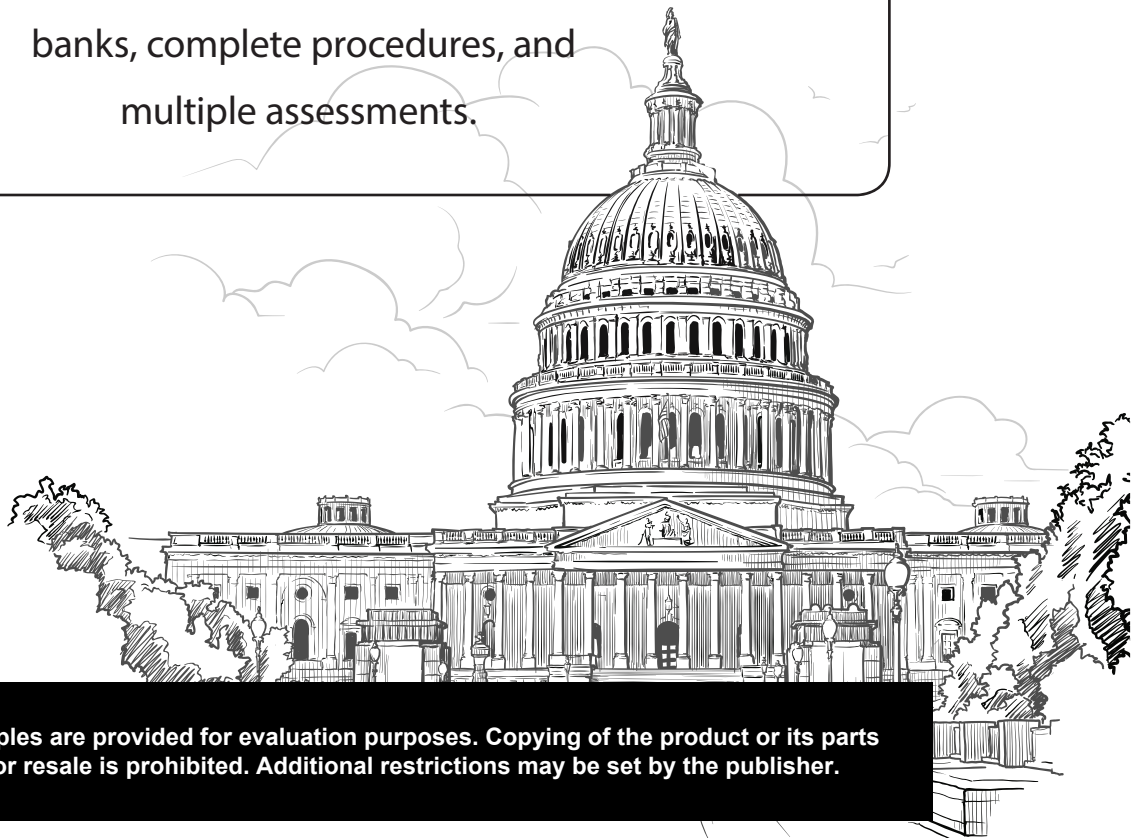


Welcome to

Government Activators

Foundations of U.S. Government

Cooperative active-learning lessons take students deep into the nuts and bolts of U.S. government as they participate in activities such as simulating negotiations between a society's leaders and its people for basic rights, role-playing Cabinet secretaries aiding the president with real-life issues, and trying a Bill of Rights case in a moot Supreme Court. Each lesson includes a historical background essay, a graphic organizer, activity-specific handouts, word banks, complete procedures, and multiple assessments.



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Purpose and Overview

Government Activators consists of ten lessons on the history and operation of the United States government. These lessons provide exciting experiences in “participatory government” for your students. Students will find themselves drawn into the study of civics and government and actively engage in lessons that become compellingly real for them. The first three lessons explore the early roots of American constitutionalism and government, examining how British heritage was translated into American democracy. The next five lessons look at the structure and operation of the three branches of government, the checks and balances between them, and how the concept of federalism establishes dual sovereignty between state and federal entities. The last two lessons examine the history and application of the Bill of Rights, looking back into the past to explain important fundamental rights as they are practiced today.

Activators possess three common elements, which embody a philosophical foundation.

1. The presentation of key academic concepts in civics and history that enhance and expand textbook learning
2. Multiple activities that can stand alone or be used in sequence to provide an in-depth examination of broad concepts and give teachers flexibility in instruction
3. An appeal to a broad range of learning styles—including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic—in order to allow students of different abilities to actively participate in their learning.

Format

Each Activator highlights a key concept and presents it in four modular learning activities.

