Who Holds Power?

Compare how governments divide authority and make decisions.

USG.C.1.4 "Compare the advantages and disadvantages of ways in which governmental power can be distributed. Describe the structures of unitary, federal, and confederal systems..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle the five system names in the passage, then put a plus sign beside each stated advantage and a minus sign beside each stated drawback.

Who Acts When a Flood Spreads?

1. Suppose a flood crosses three regions. Who may order repairs and raise the money? In a unitary system, the central government holds ultimate authority and may delegate powers to local governments. France is an example. In a federal system, national and regional governments each have powers protected by a constitution. The United States is an example. In a confederal system, member governments keep most authority and give a shared body limited powers. The United States under the Articles of Confederation was an example.

2. These arrangements create trade-offs during the flood. A unitary government can set one response quickly, but local needs may get less attention. A federal system lets states tailor repairs while the national government handles problems across state lines. Yet disagreements over responsibility can delay action. A confederal body can coordinate members without taking much power from them, protecting their independence. But if members must approve funding separately, a shared response may stall. No arrangement guarantees wise decisions or fair treatment.

3. Power is also divided between lawmakers and executives. In the United States, a presidential system elects a president separately from Congress; neither can simply remove the other over a policy dispute. This separation can restrain abuses but also produce gridlock. In the United Kingdom, a parliamentary system has a prime minister whose government depends on the confidence of the elected House of Commons. A majority can replace that government when it loses support, making a change of direction quicker, though a strong majority may face fewer obstacles.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. During the flood, how might a unitary system act faster than a federal system, and what local need might it miss?

2. Compared with a federal system, what authority do members keep in a confederal system, and why might shared funding take longer?

3. Which system, presidential or parliamentary, can replace its government when it loses lawmakers' support? How does the other system differ?

4. Compare one risk of a strong parliamentary majority with one risk of separating presidential and congressional power.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A new country has four language regions. In four sentences, choose a way to distribute power and an executive system, assign school policy and foreign treaties to levels of government, and explain one benefit and one risk of your design.

ANSWER KEY

Who Holds Power?

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.1.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle the five system names in the passage, then put a plus sign beside each stated advantage and a minus sign beside each stated drawback. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	During the flood, how might a unitary system act faster than a federal system, and what local need might it miss?	**A unitary government can set one response without disputes between levels of government, but it may give less attention to different local needs.**
2	Compared with a federal system, what authority do members keep in a confederal system, and why might shared funding take longer?	**Confederal members keep most authority. Shared funding may take longer because members must approve it separately.**
3	Which system, presidential or parliamentary, can replace its government when it loses lawmakers' support? How does the other system differ?	**In a parliamentary system, a majority can replace a government that loses its support. In a presidential system, Congress cannot remove the president simply over a policy dispute.**
4	Compare one risk of a strong parliamentary majority with one risk of separating presidential and congressional power.	**A strong parliamentary majority may face fewer obstacles to its decisions. Separating a president from Congress can produce gridlock.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would use a federal system with a parliamentary executive. Each region would set school policy for its language, while the national government would negotiate foreign treaties. Regional control could make schools more responsive to families, and a parliamentary majority could pass shared policies quickly. However, disputes over funding could slow action, and a strong majority might overlook minority regions.

Accept other coherent combinations of power distribution and executive system. The response should assign both responsibilities and connect a plausible benefit and risk to the proposed design.