Who Checks Power?

Sort governments by the limits on a ruler's power.

MWH.C.3 "Analyze developments in politics, science, and philosophy contributing to human advancement and the rise of modern institutions of self-government. Compare theories and forms of government regarding sources of authority and legitimacy..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

LIMITED GOVERNMENT	UNLIMITED GOVERNMENT
Enforceable laws or institutions can restrict what rulers do. A ruler cannot simply ignore those limits.	No enforceable law or institution can stop the ruler's decisions. A claim about where authority comes from does not, by itself, show whether power is limited.
A binding charter forbids a city leader from closing places of worship.	A military governor may seize farms at will, and residents have no legally protected way to stop the seizures.

1 SORT

8 items

For each item, circle LIMITED or UNLIMITED; then choose two items and explain which detail proves each choice.

1.	The English Bill of Rights prevents the monarch from suspending laws without Parliament's consent.	LIMITED UNLIMITED
2.	A ruler inherits the throne and may issue binding laws without any enforceable limits.	LIMITED UNLIMITED
3.	A king claims sacred authority, and no enforceable law or institution can limit his decisions.	LIMITED UNLIMITED
4.	A constitution gives judges power to cancel laws that violate protected freedoms.	LIMITED UNLIMITED
5.	Before levying new taxes, the ruler must obtain an elected legislature's approval.	LIMITED UNLIMITED
6.	A ruler who violates the constitution can be removed through a legal process.	LIMITED UNLIMITED
7.	A monarch's orders take effect despite a legislature's objections, and no other enforceable check can stop those orders.	LIMITED UNLIMITED
8.	A binding constitution requires regular elections that the ruler cannot cancel.	LIMITED UNLIMITED

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one new, specific example of LIMITED government and one of UNLIMITED government. Show whether an enforceable check exists.

LIMITED _____

UNLIMITED _____

CHALLENGE

A king claims divine right but must follow a constitution that a court enforces. In two sentences, classify his government and explain why his claim does not change your choice.

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PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	The English Bill of Rights prevents the monarch from suspending laws without Parliament's consent.	**LIMITED**	The monarch cannot suspend laws without an enforceable parliamentary check.
2	A ruler inherits the throne and may issue binding laws without any enforceable limits.	**UNLIMITED**	No enforceable limit restricts the ruler's lawmaking power.
3	A king claims sacred authority, and no enforceable law or institution can limit his decisions.	**UNLIMITED**	The absence of enforceable checks, not the sacred claim alone, makes the government unlimited.
4	A constitution gives judges power to cancel laws that violate protected freedoms.	**LIMITED**	Judges can enforce constitutional limits on government power.
5	Before levying new taxes, the ruler must obtain an elected legislature's approval.	**LIMITED**	The legislature has an enforceable check on the ruler's taxing power.
6	A ruler who violates the constitution can be removed through a legal process.	**LIMITED**	The constitution and removal process impose an enforceable limit.
7	A monarch's orders take effect despite a legislature's objections, and no other enforceable check can stop those orders.	**UNLIMITED**	Neither the legislature nor any other enforceable check can block the monarch's orders.
8	A binding constitution requires regular elections that the ruler cannot cancel.	**LIMITED**	The ruler cannot override the constitutional requirement for elections.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **LIMITED**: A binding law prevents a governor from censoring newspapers.
- **UNLIMITED**: An emperor can set any trade rule, and no enforceable law or institution can stop him.

Challenge: This government is limited because an enforceable constitution restricts the king's power. His divine-right claim describes the source of his authority, but it does not erase the legal check.

For Part 2, accept explanations that identify the enforceable check or its absence in each chosen item. A claim of sacred or inherited authority alone does not establish whether a government is limited.