



Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills 8th Edition

Benchmark MOY

Grade 8

Student Materials

Government

Societies tend to function best when there are well-defined laws. Yet, even more important than the laws are the people who get to decide, enact, and enforce those laws. The people and structures that make those decisions are called government. Worldwide there are many types of government. These function at local, regional, and national levels. In all instances, government is the basis of power and control. But even when power is shared among people, problems arise. So, no form of rule is perfect.

An aristocratic government is power and control in the hands of a few people. Usually these people are thought to be different from the general population in some way. Ways in which aristocrats are thought to be different include: wealth, physical strength, intelligence, honor, technology, or achievement.

A despotic government is absolute power and control in the hands of a single person or very small group. Despotic rulers often rule out of self-interest and ignore the desires of the people. They often come to power in one of two ways. First, they can inherit power from a relative—such as a king or queen. These are known as absolute monarchs or dictators. Second, a despotic government can seize power from their predecessors. This process is called a military coup. Often despotic governments are authoritarian or totalitarian. This means that the person or people in power try to control all aspects of life.

A democratic government is one in which people are involved in decision making. There are two main ways democracies function. One is direct democracy where people get to create, vote on, and enact laws on their own. The other is indirect democracy where citizens elect politicians to vote on and enact laws. Often in democracies a simple majority wins, but this can put people with minority viewpoints at a disadvantage.

Anarchy is the opposite of government where a population is not ruled by any controlling body. In some senses, people view anarchy as disorder due to the lack of laws. However, for proponents of this form of “government”, it removes all power structures. It makes individuals truly equal because it removes power from those with wealth, strength, merit, military arms, honor, and technology.