

Voices and Choices

Compare how citizens can influence government in different political systems.

6.11.B "explain how opportunities for citizens to participate in and influence the political process vary among various contemporary societies."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each action citizens can use to influence political decisions. Circle each limit on participation, then use your marks to compare the two societies.

Different Paths to Influence

- ① Citizens can try to influence public decisions in many ways. They may vote, join a political party, speak at a public meeting, sign a petition, contact an official, or protest. The chances to use these actions depend on a society's laws and political system. In a democracy with competitive elections, voters can choose among candidates and parties. In other systems, leaders may limit who can run, what people can say publicly, or whether citizens can organize protests. Having a right on paper also differs from being able to use it safely.
- ② In Canada, citizens age eighteen and older may vote in federal elections. Several political parties compete, and voters can support candidates with different ideas. Between elections, people can write to members of Parliament, attend public meetings, join advocacy groups, or demonstrate peacefully. News organizations and citizens may criticize government policies. These opportunities do not guarantee that officials will agree, but they give citizens several legal ways to press for change. Rules, money, time, and unequal access to information can still affect whose voices are heard.
- ③ In China, the Communist Party leads the state, and citizens do not choose the country's top leaders through competitive national elections. Citizens can vote in some local people's congress elections and may raise concerns through official channels, such as letters or online government services. However, the government restricts independent political parties, many protests, and criticism it considers threatening. Media and online discussion are also controlled. A Canadian voter and a Chinese citizen can both seek to influence decisions, but they have different choices, risks, and limits. Comparing those conditions helps explain why participation varies.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Name two legal ways, other than voting, that citizens in Canada can use to press for change.

2 What are two limits on political participation in China described in the passage?

3 How does choosing national leaders differ for citizens in Canada and China?

4 Why does the passage say that having a right on paper can differ from being able to use it safely?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Create a 4- to 6-sentence comparison of two imaginary societies. Name one participation opportunity and one limit in each society, then explain which society gives citizens more ways to influence political decisions and why.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each action citizens can use to influence political decisions. Circle each limit on participation, then use your marks to compare the two societies. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Name two legal ways, other than voting, that citizens in Canada can use to press for change.	They can write to members of Parliament, attend public meetings, join advocacy groups, demonstrate peacefully, or criticize government policies.
2	What are two limits on political participation in China described in the passage?	The government restricts independent political parties, many protests, and criticism it considers threatening. Media and online discussion are also controlled.
3	How does choosing national leaders differ for citizens in Canada and China?	Canadian voters can choose among competing candidates and political parties in federal elections. Chinese citizens do not choose the country's top leaders through competitive national elections.
4	Why does the passage say that having a right on paper can differ from being able to use it safely?	A law may name a right, but restrictions, risks, or lack of access can make it difficult or unsafe for citizens to use that right.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In Riverland, adults vote in competitive elections and can attend town council meetings. Its laws protect peaceful protests, although meetings are difficult for people who work late. In Stoneport, citizens can send requests to local officials, but only one party may choose national candidates and public protests are banned. Riverland citizens have more ways to influence political decisions because they can choose among candidates and use more public forms of participation.

Accept accurate passage-based wording for the short answers. For the open response, accept varied imaginary societies if the student identifies an opportunity and a limit in each and gives a logical comparison of citizens' influence.