- A background reading and study of key words and terms
- A setup or content-building activity
- A main activity
- A debriefing and assessment

Teaching Tools

Each Activator contains the following teaching tools:

- Historical Background Essay
- Word Bank
- Setup or content-building activity
- Main activity
- Assessment methods

Historical Background Essay

Each lesson begins with a **Historical Background Essay** that provides context and presents the key concepts of the lesson's main theme. Each essay contains focus questions and a **Graphic Organizer** for which answers can be found in the text. A Graphic Organizer Answer Key is provided at the back of the book. Information from the Historical Background Essay also provides important information for successfully completing the main activity.

Word Bank

Each lesson contains a list of important words and terms highlighted in bold in the Historical Background Essay.

Setup or Content-Building Activity

The first activity in each unit builds on the points covered in the Historical Background Essay and helps generate a solid understanding of concepts explored in the main activity.

Main Activity

Each main activity presents either full-class or small-group activities that engage every student. Methods include simulations, case studies, role plays, and presentations. These activities examine the fundamental concepts behind current issues of concern in U.S. government and civics, providing students with opportunities to present them in innovative ways.

Assessment Methods

Each Activator incorporates authentic **assessments** and also contains **debriefing questions** constructed to help students conceptualize main points and prepare them for the assessment exercise. Two assessment options are available to accommodate a wide range of student abilities. Detailed rubrics are included when appropriate.

Historical Background Essay

During the period known as the Enlightenment (1600–1800), people in Europe began to imagine a different kind of government. People would no longer be “subjects” of a monarch. Their rights were to be honored and protected. People were also to have more say in the type of government they wanted. And people would have more responsibility in making sure the government protected their rights. From these ideas, Enlightenment philosophers like John Locke, Montesquieu, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau developed four basic **principles of government**:

- The people possess the **rights** to life, liberty, and property.
- The people are **sovereign**, meaning that they have the ultimate power over the government. They can abolish the government if they feel it is violating their rights.
- Governments are based on the **social contract**, an informal agreement of the people to obey basic laws of human decency and respect universal human rights, and the government agrees to protect their rights.
- Governments should be set up with a **separation of powers**—executive, legislative, and judicial. Each branch has powers that limit the powers of the other two. This creates a system of **checks and balances**.

This new way of thinking about government was evolving as Great Britain began to colonize North America in the 1600s. The colonies were over three thousand miles across the ocean. This meant that any orders from Britain took ten to twelve weeks to get to the colonies. It took another twelve weeks to get an answer. The British government needed an effective government to rule the area.

The British Parliament incorporated some of the ideas from the Enlightenment into its colonial governments and understood that the British government would have to share power with the people. The colonies would be set up by a **charter**, a legal document that defined the borders and area of the colony. The charter established Great Britain as the ruler of the colonies. It also set up legal rights of the colonists so they could partially govern themselves.

By 1700, the colonial governments were structured like the British government. Each colony had a legislative, executive, and judicial branch. However, the king held the ultimate control over the colonial governments. He appointed colonial governors as the executives, and these governors held substantial power. As the king’s agents, they could enforce the law with the help of the British army.

Each colony had a legislature with two houses, one a privy council and the other an assembly. The colonial governor appointed members of the privy council. The colonists voted for representatives of the assembly from the local population. The **colonial**

assembly could impose taxes, but only on their own colony. In most colonies, the legislatures paid the governor’s salary. This put a check on his power. If the governor abused his authority, the assembly could withhold his salary.



John Locke

Historical Background Essay

The **colonial courts** evolved over time. In the 1600s, most courts were run by a magistrate, sometimes called the “justice of the peace” or simply a “judge.” These judges were usually local ministers or civil leaders. The courts dealt with minor offenses. Cases were heard without juries or lawyers. By the 1700s, the colonial legal system became more like the English court system. There were judges trained in the law, lawyers to represent the accused, and juries.

Not all people living in the colonies had rights. **Social custom** and law said that only white, male landowners could vote. All other segments of society were either partially or completely **disenfranchised**—unable to participate in the government through the vote. In most colonies, women had only the rights their husbands gave them. Enslaved people made up nearly 20 percent of the population and had no rights. A few free blacks could own property or operate a business, but they had no right to vote. Native Americans were not considered citizens and were forced to relocate from their ancestral homelands to the frontier.

The British Crown and Parliament had authority over all the colonies. However, they divided authority between themselves and the colonies. The Crown and Parliament dealt with foreign policy, trade, and defense. The economy operated under a system of **mercantilism**. Britain produced finished goods made from the raw materials grown or produced in the colonies. Any goods that competed with British-made goods could be banned. Britain allowed the colonies to produce some of their own goods, but these could be taxed. Generally, Great Britain seldom interfered with the colonial affairs.

