Who Holds Power?

Compare how government structures shape decisions and accountability.

USG.C.1.4.B "Compare structural differences in terms of effectiveness, prevention of abusive power, and responsiveness to the popular will."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail about how each government can act quickly, circle two checks on power, and number the ways voters can influence each government.

Two Ways to Govern

1. A city faces severe flooding, and national leaders must decide how to fund repairs. In the United States, voters elect a president separately from Congress. Congress passes spending bills, while the president can sign or veto them. Congress can override a veto with enough votes. This separation can slow a response when branches disagree, yet it also stops one leader from controlling both the plan and the money. Voters can replace members of Congress at regular elections, even if the president stays in office.

2. In the United Kingdom, voters choose members of Parliament, not the prime minister directly. The prime minister usually leads the party that holds a majority in the House of Commons. A government with a reliable majority can pass a flood-relief bill quickly because executive leaders and lawmakers work together. But that unity can weaken scrutiny of a government bill. Members can question ministers, and the Commons can withdraw confidence from a government, forcing it to resign or seek an election.

3. Suppose flood-relief funds are diverted to reward political allies. In the United States, congressional committees can investigate, and federal courts can review whether government actions violate the law. In the United Kingdom, parliamentary committees can investigate, and courts can review whether officials act within the law. Neither design guarantees honest leaders. Separate elections give US voters a direct choice of president, while UK voters can change their representatives and, through them, the governing party.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which structure could pass a flood-relief bill faster, and what feature of the other structure might slow it?

2. Compare one way each government could check an attempt to divert flood-relief funds.

3. How does each structure let voters influence who leads the government?

4. If a government proposes a disputed bill, how might the US veto and the UK majority affect scrutiny of it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A town must redesign its bus routes. Choose either a separately elected mayor who can veto council plans (the council can override), or a mayor chosen and removable by the council majority. In one paragraph, compare how both designs affect speed, checks on power, and response to voters, then defend your choice.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one detail about how each government can act quickly, circle two checks on power, and number the ways voters can influence each government. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which structure could pass a flood-relief bill faster, and what feature of the other structure might slow it?	**A UK government with a reliable Commons majority could pass it faster. In the US, disagreement between the separately elected president and Congress could slow action.**
2	Compare one way each government could check an attempt to divert flood-relief funds.	**Congressional committees could investigate in the US. Parliamentary committees could investigate in the UK.**
3	How does each structure let voters influence who leads the government?	**US voters elect the president separately. UK voters elect representatives who can change the governing party and its leader.**
4	If a government proposes a disputed bill, how might the US veto and the UK majority affect scrutiny of it?	**A US president can veto a bill passed by Congress, though Congress can override the veto. A reliable UK majority can pass its government's bill quickly, but that unity can weaken scrutiny.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would choose a mayor selected by the council majority. The mayor and council could work together to change bus routes quickly, and voters could replace council members who ignore their needs. The council could also remove a mayor who favors only one neighborhood. A separately elected mayor could offer voters a direct choice of leader and could veto an unfair plan. However, a dispute between that mayor and the council might delay new routes for residents who need them now.

Accept comparisons that accurately distinguish separate elections and a veto from a council-selected leader. For the open task, look for a defensible choice that addresses all three criteria and acknowledges a trade-off.