Social Studies  
6-8  
Government  
Sample Test Questions  
Students use knowledge of the purposes, structures and processes of political systems at the local, state, national and international levels to understand that people create systems of government as structures of power and authority to provide order, maintain stability and promote the general welfare.

Benchmark A  
Explain why people institute governments, how they influence governments, and how governments interact with each other.
Grade band: 6-8  
Subject: Social Studies  
Benchmark: Government A  
Question type: Multiple Choice  

Bloom: Comprehension  

Question: A basic idea stated by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence is that  

A. The power to govern a nation comes from the people  
B. People should always follow their government  
C. America must have a constitutional convention  
D. Slavery must end in America  

Rubric:  

Answer - A
**Grade band:** 6-8  
**Subject:** Social Studies  
**Benchmark:** Government A  
**Question type:** Multiple Choice  

**Bloom:** Knowledge  

**Question:** Early peoples create governments. Select the main reason why early peoples needed government.

A. They wanted peace and security  
B. They needed methods for citizens to vote  
C. They needed ways to increase trade and commerce  
D. They wanted to increase the power of local leaders

**Rubric:** Answer - A
Grade band: 6-8
Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government A
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Knowledge

Question: The world is divided into many countries. How do these countries interact with each other?

A. Countries around the world all vote for the same leaders and policies
B. Countries around the world decide together how all countries will be governed.
C. Countries around the world interact through diplomacy, treaties, and military conflicts.
D. Countries around the world interact through local political parties to elect local leaders.

Rubric: Answer - C
The first political parties in the United States, the Federalist Party and the Democratic Republican Party, developed around issues of how the United States would work. Identify two of the issues that caused political parties to form and discuss that parties view.

**Rubric:**
Possible answers may include…

- **Payment of Debt**
  - Federalists – The United States would pay off all debt including each state debt
  - Dem. Republican – Southern States had already paid their debts

- **Establishment of national bank**
  - Federalists – Would allow the US to do business, collect taxes, pay debt and stimulate the economy and business and industry
  - Dem. Republican – Saw the bank as a means to enrich the wealth of the northerners. Wanted US to be an Agrarian (farming) society.

- **Strict or loose interpretation of the Constitution**
  - Federalists – Favored a loose interpretation to allow the government to adjust to different times and issues
  - Dem. Republican – Favored a strict interpretation
Grade band: 6-8
Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government A
Question type: Short Answer

Bloom: Comprehension

Question: Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. In the document, Jefferson wrote about the rights of men and relied on the theories of European political philosophies from the Age of Enlightenment (Age of Reason). Discuss two of Jefferson’s views on the rights of man in the Declaration of Independence.

Rubric: Student answer should discuss how 1) all men are created equal and are endowed with 2) unalienable rights such as life, liberty and the pursuits of happiness.

2 points – Student gives two rights of man
1 points – Students gives one right of man
Grade band: 6-8  
Subject: Social Studies  
Benchmark: Government A  
Question type: Extended Response

Bloom: Analysis

Question: The first political parties in the United States, the Federalist Party and the Democratic Republican Party, developed around issues of how the United States would work. Identify two of the issues that caused political parties to form and discuss that parties view.

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• Strict or loose interpretation of the Constitution  
  Federalists – Favored a loose interpretation to allow the government to adjust to different times and issues  
  Dem. Republican – Favored a strict interpretation of the Constitution. Government can only do what the Constitution specifically states. This protects states rights and individual liberties of people.

• Support for England or France  
  Federalists – Favored closer ties with England, our traditional treaty partner, cultural and family ties, democratic government  
  Dem. Republican – distrustful of England, favored France. France had helped us during the American Revolution

4 points – Student identifies 2 issues that caused the formation of political parties and discusses a viewpoint for each
3 points – Student identifies 2 issues that caused the formation of political parties and discusses one viewpoint of the parties involved OR student identifies 1 issue that caused political parties to form and discusses the viewpoint of each party for the stated issue.
2 points – Student identifies two issues that caused the formation of political parties but does not discuss the viewpoints of the parties involved OR student identifies one issue and discusses the viewpoint of one party
1 point – Student identifies one issue that caused the formation of political parties OR discusses the viewpoint of one political party.
Question: One result of British regulations such as the Sugar and Stamp Act was America’s resentment of 

A. Foreign alliances  
B. Locally appointed governing bodies  
C. Taxation without representation  
D. Government control of speech

Rubric: Answer – C
Grade band: 6-8
Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government A
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Application

Question: “My motive and object in all my political works, beginning with Common Sense, the first work I ever published, have been to rescue man from tyranny and false systems...of government, and enable him to be free....

