



GOVERNMENT/CIVICS UNDERSTANDINGS

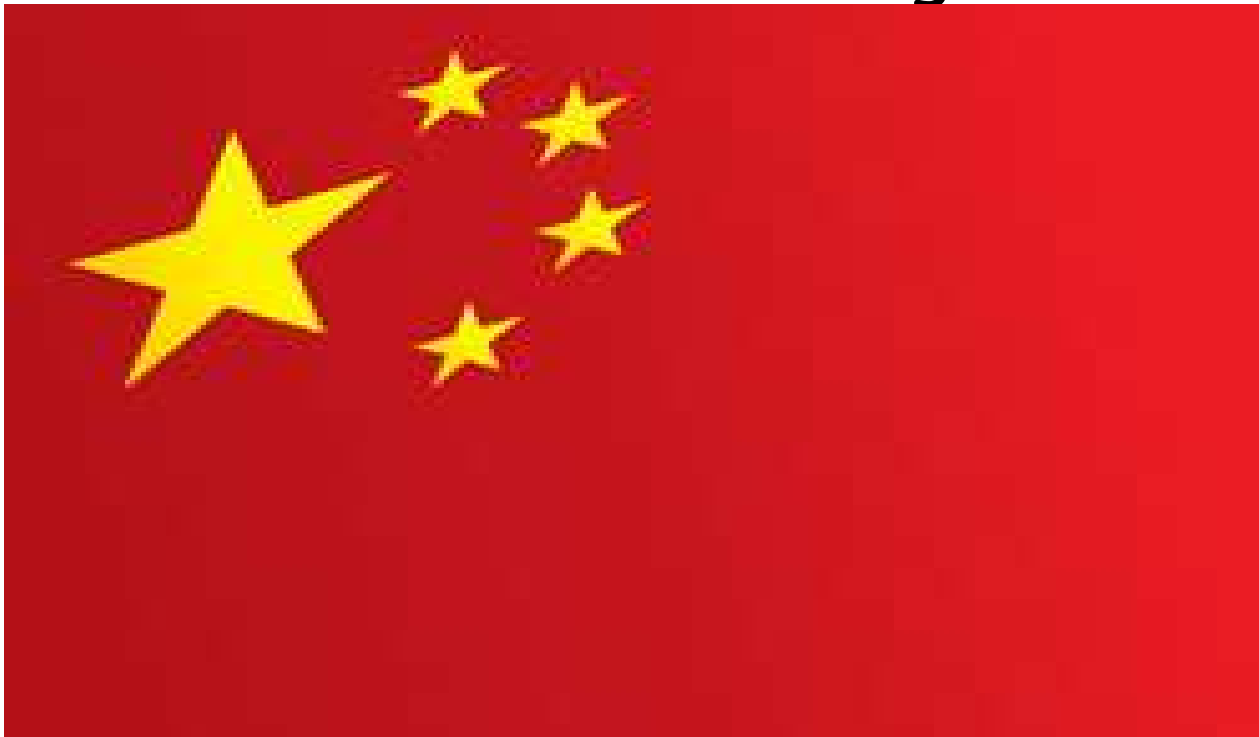
SS7CG6

The student will compare and contrast the
functions of government.

- a. Describe the ways government systems distribute power: unitary, confederation, and federal.

A **unitary government system** is one in which the central government holds nearly all of the power.

In a **unitary system**, local governments such as state or county systems may have some power at certain times, but they are basically under the control of the central government.



The People's Republic of China (flag above) is an example of a **unitary government**.

The central government has the power to change the way state or county governments operate or abolish them altogether. Some unitary governments have officials who, once elected, may make and enforce laws without taking the opinions of those at lower levels of government into consideration.



Officials, past and present, in China's government.

In a **monarchy**, which is an area ruled by a king or emperor, the ruler and his advisors make most of the decisions. This would be an example of a **unitary government**. Some of the countries in Southern and Eastern Asia have unitary forms of government. The communist government of the **People's Republic of China** is an example of a **unitary government**.



