Who Decides Water?

Compare limits on government and ways citizens can shape decisions

7.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 two limits on government power and circle two ways people can influence decisions. Number one phrase about who holds power in the United States and one phrase about who held power in Louis XIV's France.

Sharing a River

1. A dry summer leaves two towns, one in the United States and one in Mexico, worried about river water. The 1944 Water Treaty between the two countries sets rules for sharing water from the Colorado and Rio Grande river systems. Each country remains sovereign, meaning it governs its own territory, but both have agreed to follow the treaty. Their governments use a joint commission to carry out its rules and settle water disputes. A treaty can guide what governments do without making either country the ruler of the other.

2. In the United States, the president can negotiate a treaty, but two thirds of the senators present must agree before the United States can ratify it. The Constitution also divides power among branches, and courts can strike down laws that violate it. Congress makes federal laws, including laws that may fund water projects. Citizens can ask elected representatives to change those laws and can vote for representatives who reflect their views. These steps may slow a decision, but they make public officials answerable to voters and the law.

3. Imagine the same water shortage under the rule of Louis XIV in France. In his era, the king directed many national decisions, while ordinary subjects could not vote for national lawmakers. People could petition officials, but they had less influence over national policy than voters in the modern United States. A king still faced practical limits, such as money and resistance from powerful groups. In a democracy, civic virtues such as listening to neighbors and weighing evidence help citizens debate competing needs. Those habits give elections and public meetings more value than voting alone.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the 1944 treaty limit both countries' choices without taking away their sovereignty?

2. Compare how a person could influence national water policy in the United States and in Louis XIV's France.

3. Why might a U.S. water decision take longer than a decision directed by Louis XIV, and what benefit could the delay bring?

4. How could listening to neighbors and weighing evidence make a public meeting more useful during a water shortage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A U.S. town wants to build a factory near a river shared with another country. In four or five sentences, propose how citizens and officials should decide what to do, explain one legal limit on their choice, and compare their process with a king's decision.

ANSWER KEY

Who Decides Water?

GRADE 7 · 7.P.2.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two limits on government power and circle two ways people can influence decisions. Number one phrase about who holds power in the United States and one phrase about who held power in Louis XIV's France. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the 1944 treaty limit both countries' choices without taking away their sovereignty?	**Both countries agree to follow rules for sharing water, but each still governs its own territory.**
2	Compare how a person could influence national water policy in the United States and in Louis XIV's France.	**A U.S. citizen can contact and vote for representatives. A subject in Louis XIV's France could petition officials but could not vote for national lawmakers.**
3	Why might a U.S. water decision take longer than a decision directed by Louis XIV, and what benefit could the delay bring?	**U.S. decisions involve divided powers and elected representatives rather than one ruler directing many national decisions. Those steps make officials answerable to voters and the law.**
4	How could listening to neighbors and weighing evidence make a public meeting more useful during a water shortage?	**People could consider different water needs and use evidence to debate a decision, rather than speaking only for themselves.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Residents should listen to neighbors who need jobs and neighbors who depend on clean water. They can weigh evidence about pollution before speaking at a public meeting. They can ask elected representatives to pass rules requiring safeguards. Officials must follow applicable laws and any relevant water treaty when considering the factory. Unlike a king directing national policy, elected officials must answer to voters and follow legal limits.

Accept other accurate comparisons that distinguish voting for representatives from petitioning officials. For the open task, look for a citizen role, a legal limit, and a clear comparison of how decisions are made.