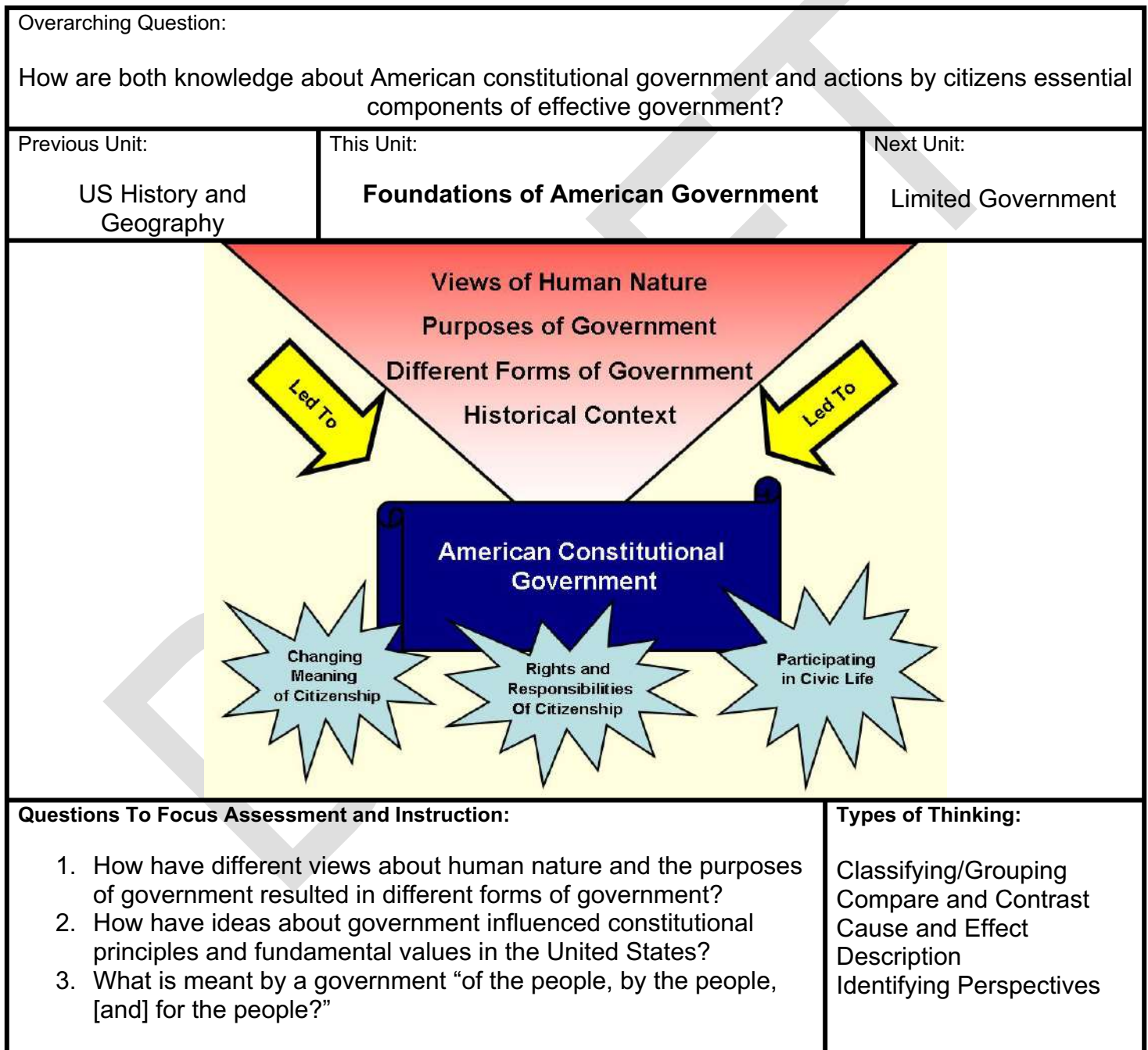


## Civics and Government

### Unit 1: Foundations of American Government

#### Big Picture Graphic



### **Unit Abstract:**

This unit introduces students to the fundamental values and constitutional principles of the American political system. The responsibilities of citizens in our democratic republic are explored at the end of the unit. Students begin their study of civics and government by exploring why people form governments. They think about what life would be like without government, rules or laws. By considering the advantages of forming a civil society, students explore the purposes of government, role of citizens and institutions, and the distribution of political power. Using ideas from influential political philosophers such as Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, students explore how each viewed the role of government. Next, students examine historical and contemporary forms of government with a focus on the rights of citizens, role of citizens and institutions, and the distribution of political power. In doing so, students explore the relationship between the authority of a centralized government and the rights of its citizens, as well as the distinction between limited and unlimited governments. Students then focus on the American form of government with an emphasis on the historical context and the ideas and principles in the *Declaration of Independence* and *United States Constitution*. They analyze the compromises made to create the Constitution and examine the provisions the Founders included to delegate and limit the power of government. Next, students examine how the Constitution creates a democratic republic and the importance of the rule of law to our constitutional scheme. They also investigate how ideas such as natural rights, social contract, popular sovereignty, limited government, and representative government are reflected in our foundational documents. After examining some of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, students reflect on what is meant by a government “of the people, by the people, [and] for the people.” In doing so, they consider the voluntary nature of citizenship in the United States, the means by which citizens effectuate change through civic engagement and the role civil disobedience has played in our society. The unit concludes with students identifying problems facing American citizens today and reflecting on how these issues are related to conflicting constitutional principles and/or fundamental values.

### **Focus Questions**

1. How have different views about human nature and the purposes of government resulted in different forms of government?
2. How have ideas about government influenced constitutional principles and fundamental values in the United States?
3. What is meant by a government “of the people, by the people, [and] for the people?”

### **Content Expectations:**

**C.1.1.2:** Explain and provide examples of the concepts “power,” “legitimacy,” “authority,” and “sovereignty.”

**C1.1.3:** Identify and explain competing arguments about the necessity and purposes of government (such as to protect inalienable rights, promote the general welfare, resolve conflicts, promote equality, and establish justice for all). *Also meets C3.4.2.*

- C1.1.4:** Explain the purposes of politics, why people engage in the political process, and what the political process can achieve (e.g., promote the greater good, promote self-interest, advance solutions to public issues and problems, achieve a just society).