Above: Image of dictator Mao Zedong, first chairman of the Communist party in China

of government. It's a constitutional monarchy.

That means that even though Japan has an emperor, his powers are restricted to those granted under the constitution or laws of the nation. The Emperor of Japan is head of state and is a symbol of the country, but has no political power. He has ceremonial duties, but he doesn't take part in the day-to-day politics of the government.



Above: Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko

The power in the Japanese government is in the hands of the Japanese Diet, a two-house legislature that is elected by the Japanese people.



A confederation government system is one in which local governments hold all of the power and the central government depends on the local governments for its existence. The central government has only as much power as the local governments are willing to give.



The United Nations is a good example of a confederation. The United Nations can only offer advice and assistance when the member nations agree to cooperate.



Above: Flag of the United Nations

Examples of confederations that can be found among the countries of Southern and Eastern Asia would include the **Association of Southeast Asian nations** or **ASEAN**. This organization is a regional group organized to help the member nations cooperate on economic matters, encourage cultural exchanges, and to help keep peace and stability in the region.



A **federal government system** is a political system in which power is shared among different levels of government. The states have some powers that the federal government doesn't have, such as the right to collect property taxes and determine state sales taxes. The national government also has some powers that the states don't, such as the right to declare war and make treaties with foreign governments.



In Southern and Eastern Asia, the country of India is a good example of a **federal form of government**. The **Indian National Congress** is a two-house legislature made up of representatives elected from all across the country who are chosen in a general election in which all citizens age 18 years and older are eligible to vote.



Above: Flag of the Indian National Congress

Once the **Indian National Congress** is elected, the majority political party then chooses someone to serve as **prime minister**.



Above: Indian Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh

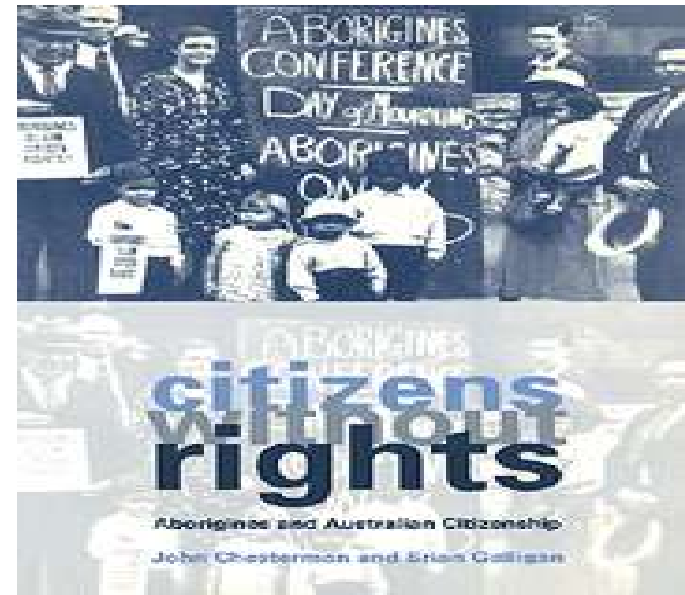


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The student will compare and contrast various forms of government.

b. Explain how governments determine citizenship participation: autocratic, oligarchic, and democratic.

People who live under different kinds of governments often find there are great differences in the rights given to individual citizens.



Not every government believes that all citizens have rights.

An **autocratic government** is one in which the ruler has absolute power to do whatever he wishes and make and enforce whatever laws he chooses. Individuals who live under autocratic governments don't have any rights to choose leaders or to vote on which laws are made and put into practice.