-Thomas Paine, 1806

An important effect of Common Sense was that it persuaded many ____

A. Ordinary people to support independence from Great Britain
B. Rich merchants to leave the colonies
C. Loyalists to support the king
D. Loyalists and patriots to unite against Great Britain

Rubric: Answer – A
Grade band: 6-8  
Subject: Social Studies  
Benchmark: Government A  
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Comprehension

Question:

Based on the cartoon, which of the following best explains the impact of the Monroe Doctrine?

A. The United States would not allow foreign nations to form alliances  
B. The United States would not allow further European colonization in the Western Hemisphere  
C. The United States would serve as a negotiator between European nations  
D. The United States would protect the economic interests of Europe

Rubric: Answer – B
**Question:** The weakness of the Articles of Confederation and Shay’s Rebellion caused many Americans to realize the country needed a stronger national government. Name the meeting that was held in response to this feeling and the document that was a result of this meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Document</th>
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**Rubric:** The meeting was the Constitutional Convention. The document was the Constitution.

2 points – Student answers both the Constitutional Convention and the Constitution
1 point – Student answers either the Constitutional Convention or the Constitution
Grade band: 6-8
Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government A
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Knowledge

Question:
The purpose of the Bill of Rights is to ______

A. Allow people to do what they want
B. Prevent the people from abusing their power
C. Assure the people are protected from their government
D. Provide the government with the power to do its job

Rubric: Answer - C
Benchmark B

Explain how the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, and the Northwest Ordinance have provided for the protection of rights and the long-term future of a growing democracy.
Grade band: 6-8

Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government B
Question type: Extended Response

Bloom: Analysis

Question: The United States constitution guarantees all citizens certain rights that legally cannot be taken away. United States citizens also have certain responsibilities that they should fulfill in order to make the country a better place to live.

Identify two rights guaranteed to all citizens by the United States Constitution and explain the importance of these rights in a democratic society.

Rubric:

Possible answers may include

- Freedom of Speech – Allows citizens to express their views
- Freedom of Religion – Allows citizens to worship the Deity of their choice
- Freedom of Press – Allows citizens access to information
- Freedom of Petition – Allows citizens to ask their government to address their concerns

4 points – Student correctly identifies 2 rights and corresponding importance
3 points – Student correctly identifies 2 rights and 1 corresponding importance
2 points – Student correctly identifies 2 rights but no corresponding importance OR 1 right and the corresponding importance
1 point – Student correctly identifies 1 right
The framers of the U.S. Constitution wanted to prevent the new federal government from becoming a dictatorship. To keep the government from becoming too powerful, they divided its powers among three branches – the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the judicial branch. For each of the three branches of government identify one power given to it by the Constitution. Explain why one of the powers you identified is important in our system of government.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive Powers</th>
<th>Legislative Powers</th>
<th>Judicial Powers</th>
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Rubric: Possible answers could include:

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<tr>
<td>Make appointments</td>
<td>Override Presidential veto</td>
<td>Declare acts of Congress unconstitutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veto laws</td>
<td>Confirm executive appointments</td>
<td>Declare executive actions unconstitutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiate foreign treaties</td>
<td>Ratify treaties</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The importance of these powers...
- Make appointments – the President needs people to run the government
- Veto laws – the Executive Branch needs the ability to check the power of the Legislative Branch
- Negotiate Foreign Treaties – The Executive branch needs the ability to interact with foreign governments
- The powers to override Presidential veto, confirm appointments and ratify treaties are important because they give the Legislative Branch the ability to check the power of the Executive Branch
- The powers to declare acts of Congress and Executive actions unconstitutional gives the Judicial Branch the ability to check the powers of the Executive and Legislative Branch

4 points – Student correctly identifies a power for each of the 3 branches of government and gives a plausible explanation of the importance for one.
3 points – Student correctly identifies a power for each of the 3 branches of government but fails to explain the importance of any of them, OR student identifies 2 powers and explains the importance of one
2 points – Student correctly identifies a power for 2 branches of government but fails to explain the importance of them OR, identifies one power for one branch of government and gives an explanation of the importance of that power.
1 point – Student correctly identifies one power for only one branch of government
Grade band: 6-8
Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government B
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Knowledge

Question: Under our system of checks and balance, the Supreme Court can limit the power of both the Congress and the President by…

A. Impeaching public officials
B. Vetoing a law
C. Making appointments
D. Declaring a law unconstitutional

Rubric: Answer - D
**Grade band:** 6-8  
**Subject:** Social Studies  
**Benchmark:** Government B  
**Question type:** Extended Response

**Bloom:** Evaluation

**Question:** The Articles of Confederation was the first attempt of the United States to form a government. They were eventually replaced by our current Constitution. List and explain at least two arguments to defend the following statements: The Articles of Confederation created a weak and ineffective national government.

