

Power With Limits

Read how the Texas Constitution organizes and limits state government.

7.13.A “identify how the Texas Constitution reflects the principles of limited government, republicanism, checks and balances, federalism, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights; and”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each of the seven principle names in the passage. In the margin, write P, R, S, C, L, F, or I beside a sentence that explains popular sovereignty, republicanism, separation of powers, checks and balances, limited government, federalism, or individual rights.

Texas Government by Design

- ① The Texas Constitution is the state’s basic plan for government. Its opening idea is popular sovereignty: political power comes from the people. Texas voters approved the current constitution in 1876, and voters must approve constitutional amendments. The constitution also supports republicanism. Instead of voting on every state decision, Texans elect representatives, such as legislators, to make many laws. Elections let people choose officials and replace them. These rules connect government authority to citizens rather than to a king or a small, unelected group.
- ② The constitution divides state power among legislative, executive, and judicial branches. This separation of powers gives each branch different jobs. The Legislature writes laws, the governor leads the executive branch and can veto bills, and courts decide cases under the law. Checks and balances prevent one branch from acting without limits. For example, the Legislature may override a governor’s veto with enough votes. Judges also cannot create any rule they want, because they must apply the constitution and laws to cases.
- ③ Limited government means state officials must follow the constitution’s limits on their power. Individual rights, including freedoms of speech, religion, and press, are protected in the Texas Bill of Rights. Federalism shares power between the national government and state governments. Texas handles many state matters, but the U.S. Constitution and valid federal laws take priority over conflicting state laws. Together, these principles protect people while allowing government to act within constitutional rules.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How does voter approval of the Texas Constitution and its amendments show popular sovereignty?

2 Name the three branches of Texas state government. Then describe one check named in the passage.

3 According to the passage, which principle shares power between national and state governments? Explain how Texas fits this system.

4 How do limited government and individual rights both protect Texans?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine Texas faces a drought and lawmakers propose a water-use law. Write five sentences explaining how at least three constitutional principles should shape the law, including one branch role or check and one limit or right the law must respect.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each of the seven principle names in the passage. In the margin, write P, R, S, C, L, F, or I beside a sentence that explains popular sovereignty, republicanism, separation of powers, checks and balances, limited government, federalism, or individual rights. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does voter approval of the Texas Constitution and its amendments show popular sovereignty?	It shows that political power comes from the people because voters approve the constitution and its amendments.
2	Name the three branches of Texas state government. Then describe one check named in the passage.	The branches are legislative, executive, and judicial. One check is that the Legislature can override a governor's veto with enough votes.
3	According to the passage, which principle shares power between national and state governments? Explain how Texas fits this system.	Federalism shares power between national and state governments. Texas handles many state matters while the national government also has constitutional powers.
4	How do limited government and individual rights both protect Texans?	Limited government requires officials to follow constitutional limits on their power. Individual rights protect freedoms such as speech, religion, and press.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

During a drought, the Legislature could pass a water-use law through elected representatives, showing republicanism. The governor could veto the bill if it goes too far, providing a check. Limited government means the law must stay within constitutional limits. The rule must also respect individual rights, so it cannot punish people for criticizing it. Texans could vote for different lawmakers in later elections.

Accept equivalent explanations that accurately connect each principle to the passage. For the open response, accept any realistic drought policy that correctly explains at least three principles, includes a branch role or check, and identifies a constitutional limit or protected right.