Who Holds Power?

Compare how two democracies limit government and involve citizens.

8.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 limit on government power in each country, circle who holds political authority in each system, and number two ways citizens can influence decisions.

A Park, a Protest, and the Law

1 Imagine a city closes its main park to public meetings after residents criticize a new rule. In the United States, people can challenge the closure in court if it violates their First Amendment right to assemble. The Constitution limits government power, and courts can reject laws that conflict with it. Voters also choose lawmakers who can change unfair rules. These checks reflect popular sovereignty: government gets its authority from the people. Citizens strengthen that system when they learn the facts, speak respectfully, vote when eligible, and defend others' rights.

2 Now picture a similar dispute in the United Kingdom. The king is head of state, but elected members of Parliament shape most national policy, and the prime minister leads the government. UK residents can challenge government actions in court, but UK courts generally cannot cancel an Act of Parliament for conflicting with a single written constitution. The UK has no single written constitution; its rules come from laws, court decisions, and traditions. Parliament has the highest lawmaking authority, called parliamentary sovereignty. The UK has no elected national president, unlike the United States.

3 Suppose both countries sign an international agreement to protect public parks. An agreement can guide cooperation, but it does not erase each country's legal limits. In the United States, the president makes treaties with the approval of two thirds of senators present; a treaty cannot override the Constitution. In the United Kingdom, an agreement does not usually change domestic law unless Parliament passes a law. In both systems, the rule of law means officials must follow legal rules, not just personal wishes. Citizens can question officials and press for fair laws.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could residents in each country use courts to question the park closure? What is one limit on UK courts?

2. How is political authority different under popular sovereignty in the United States and parliamentary sovereignty in the United Kingdom?

3. What limits does the passage describe for US treaties and for changing UK domestic law under an international agreement?

4. Choose one citizen action from the passage. How could it help hold officials to the rule of law?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A city closes its library meeting room just before residents debate a new tax. Write five sentences proposing a two-step response for residents in each country, using courts or lawmakers, and explain how your plans show civic virtue and respect for the rule of law.

ANSWER KEY

Who Holds Power?

GRADE 8 · 8.P.2.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one limit on government power in each country, circle who holds political authority in each system, and number two ways citizens can influence decisions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could residents in each country use courts to question the park closure? What is one limit on UK courts?	**US residents could challenge a closure that violates their right to assemble. UK residents could challenge the government's action, but UK courts generally cannot cancel an Act of Parliament for conflicting with a single written constitution.**
2	How is political authority different under popular sovereignty in the United States and parliamentary sovereignty in the United Kingdom?	**In the United States, government gets its authority from the people. In the United Kingdom, Parliament has the highest lawmaking authority.**
3	What limits does the passage describe for US treaties and for changing UK domestic law under an international agreement?	**A US treaty needs the approval of two thirds of senators present and cannot override the Constitution. An international agreement usually does not change UK domestic law unless Parliament passes a law.**
4	Choose one citizen action from the passage. How could it help hold officials to the rule of law?	**Citizens can question officials about a closure and ask them to follow the law rather than act on personal wishes.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In the United States, residents could gather facts about the closure and ask a court whether it violates their right to assemble. They could also ask elected city lawmakers to change the meeting-room rules. In the United Kingdom, residents could challenge the city's action in court and tell their elected members of Parliament what happened. They could then urge Parliament to change any law that permits such closures. Both groups should listen to opposing views and use legal steps instead of threatening officials.

Accept other accurate comparisons grounded in the passage. For the open task, look for two distinct steps in each country and an explanation of lawful, respectful participation.