

Two Constitutions Compared

Compare shared principles, structures, rights, and amendment processes.

7.13.B "compare the principles and concepts of the Texas Constitution to the U.S. Constitution, including the Texas and U.S. Bill of Rights."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ideas both constitutions share, circle two differences, and put a star by one protection named only for the Texas Bill of Rights.

Texas and U.S. Government Rules

- ① Two constitutions organize government in Texas. The U.S. Constitution, adopted in 1787, is the nation's highest law. The Texas Constitution of 1876 governs the state, but it cannot conflict with the U.S. Constitution. Both divide power among legislative, executive, and judicial branches. This separation of powers helps prevent one branch from controlling government. Both also use checks and balances. For example, a governor or president may veto a bill, while lawmakers can act to override a veto under rules in their constitution.
- ② Important differences reflect state and national power. Texas has a plural executive, so several independently elected officials share executive duties. The U.S. Constitution places executive power in one president. Texas lawmakers meet in regular session every two years, while Congress meets more often. Changing the constitutions differs. In Texas, two-thirds of each legislative house must propose an amendment, and Texas voters approve it by a majority vote. Usually, Congress proposes a U.S. amendment by two-thirds votes, then three-fourths of the states ratify it. Alternatively, two-thirds of states can request a convention to propose one.
- ③ Each constitution protects individual liberties through a bill of rights. The first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution are the U.S. Bill of Rights. Article I of the Texas Constitution is the Texas Bill of Rights. Both protect freedoms such as speech, religion, assembly, and fair legal procedures. Texas lists some protections more specifically, including an explicit right to "open courts" for an injury. The Texas document is longer because it contains many detailed rules for state government. Even with differences, both constitutions limit government power and protect people's rights.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What principle divides government power among three branches in both constitutions, and what is its purpose?

2 How is the executive branch organized differently in Texas and the United States?

3 After an amendment is proposed, how does approval differ in Texas and in the United States?

4 Name one freedom both bills of rights protect and one protection the Texas Bill of Rights states more specifically.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write three sentences comparing the two constitutions. State one shared principle, explain one structural or amendment-process difference, and tell how that difference can affect government or citizens.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline two ideas both constitutions share, circle two differences, and put a star by one protection named only for the Texas Bill of Rights. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What principle divides government power among three branches in both constitutions, and what is its purpose?	Separation of powers divides authority among legislative, executive, and judicial branches. It helps prevent one branch from controlling government.
2	How is the executive branch organized differently in Texas and the United States?	Texas has a plural executive, with several independently elected officials sharing executive duties. The U.S. Constitution places executive power in one president.
3	After an amendment is proposed, how does approval differ in Texas and in the United States?	Texas voters approve a proposed amendment by a majority vote. In the United States, three-fourths of the states must ratify a proposed amendment.
4	Name one freedom both bills of rights protect and one protection the Texas Bill of Rights states more specifically.	Answers may name speech, religion, assembly, or fair legal procedures as a shared protection, and the explicit right to open courts for an injury as the Texas-specific example.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Both constitutions divide power among three branches, which can limit the control of any one branch. Texas uses a plural executive, but the U.S. Constitution gives executive power to one president. In Texas, several elected officials, rather than only the governor, carry executive responsibilities.

Accept accurate comparisons drawn from the passage and a reasonable explanation of an effect. For the U.S. amendment process, accept the usual congressional proposal route or the alternative convention requested by two-thirds of the states.