Students should check facts and listen to others before voting.

Accept other accurate comparisons and civic responsibilities supported by the passage. In Part 3, look for a clear leadership plan, a protected right, a limit on council power, a student responsibility, and one accurate supporting detail from each country.