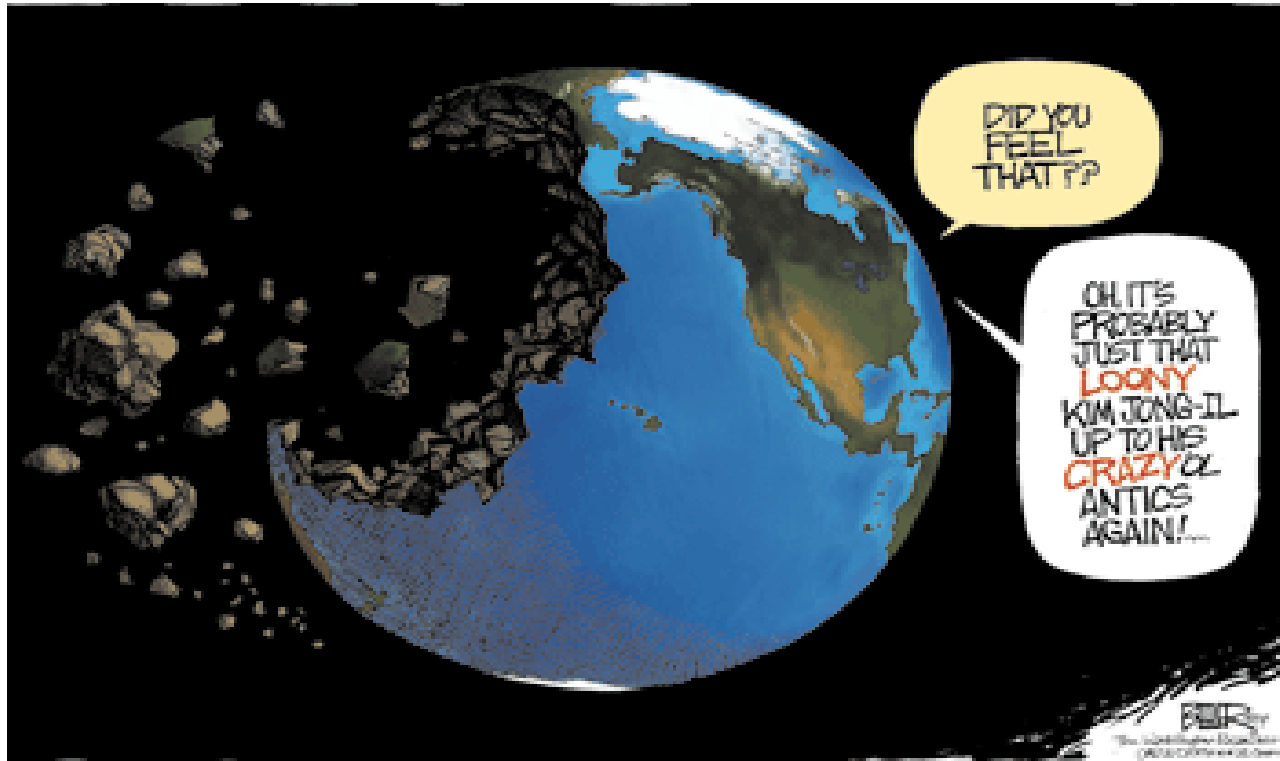
North Korea (flag above) is an autocratic government run by Communist dictator Kim Jong-Il.

Some autocratic governments may allow people rights in certain areas like managing local affairs, but the central government keeps control of all the most important aspects of the country's life. In North Korea, that even includes entertainment like movies.



Kim Jung Il wanted North Korean movies to be as good as those in South Korea, so he had South Korean director Shin Sang-Ok locked in prison, and the director's wife, actress Choe Un-Hee, locked in his palace. They were told that the only way they could see one another again was if they would make movies for him.

In an autocratic system, people usually have little or no power to use against the government if they disagree with decisions that the government or ruler has made.



There are many different types of **autocratic governments**. The Communist government of North Korea could be an example of an autocratic government. In North Korea, **Kim Jong-Il** holds the office of premier *and* head of the national Defense Commission, the two most powerful positions in the government. He rules North Korea as an **autocratic dictator**.



Kim Jong Il

An oligarchy [ŏl-ĭ-gahr-kēē] means "government by the few". In this form of government, a political party or other small group takes over a government and makes all of the major decisions. The people of the country have very little choice but to go along. This sort of government can be very similar to an autocratic government.