- C1.2.1:** Identify, distinguish among, and provide examples of different forms of governmental structures including anarchy, monarchy, military junta, aristocracy, democracy, authoritarian, constitutional republic, fascist, communist, socialist, and theocratic states. *Also meets C1.1.2.<sup>1</sup>*
- C1.2.2:** Explain the purposes and uses of constitutions in defining and limiting government, distinguishing between historical and contemporary examples of constitutional governments that failed to limit power (e.g., Nazi Germany and Stalinist Soviet Union) and successful constitutional governments (e.g., contemporary Germany and United Kingdom).
- C1.2.3:** Compare and contrast parliamentary, federal, confederal, and unitary systems of government by analyzing similarities and differences in sovereignty, diffusion of power, and institutional structure.
- C1.2.4:** Compare and contrast direct and representative democracy.
- C2.1.1:** Explain the historical and philosophical origins of American constitutional government and evaluate the influence of ideas found in the Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights, Mayflower Compact, Iroquois Confederation,<sup>2</sup> Northwest Ordinance, Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, selected Federalist Papers (such as the 10th, 14th, 51st), John Locke's Second Treatise, Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, and Paine's Common Sense.<sup>3</sup>
- C2.1.2:** Explain the significance of the major debates and compromises underlying the formation and ratification of the American constitutional government including the Virginia and New Jersey plans, the Great Compromise, debates between Federalists and Anti-Federalists, debates over slavery, and the promise for a bill of rights after ratification.
- C2.1.3:** Explain how the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights reflect [fundamental values of America's constitutional republic (e.g., life, liberty, property, the pursuit of happiness, the common good, justice, equality, diversity, authority, participation, and patriotism) and]<sup>4</sup> political principles of popular sovereignty, rule of law,

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<sup>1</sup> Use concepts such as "power," "legitimacy," "authority," and "sovereignty" as criteria to distinguish these forms of government.

<sup>2</sup> Since the Iroquois Confederation is not a document and academics overwhelmingly dispute its influence upon the creation of the Constitution, the Iroquois Confederation portion of the expectation is not addressed in this unit.

<sup>3</sup> Many of the historical events listed in this expectation are addressed in the Foundations unit of U.S. History and Geography course (See 9<sup>th</sup> Grade, Unit 1).

<sup>4</sup> Text appearing in brackets [ ] has been added to the language of the original expectation. These modifications have been made to provide clarity, coherence, and consistency when multiple expectations address the same essential understanding.

checks and balances, separation of powers, social compact, natural rights, individual rights, separation of church and state, republicanism, and federalism. *Also meets C2.2.1.*<sup>5</sup>