That was, until after the French and Indian War, also known as the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763). Then things changed. Britain won the war, but at a tremendous cost. The victory increased Britain’s control of North America. The British victory would greatly benefit the colonists. Settlers and merchants could expand into the new territory. The British army would be there to protect them. Because of this, members of Parliament felt it was proper for the colonists to pay for the cost of the war and future defense.

From 1765 to 1775, the British Parliament passed a series of taxes and enforcement laws on the colonies. Quickly, many of the colonists responded with a resounding “No!” They didn’t object to the taxes—they understood their purpose. What they resented was being taxed without their consent. The colonists had no representation in Parliament. The members of Parliament in Britain said they were their representatives.

Not taking no for an answer, Great Britain pushed harder to enforce the colonial tax laws. After all, it ruled over the colonies by the law of the charters and had fought a bitter and expensive war on their behalf. The colonists increased their resistance and eventually formed an army to fight for their rights. In 1776, the American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain. To members of Parliament, the Declaration of Independence amounted to an act of treason. They considered the Continental Army a mere nuisance. For Americans, it was the beginning of a long journey.

How a Bill Becomes a Law

- Ideas for a law can come from any citizen, member of Congress, the president, or a public or private interest group.
- Once an idea has been developed, it is written in to a bill.
- Bills can be introduced by either house, but spending bills have to start in the House of Representatives.
- Only members of Congress can officially introduce a bill.

- THE HOUSE**
- A bill is introduced in the House.
 - A bill originating in the House is designated with an "H.R." before its number: H.R. 1234.

- THE SENATE**
- A bill is introduced in the Senate.
 - A bill originating in the Senate is designated with an "S." before its number: S. 1234.

- COMMITTEE WORK**
- Bills are assigned to a committee or a sub-committee, which holds a hearing on the bill.
 - Witnesses testify at the hearing, supporting or opposing the bill.

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- Bills are assigned to a committee or a sub-committee, which holds a hearing on the bill.
 - Witnesses testify at the hearing, supporting or opposing the bill.

- HOUSE FLOOR ACTION**
- Debate in the House is restricted to a specific time. Members can suspend the rules to move a bill quickly through the House, but this requires unanimous consent (everyone agreeing).

- SENATE FLOOR ACTION**
- Each senator has the right to debate as long as desired. This can be extended into a filibuster, where a senator speaks nonstop on a bill in order to stall its passage. To stop a filibuster, $\frac{3}{5}$ of the Senate membership has to agree. This is called a "cloture."

After a bill is passed by one chamber, it must go to the other chamber and undergo the same procedure. The second chamber can accept the bill without changes and send it on to the president. Or it can amend the bill. If amended, the bill goes to a conference committee to resolve the differences.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Once a bill passes both houses of Congress, it goes before a conference committee to reconcile any differences. If necessary, another vote is taken in both chambers.

PRESIDENT

The bill is sent to the president, who either signs it into law or vetoes (rejects) it. If the bill is vetoed, it goes back to Congress, which can either accept the veto or try to override it. It takes two-thirds of both the House and the Senate to override a veto.

FLOOR ACTION

Debate in the House is restricted due to its size. The rules committee sets specific time limits for debate and limits the number of amendments which have to be related to the bill. Members can suspend the rules to move a bill quickly through the House, but this has to be done through unanimous consent.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Graphic Organizer: The Legislative Branch

1. Refer to the first two paragraphs of the Historical Background Essay to fill in the effects for the following causes.

Cause	Effect
Colonists win independence from Great Britain.	
The states wanted a different form of government than the British Parliament.	
The national government under the Articles of Confederation was weak.	
The framers of the Constitution didn't completely trust the people to govern by themselves.	

2. Read Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution for a detailed look at the powers of Congress. Use this table to list the powers that fulfill the goals of the Preamble:

Clause from the Preamble: We the People of the United States . . .	Powers Granted to Congress
<i>in order to form a more perfect union,</i>	
<i>establish justice,</i>	
<i>insure domestic tranquility,</i>	
<i>provide for the common defense,</i>	
<i>promote the general welfare,</i>	
<i>secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity,</i>	

3. Answer the following questions:

- a. Who can present an idea for a bill to Congress? Why do you think only members of Congress can officially introduce a bill?

- b. What actions take place in a congressional committee? Why are committees important?

- c. After one of the chambers approves a bill in a floor vote, it goes on to the other house. Why do you think the framers required that both houses approve a bill before it goes to the president?

- d. How are the two legislative houses different?

- e. How are the rules for a floor vote different in the House and Senate?

- f. What is the central purpose of a conference committee?

- g. What options does the president have once a bill comes to his or her desk?