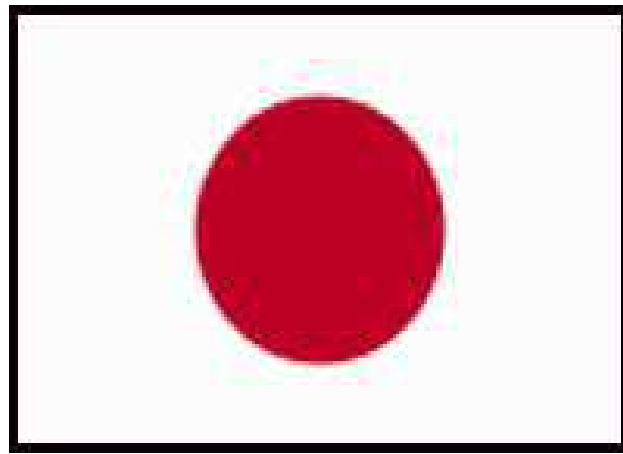
Above: Propaganda poster put out by the Chinese Communist party, the group that runs China's government. 19

The government of the People's Republic of China could be considered an oligarchic government, as the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party control most of what goes on in the country.



Above: Hu Jintao is currently the Paramount Leader of the People's Republic of China, holding the titles of General Secretary of the Communist Party of China since 2002, President of the People's Republic of China since 2003, ²⁰ and Chairman of the Central Military Commission since 2004.

In a **democratic government system**, the people play a much greater role in deciding who the rulers are and what decisions are made. **Democracy** comes from the Greek word "**demos**," which means people. In this form of government, a great deal of power is left in the hands of the people themselves.



(Left to Right) Flags of Southern and Eastern Asian democracies:
India, Japan, South Korea

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The student will compare and contrast various forms of government.

c. Describe the two predominant forms of democratic governments: parliamentary and presidential.

In a parliamentary form of democratic government, the people vote for those who represent the political party they feel best represents their views of how the government should operate.



Above: India's parliament building

The legislature the people elect, **parliament**, makes and enforces the laws for the country. The leader of a **parliamentary form of government** is usually chosen by the party that wins the majority of representatives in the legislature. This leader is often called a **prime minister** or **premier** and is recognized as the head of the government.



Above: Image of the inside of the parliament building where the Indian National Congress meets. The Indian political parties are the Samajwadi Party (SM), the Rashtriya Janata Dal Party (RJD)²⁴ and the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP).

The prime minister leads the executive branch of the government and must answer directly to the legislature for the actions and policies recommended. In many parliamentary governments, a head of state serves as ceremonial leader.



Above: Japanese Prime Minister Hatoyama

The actual work of the parliament is led by the **prime minister**, who represents the leading political party. He or she rules with the help of a **cabinet**, or group of advisors. A prime minister holds power for whatever term of office the country's constitution allows. A prime minister may be voted out of office before the term runs out if the party he or she leads begins to lose power.



Above: Members of the Loyalist Political Party in India make up the prime minister's cabinet.

There are several countries in Southern and Eastern Asia that have **parliamentary systems of government**. India is the largest democracy in the world. The people elect representatives to the **Indian National Congress**, and the majority party in the Congress chooses who will be the prime minister.



Japan is also a good example of a **parliamentary democracy**. The Japanese two-house parliament is called the **Diet**. The **Japanese Diet** holds the real power in Japan, even if the government also includes an emperor.



Above: Japanese National Diet Building

A presidential form of democratic government is sometimes called a congressional form of government. Here a president, or chief executive, is chosen separately from the legislature. The legislature passes the laws, and it's the duty of the president to see that the laws are enforced.



The president holds power separately from the legislature, but he or she doesn't have the power to dismiss the legislature or force them to make particular laws. The president is the official head of government. The legislature doesn't have the power to dismiss the president, except in extreme cases when the president has broken a law. The president is both the head of state and the head of the government.



One difference between a presidential and parliamentary system of government is that a prime minister is a member of parliament while a president is a separate branch of government. In a presidential system, the president serves for a set period of time.

