

TEACHING NOTES

Book title: What's Government?

Series: First Guide to Government

What are the three branches of government? How are laws made? How many judges work in the Supreme Court? In this What's Government? book readers will learn all about the United States federal government, including the roles of the three branches of government and how they work together. Students will also discover the important part citizens play in choosing our government leaders.



Text Structure: Question and Answer



Before reading, pass out copies of the two-column graphic organizer. Have students label the first column *Questions* and the second column *Answers*. Then have students turn to page 4 and write the heading "What Is Government?" in the first column. Allow students to raise their hands and answer the question. Record their answers on the board. Then explain to students that authors sometimes organize their writing by asking a question and then answering it for the reader. Have students locate the answer to the question in the text and write it in the second column of their charts. Ask students to compare their original answers to the answers the author provides. What were they right about? Did they learn anything new? Students should continue to add questions (*What is the Executive Branch? What is the Legislative Branch? What is the Judicial Branch?*) and answers to their charts as they read the book.



Text Feature: Maps

Direct students' attention to the map on page 28. Have students read the text above the map. Ask: What does this map show? (*the location of some important places in Washington, D.C.*) Point out the key in the bottom left-hand corner of the map. Ask: What does it mean if a building is colored red? (*it is a major point of interest*) Tell students that the three branches of government are based in buildings on this map. Ask students to find the White House, the U.S. Capitol, and the Supreme Court on the map.



Comprehension Strategy: Using Background Knowledge

Before reading, ask students what they already know about the federal government or Washington, D.C. Write their responses on the board. Then ask what they would like to learn, and write those responses on the board as well. Explain that thinking about what they already know before reading will enable students to become more engaged when reading a new text. Coming up with questions can give readers a purpose for reading—to find answers. Model how to engage background knowledge while reading a text using the section *The Legislative Branch* on page 14.

Think Aloud:

“I already knew that Congress was the legislative branch of government, but I didn’t know that there were two branches of Congress called the Senate and the House of Representatives. This means that when I read about the legislative branch, I understand the two branches of Congress work together to make laws.”



Word Study: Using Context Clues

Talk with students about the importance of using context clues to figure out confusing words. Have students read page 11. Ask them to determine what *Cabinet* means based on the way that it is used in the sentence and the other information surrounding it. Elicit from students that *Cabinet* refers to a group of people who make help give advice to the president. Ask students to explain how they came up with their definition. How does the illustration on page 11 help them determine the meaning of the word? Is it helpful?



Writing and Responding: Story

After reading the book, direct students’ attention to the photograph and caption on page 13. Then ask students to write a story about what they think it would be like to be President and live in the White House. Before students begin writing, have them brainstorm answers to the following questions: What would it be like to live in the White House? How would it be different than living in a regular house or apartment? What would it be like to work there? What kinds of decisions would you make every day? What would be the best part of being President? Encourage students to use the information and vocabulary that they’ve learned in their reading to help shape their stories.

 *Indicates a graphic organizer is linked to this activity.*

[insert 2 column graphic organizer]

NAME



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