- C2.2.3: Use past and present policies to analyze conflicts that arise in society due to competing constitutional principles or fundamental values (e.g., liberty and authority, justice and equality, individual rights, and the common good).
- C2.2.4: Analyze and explain ideas about fundamental values like liberty, justice, and equality found in a range of documents (e.g., Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech and “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration of Sentiments, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the Patriot Act).
- C2.2.5: Use examples to investigate why people may agree on constitutional principles and fundamental values in the abstract, yet disagree over their meaning when they are applied to specific situations.
- C3.2.1: Explain how the principles of enumerated powers, federalism, separation of powers, bicameralism, checks and balances, republicanism, rule of law, individual rights [including the Bill of Rights], inalienable rights, separation of church and state, and popular sovereignty serve to limit the power of government. *Also meet C3.2.4.*<sup>6</sup>
- C3.2.3: Identify specific provisions in the Constitution that limit the power of the federal government.
- C3.2.4: Explain the role of the Bill of Rights and each of its amendments in restraining the power of government over individuals.
- C3.4.1: Explain why the rule of law has a central place in American society (e.g., Supreme Court cases like *Marbury v. Madison* and *U.S. v. Nixon*; practices such as submitting bills to legal counsel to ensure congressional compliance with the law).
- C5.1.2: Compare the rights of citizenship an American has as a member of a state and the nation.<sup>7</sup>
- C5.2.1: Explain the distinction between citizens by birth, naturalized citizens, and non-citizens.
- C5.2.2: Describe the distinction between legal and illegal immigration and the process by which legal immigrants can become citizens.

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<sup>5</sup> C2.2.1 asks students to explain how fundamental values are reflected in constitutional principles. Core democratic values of American constitutional democracy include both fundamental values and constitutional principles. They are distinct but related concepts, both of which are reflected in our foundational documents. Accordingly, expectation C2.1.3 has been rewritten in this document for clarity and accuracy.

<sup>6</sup> Text appearing in brackets [ ] has been added to the language of the original expectation.

<sup>7</sup> This expectation has been modified to be grammatically correct.

- C5.2.3: Evaluate the criteria used for admission to citizenship in the United States and how Americans expanded citizenship over the centuries (e.g., removing limitations of suffrage).
- C5.4.2: [Explain the idea and meaning of citizenship and] describe the importance of citizens' civic responsibilities including obeying the law, being informed and attentive to public issues, monitoring political leaders and governmental agencies, assuming leadership when appropriate, paying taxes, registering to vote and voting knowledgeably on candidates and issues, serving as a juror, serving in the armed forces, and performing public service [to the preservation of American constitutional democracy]. *Also meets C5.1.1; C5.4.1; C5.4.3; C5.5.1; C5.5.2; C5.5.3; C6.2.9.*
- C6.1.1: Identify and research various viewpoints on significant public policy issues.
- C6.2.3: Describe how, when, and where individuals can participate in the political process at the local, state, and national levels (including, but not limited to voting, attending political and governmental meetings, contacting public officials, working in campaigns, community organizing, demonstrating or picketing, boycotting, joining interest groups or political action committees); evaluate the effectiveness of these methods.<sup>8</sup>
- C6.2.5: Describe how citizen movements seek to realize fundamental values and principles of American constitutional democracy.
- C6.2.6: Analyze different ways people have used civil disobedience, the different forms civil disobedience might take (e.g., violent and non-violent) and their impact.

### Key Concepts

authority  
Bill of Rights  
citizenship  
civil disobedience  
civil society  
constitutional government  
constitutional principles  
enumerated powers  
equality  
federalism  
governmental structures / forms of government  
liberty  
limited / unlimited government  
natural rights

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<sup>8</sup> This expectation ended with the phrase "of participants." This phrase has been removed for grammar and clarity.

purposes of government  
republic  
rule of law  
social contract  
sovereignty

### **Duration**

3 weeks

### **Lesson Sequence**

Lesson 1: Why Do We Need Government?  
Lesson 2: Forms of Governments  
Lesson 3: *The Declaration of Independence*  
Lesson 4: Introducing the Constitution  
Lesson 5: A Government of Compromises  
Lesson 6: Defining Government in the United States  
Lesson 7: The Meaning of Citizenship  
Lesson 8: Citizens and Civic Engagement  
Lesson 9: Citizenship and Civil Disobedience  
Lesson 10: When Fundamental Values and Constitutional Principles Conflict

### **Assessment**

Selected Response Items

Constructed Response Items

Performance Assessments

C1.1.2; C1.1.3; C1.2.1; C1.2.2; C1.2.3; C2.1.1	Explain how ideas about human nature and the purposes of government have influenced the types of governments people form. Use the United States and two other countries as examples. For each country, explain how decisions regard the legitimacy of power, diffusion of power, limits of government, and number of rulers reflect thoughts about human nature and purposes of government.
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### **Resources**

Equipment/Manipulative

Chart paper  
Computers for students with Internet Access  
Document Camera, Overhead Projector, or Computer Projector  
Highlighters



## Markers

Student Notebook or Journal for the Citizenship Notebook

## Student Resource

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