**Rubric:**

- The Articles of Confederation limited the powers of Congress
  - It required the agreement of 9 out of 13 states to pass laws
  - Congress could not regulate trade between states or between states and foreign governments
  - The government could not pass laws regarding taxes, they had to ask states for money to run the national government

- National government had no president
  - There was no one to carryout and execute laws of government

- No method or mechanism to settle disputes between states
  - Land disputes in west almost led to war between some states.

- Foreign countries took advantage of the United States
  - Without taxing authority, Congress could not afford to pay for an Army or Navy to force Britain out of the Ohio Valley, or force Spain to open the port of New Orleans to American farmers

- States printed their own money or used English pounds or Spanish currency
  - The caused great difficulty because most states would not accept any currency except their own thus making trade difficult

- Shays Rebellion
  - National government lacked an army and a commander to put down rebellions

4 points – Student identifies two arguments and gives an explanation for each  
3 points – Student identifies two arguments and gives an explanation for one OR student identifies one argument and gives two explanations for its defense  
2 points – Student identifies two arguments but does not defend either one OR student gives one argument and its defense  
1 point – Student identifies one argument or defense for the statement
Grade band: 6-8
Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government B
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Knowledge

Question: During the early years of the United States, under the Articles of Confederation a rebellion by Massachusetts’s farmers protesting government actions occurred. The rebellion was called ____

A. The Whiskey Rebellion
B. The Civil War
C. Shay’s Rebellion
D. The Pinckney Rebellion

Rubric: Answer – C
**Grade band: 6-8**
**Subject: Social Studies**
**Benchmark: Government B**
**Question type: Short Answer**

**Bloom: Comprehension**

**Question:** In 1786, Daniel Shay, a Massachusetts’s farmer, led a rebellion. 1,000 angry farmers attacked the courthouse and tried to take a warehouse full of rifles and gunpowder. It was called Shay’s Rebellion. Describe one cause and one result of the rebellion.

**Rubric:**

**Causes**
1. An economic depression caused prices to fall.
2. Many farmers who had borrowed money during the American Revolution could not pay their taxes
3. Massachusetts threatened to seize their farms

**Result**
1. Proved that the Articles of Confederation were not working.
2. Leaders from several states called for a convention to fix the Articles of Confederation
3. Ultimately, the Articles of Confederation were abandoned and a new Constitution was proposed.

2 points – Student gives one cause and one result
1 point – Student gives either one cause OR one result
**Grade band:** 6-8  
**Subject:** Social Studies  
**Benchmark:** Government B  
**Question type:** Multiple Choice

**Bloom:** Knowledge

**Question:** The U.S. Constitution maintains a republican system of government through the ___

A. President’s power to veto acts of Congress  
B. Appointment of federal judges to life terms  
C. Election of representatives who make laws  
D. Creation of a presidential cabinet

**Rubric:** Answer – C
Grade band: 6-8
Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government B
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Comprehension

Question:

Checks and Balances
A system by which each branch of government limits the power of the other branches

Which of these is an example of the system of checks and balances?

A. Congress can regulate industry
B. Governors can pardon federal prisoners
C. The president can veto bills passed by Congress
D. The supreme Court can impeach members of Congress

Rubric: Answer – C
**Grade band:** 6-8  
**Subject:** Social Studies  
**Benchmark:** Government B  
**Question type:** Multiple Choice

**Bloom:** Knowledge

**Question:** In 1803 Thomas Jefferson made one of his most important contributions as president when he ____

A. Wrote the Declaration of Independence  
B. Became the leader of the Democratic-Republican Party  
C. Founded the University of Virginia  
D. Purchased the Louisiana Territory from France

**Rubric:** Answer – D
Grade band: 6-8
Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government B
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Knowledge

Question: One reason freedom of the press was included in the Bill of Rights was the important role newspapers played in_____

A. Alerting the British troops about the colonists’ activities
B. Publishing battle plans and detailed maps
C. Spreading information and helping unify the colonies
D. Spreading Loyalist propaganda

Rubric: Answer – C
**Grade band:** 6-8  
**Subject:** Social Studies  
**Benchmark:** Government B  
**Question type:** Multiple Choice

**Bloom:** Knowledge

**Question:** In 1787 many of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention opposed ratification of the U.S. Constitution because of its failure to ____

A. Include a bill of rights  
B. Reduce states’ rights  
C. Eliminate slavery  
D. Establish a foreign-trade policy

**Rubric:** Answer – A
Grade band: 6-8
Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government B
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Knowledge

Question: Which of these parts of the United States constitution contains fundamental liberties of American citizens?

