Why Government? Power, Public Needs, and Accountability

First & Last Name: _____ Date: _____

CENTRAL QUESTION

When does government serve the people, and how can people judge its performance?

Learning objective

Analyze four source sets, evaluate evidence and limitations, and defend a civic judgment through interdisciplinary inquiry.

Demonstration of learning

Complete the daily evidence tasks, earn a score on 15 multiple choice items, and write a source based RACE response using the 19 point rubric.

Standards and task alignment

NJSLS Social Studies: 6.3.8.CivicsPI.1; 6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.b. Applied in daily analysis and the final civic judgment. NJSLS ELA (2023): RI.CR.6.1 (evidence), RI.CI.6.2 (central ideas), W.AW.6.1 (argument), SL.PE.6.1 (discussion). National CCSS: RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.2, RH.6-8.7; WHST.6-8.1 and WHST.6-8.9. NJSLS / CCSS Math: 6.RP.A.3 (ratios and percent); Science, technology, arts, history, and civic participation are integrated through the named tasks; no additional science or arts code is claimed.

Five lesson sequence

Days 1 to 4: read, annotate, analyze, collaborate, and write. Day 5: 15 question assessment and extended RACE response. Each lesson is designed for 40 minutes; teacher notes provide timing and supports.

Academic vocabulary

government: institutions that make and enforce public decisions; authority: recognized power to act; public good: a shared benefit; accountability: obligation to explain and answer for decisions; consent: agreement; equity: fairness that considers barriers

Source integrity

Readings are original Ma’at instructional syntheses. Exact historical excerpts are marked. Classroom datasets and scenarios are labeled; they are not historical records or actual government budgets. Source references appear on page 13.

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DAY 1

Source A | Purposes and promises

Do Now

List two problems a community cannot easily solve through one household acting alone.

[1] The Preamble to the United States Constitution identifies purposes for the new government. Primary excerpt, 1787: 'establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare'. These goals include fair treatment, public peace, shared defense, and community well being. A purpose is a standard for judging government; it is not proof that the standard has been met.

[2] Governments make decisions that affect many people, collect revenue, and organize services. A government can build a road or support a court, but people must still ask who benefits and who carries the costs. A private club's rules apply to its members; a government's laws operate through public authority within its jurisdiction. Neither authority nor popularity automatically makes a decision just.

[3] The Preamble also speaks of liberty and future generations. Reading these purposes together creates a difficult question: how can officials protect public safety while respecting individual freedom? Citizens can test an action against several purposes rather than assuming that one goal always defeats another.

Annotation task: underline a central claim; box one civic term; mark one detail as evidence; add a question where evidence or authority needs clarification.

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