

Where Did Our Local Governments Come From?

A. WHAT STUDENTS WILL LEARN IN UNIT ONE

Students will understand the development, evolution and importance of local governments in the United States. Students will be able to:

- Cite the major differences between Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson regarding the nature of democracy in the United States.
- Trace the development of cities in California, and cite the conditions that led to the call for municipal reform.
- List the Progressive Reform measures applying to local government, and cite the reasons these measures were enacted.
- Identify those government activities which must be conducted in public, and those which may be conducted in private.

B. ADDITIONAL STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. Have students research the origins of the community in which they reside. The city clerk or county clerk/recorder will have access to original records and will often have a summary prepared.

Likewise, the local historical society frequently will have information of this type.

2. Have students locate the oldest buildings in your community. Is there a particular architectural style that reflects the period in which they were built? Contact a local architect and cooperatively prepare a report on different architectural styles found in the community. Is there an architectural theme for different sections of the community? Are there areas of mismatched styles?
3. If you live in an older community, select a particular neighborhood and trace the evolution of buildings and businesses in that area in different areas of time — perhaps in 20-year increments. Have students analyze the changes and develop a profile of the area over the years.
4. From the Registrar of Voters, have students obtain copies of past ballot measures at the state, city and county level. Have students take various initiative measures from past elections, and prepare a report indicating the rationale behind the placement of these measures on the ballot. Many communities have had recall elections in the recent

past. Have students research the background and outcome of these elections. Include in the reports the question: Are there too many initiative and recall measures? Why or why not?

5. Have meeting agendas of the county board of supervisors or city council sent to your school and reproduced for students. City or county clerks will normally add schools to agenda mailing lists, or copies are often available in local public libraries. Have students track issues that interest them. You may also have the appropriate elected official or staff come to your class to explain the issues.
6. Use the schools in your community as a laboratory for investigating the history of your area. When were they constructed, how were they paid for, after whom are they named? Have students relate the growth of the community to the addition of new schools. If schools are closing, how does this reflect changes in your community? Invite school officials to provide background information. Invite graduates from earlier days to compare schools then and now in your area.

C. UNIT ONE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question 1. People in this country have established governments at the local, state and national levels in order to perform three types of tasks. Cite those three categories of tasks, list them in order of importance and give one example for each of your categories. Be prepared to defend your priority ranking.

Possible student responses

- a. *Governments: (1) provide services (police/fire, national defense, parks, etc.); (2) set public policy (raising taxes, investing in mass transit, requiring draft registration, etc.); and (3) regulate our society (traffic laws, parking regulations, air quality standards, etc.).*
- b. *Ranked priority will vary by individual; students should be aware that all functions are important, and that changing social conditions could affect rankings.*

Question 2. The industrial revolution, high rates of immigration, migration of people from farms to cities and the increasing complexity of cities led to widespread fraud and corruption. The Progressive Era nationally, as well as in California, led to a number of reforms that changed the way governments operate. List those reforms, select the one you feel was most significant and explain your selection.

Possible student responses

- a. *Answers will include the popular primary, office-block ballot, non-partisan elections, at-large election system, public employment merit systems, professional city managers, initiative, referendum and recall.*
- b. *Students could also include more recent reform measures, including sunshine laws and campaign finance measures.*
- c. *Answers will vary for the most significant reform measure. The question is designed to have students analyze each reform measure in order to make their selections. You may wish to compile the suggestions and develop a class ranking, leading to further analysis.*

Question 3. Analyze the three pictures shown on pages 10 and 11 of your student guide showing the same area over four periods of time. Choose one of the periods and explain why you would prefer to live in the community during that period of time. What are the positives and negatives about the community in your time period? Support your answer.

Possible student responses

Answers will vary. Discussion should include how different age groups might select communities, how students' interests might change over time. Again, a class ranking might be compiled, and perhaps compared with the students' parents or neighbors ranking of communities.

D. INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

Unit I offers an opportunity for:

- photography classes to be involved by having students photograph schools in the community for a presentation on the history of the community for the showcase activity.
- art classes to prepare posters for display, showing community neighborhood changes over the years, or enlarging the schematics on pages 10 and 11 of the student guide.
- foreign language classes to translate the ballots, either those on page 13 of the student guide or from your community, into different languages. The art classes could enlarge these as well.
- math classes to create a time-line of important developments in the early history of cities, reform movements and significant developments as outlined in Unit I.

E. CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Unit One: Where Did Our Local Governments Come From?

Answer Key to Questions on Page 15

1. At the start of the 20th century, approximately what percentage of the United States population lived in rural areas?

70 percent

2. How many cities were in the United States at the time of the Revolutionary War?

24

3. Roughly what percentage of the United States population lived in cities at the time of the Revolutionary War?

3 percent

4. Who was the first president to be known as a champion of the “Common Man”?

Andrew Jackson

5. When did women finally achieve the right to vote in all elections in the United States?

1920

6. What law was changed to guarantee women the right to vote in the United States?

The United States Constitution

7. How many Spanish missions were founded in pre-American California?

21

8. What was the Spanish equivalent for the office of mayor in California?

Alcalde

9. How many cities were created by the legislature in California’s first year of statehood?

12

10. What are the “spoils” in a “spoils system”?

The right to appoint government employees

11. What did you have to do to be called a “Robber Baron” in the late 1800s?

Own one of the largest businesses

12. From what country was the idea of the secret ballot imported?

Australia

13. In the late 1800s the California legislature was accused of favoring what key industry?

The railroad

14. In what year was California’s state constitution first adopted?

1849

15. Name one local matter the framers of California’s state constitution wanted decided at the local level.

Hours and wages of city employees; land use; regulation of buildings and construction; local government services

16. What was the name of the California governor most associated with the Progressive Movement?

Hiram Johnson

17. What did the Progressives invent to take the power to nominate candidates away from party bosses?

The primary election

18. What is a non-partisan election?

Candidates’ political parties do not appear on the ballot.

19. What is an “initiative” as created by the Progressive Movement in California?

Voters create laws directly, bypassing elected representatives.

20. What is a “referendum”?

Voters nullify a law passed by elected representatives.

21. What is a “recall”?

Voters replace an elected official before completion of the term.

22. What is the difference between a “party-column” ballot and an “office-block” ballot?

On an “office-block” ballot, candidates are listed according to the office they are running for; on a “party-column” ballot, all candidates for that party are listed in the same column.

23. What do voters do when they “split their ballot”?

They vote for candidates from more than one political party.

24. What does it mean to hire public workers on a “merit system”?

Competitive examinations are used in hiring workers.

25. Name one appliance in your home that has made the initiative process more important in recent years.

Television