A. Preamble
B. Article I, Section 8 – Enumerated Powers
C. Article III – Judicial Branch
D. Amendments 1-10 – Bill of Rights

Rubric: Answer – D
**Grade band:** 6-8  
**Subject:** Social Studies  
**Benchmark:** Government B  
**Question type:** Multiple Choice

**Bloom:** Knowledge

**Question:** In his Farewell Address, George Washington urged the American people to

A. Limit a president to two terms in office  
B. Value and maintain a sense of national unity  
C. Create a defensive alliance with European countries  
D. Establish more effective political parties

**Rubric:** Answer – D
Grade band: 6-8
Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government B
Question type: Multiple choice

Bloom: Knowledge

Question: Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address is similar to the Declaration of Independence in that both documents

A. Increase descriptions of laws which should be passed
B. Emphasize the need for effective government
C. Support the ideals of self-government and human rights
D. Justify the need for economic change

Rubric: Answer - C
Benchmark C

Compare the defining characteristics of democracies, monarchies and dictatorships.
Grade band: 6-8

Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government C
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Analysis

Question: We are called a democracy [because power] is in the hands of the many and not the few….When it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses….We are prevented from doing wrong by …respect for the laws.

-Pericles, a government leader in Athens, Greece, in approximately 450 B.C.

Based on the passage, which of these activities would MOST LIKELY have occurred in Athens during the time of Pericles?

E. A king issues an order
F. A citizen holds public office
G. The government bans minority opinions
H. The government imposes a law without legislative approval

Rubric: Answer – B
Question: We are called a democracy [because power] is in the hands of the many and not the few….When it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses….We are prevented from doing wrong by …respect for the laws.

-Pericles, a government leader in Athens, Greece, in approximately 450 B.C.

Using the statement by Pericles, fill in the chart below to provide examples of the way government operates in the United States that are consistent with the statements by Pericles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement by Pericles</th>
<th>Examples of the way government operates in the United States that are consistent with the statements by Pericles</th>
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</table>

**Rubric:**

1) Representatives are elected by the people, voting is established express the people’s views
2) Anyone can run for public office, limitations for public office are not tied to a particular class

2 points – student gives one example for each statement
1 point – student gives an example for on statement
Grade band: 6-8  
Subject: Social Studies  
Benchmark: Government C  
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Comprehension

Question: Greece’s mountainous terrain and its series of small islands influenced the ancient Greeks to develop

A. A political system based on independent city-states  
B. A culture that was uniform throughout its vast empire  
C. An economic system based on mining precious metals  
D. A society completely isolated from other civilizations

Rubric: Answer – A
Grade band: 6-8
Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government C
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Knowledge

Question: In the Gettysburg Address, President Lincoln said that Union soldiers had sacrificed their lives to ensure that “government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.” What type of government was Lincoln referring to?

A. Monarchy
B. Oligarchy
C. Aristocracy
D. Democracy

Rubric: Answer – D
Grade band: 6-8
Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government C
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Knowledge

Question: In medieval Europe, law and order were maintained by the _____

A. Legions
B. Merchants
C. Nobility
D. Serfs

Rubric: Answer - C
**Grade band:** 6-8  
**Subject:** Social Studies  
**Benchmark:** Government C  
**Question type:** Multiple Choice

**Bloom:** Knowledge

**Question:** During the medieval period in Europe, the political power of the kings and great nobles was often constrained by the actions of ____

- A. Elected parliaments  
- B. High Church officials  
- C. The growing middle class  
- D. Organized groups of serfs

**Rubric:** Answer - B
Grade band: 6-8
Subject: Social Studies
Benchmark: Government C
Question type: Multiple Choice

Bloom: Knowledge

Question: What were both the Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights designed to do?

A. Limit the power of the monarch  
B. Provide for religious freedom  
C. Accept the theory of divine right  
D. Give commoners the right to vote

Rubric: Answer - A