Who Fixes the Bridge?

Compare government power and citizens' roles

7.P.2.1.B "Compare the powers and responsibilities of the United States of America's government to other forms of government, including the roles and rights of citizens."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline who can make or fund a decision in each system. Circle what people can do to influence leaders, then number the three systems so you can compare them.

One Broken Bridge, Three Governments

1 When a bridge between two states cracks, workers close it and families face long trips. In the United States, state transportation agencies usually manage bridges on state highways. Congress can vote to provide federal money for a repair, but the president cannot spend new money without legal authority from Congress. State officials decide how to carry out the work within the law. This split of powers makes several offices responsible. Residents can ask officials for updates, criticize delays in public, and vote for many officials who make these decisions.

2 Now imagine the same problem in a fictional absolute monarchy called Bellhaven. Its monarch holds the highest governing power and can order the bridge repaired and direct money to the project without a vote by an elected legislature. Advisers and workers may help, but their authority comes from the monarch, not from voters. People can tell advisers what they need if the monarch allows it. Unlike U.S. citizens, they cannot remove the monarch in a regular election. They may have some legal protections, but the monarch can change rules without the same constitutional checks.

3 In a fictional one-party state called Eastbank, the ruling party selects the candidates for top national offices. A party committee could approve the bridge budget, and officials chosen by the party could run the repairs. Residents might report unsafe roads or vote in limited local elections, but they cannot choose a different party to lead the national government. Compared with Bellhaven, decisions rest with a party rather than one ruler. Compared with the United States, citizens have fewer ways to replace national leaders. The exact rights people have would depend on the country's laws.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the power to fund a bridge repair differ between the U.S. president and Bellhaven's monarch?

2. How can citizens use elections to influence leaders in the United States, and what choice do Eastbank's residents lack?

3. Compare how people in the United States and Bellhaven could speak up about a delayed repair.

4. Who holds governing power in Bellhaven and Eastbank? How is the U.S. approach different?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a flood closes a town clinic. Write five sentences comparing how the United States and Bellhaven might respond. Include a decision maker and a way people could take part in each system, plus one possible strength or weakness of each response.

ANSWER KEY

Who Fixes the Bridge?

GRADE 7 · 7.P.2.1.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline who can make or fund a decision in each system. Circle what people can do to influence leaders, then number the three systems so you can compare them. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the power to fund a bridge repair differ between the U.S. president and Bellhaven's monarch?	**The U.S. president needs legal authority from Congress to spend new money. Bellhaven's monarch can direct money to the repair without a vote by an elected legislature.**
2	How can citizens use elections to influence leaders in the United States, and what choice do Eastbank's residents lack?	**U.S. citizens can vote for many officials involved in decisions. Eastbank's residents cannot choose a different party to lead the national government.**
3	Compare how people in the United States and Bellhaven could speak up about a delayed repair.	**People in the United States can ask officials for updates and criticize delays in public. People in Bellhaven can tell advisers what they need if the monarch allows it.**
4	Who holds governing power in Bellhaven and Eastbank? How is the U.S. approach different?	**Bellhaven's monarch holds the highest power, while Eastbank's ruling party controls top national offices. In the United States, power is split among offices, including Congress and state officials.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In the United States, state officials could arrange repairs to the flooded clinic, while Congress could authorize federal aid. Citizens could ask for updates and vote against officials who ignore the problem. Shared power may bring more checks, but decisions might take time. In Bellhaven, the monarch could order repairs and provide money, while residents could tell advisers what they need if allowed. One ruler might act quickly, but residents could not vote that ruler out if repairs were neglected.

Accept other reasonable responses that distinguish shared U.S. powers from the monarch's authority and accurately compare people's opportunities to influence decisions. Possible strengths and weaknesses should be presented as possibilities, not guaranteed outcomes.