

Principles of American Democracy

Paragraph Questions

United States Government: Democracy In Action

In addition to completing textbook assignments and class projects, you must complete at least 10 of the following questions in at least 5 complete sentences each. You may choose which questions you wish to answer, but you may not select more than 1 question from any chapter.

Chapter 1

-Contrast the social contract theory of government with the divine right theory. What type of government would result from each theory?
-Compare who benefits from government decisions made in an autocracy with who benefits from government decisions made in a representative democracy.

Chapter 2

-How did adding the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution express principles established centuries before in the Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights?
-In what ways does the Declaration of Independence express the ideas of John Locke?

Chapter 3

-Identify three constitutional amendments adopted since the Bill of Rights that have made American government more democratic, and explain how each has done so.
-Explain the power of judicial review and how it checks the power of the executive and legislative branches.

Chapter 4

-Explain the "privileges and immunities" clause and why it does not apply to nonresidents who attend a state's public universities.
-Explain why laws differ from state to state and how those differences are related to federalism.

Chapter 5

-How does the existence of committees in the House and Senate enable Congress to work more efficiently?
-Explain how redistricting makes Congress equally representative of all the people.

Chapter 6

-Why might the writers of the Constitution have required that all tax laws originate in the House of Representatives rather than in the Senate?
-Explain how the system of checks and balances slows down the process of government.

Chapter 7

-Explain why pork-barrel legislation and logrolling exist and how they affect government spending.
-For what reasons do so few bills introduced into Congress ever become law?

Chapter 8

-Which of the informal requirements for the presidency do you believe is most important in helping a candidate to be elected? Explain your answer.
-What factors that a president must consider in choosing a cabinet diminish its value as a source for the president?

Chapter 9

-Explain how the Vietnam War first allowed an expansion of presidential power and later caused power to be limited.
-Explain how some presidents have lost touch with the people. Why is it important to a president's leadership skills that this does not happen?

Chapter 10

-Why have changes in the nation over the past 200 years caused a need for a civil service system?
-Explain whether the civil service system or the spoils system better provides the average person with access to government jobs.

Chapter 11

-Why might a person who is being sued by someone who lives in another state demand that the case be tried in a federal court?
-Should a person's opinions on the controversial issues of the day be a factor in his or her selection as a Supreme Court justice? Explain why or why not.

Chapter 12

-What two actions could Congress take to undo a Supreme Court ruling that a federal law is unconstitutional? Explain the advantages and disadvantages of each action.
-What characteristics of the Supreme Court allow the law to be both predictable and flexible? Why is it important that the Court have these qualities?

Chapter 13

-Why does the law allow publication of defamatory information about government officials that it would not allow to be published about private citizens?
-How might the exercise of freedom of assembly conflict with individual rights and freedoms?

Chapter 14

-How might being unable to speak or understand English affect someone's ability to exercise his or her rights and responsibilities as a citizen?
-Explain why a city council meeting to discuss hiring more city employees must be open to the public, while a meeting to discuss firing an employee can be closed.

Chapter 15

-Describe the alternatives to a jury trial that exist for deciding a lawsuit.
-Why do citizens in a democracy need to know about the legal system?

Chapter 16

-In what ways could third parties have a positive effect on the major political parties?
-What advantages does an open primary have over a closed primary? What are some drawbacks of open primaries?

Chapter 17

-Uninformed voters tend to be more influenced by the candidates' images. Describe three propaganda techniques that candidates use to gain the support of such voters.
-Explain why reform of the laws governing campaign financing is so difficult to achieve.

Chapter 18

-Why would the president pay more attention to poll results on an issue than to letters about it received from thousands of citizens?
-How would the views of a liberal, a conservative, and a libertarian differ on government regulation of airline fares so that more people could afford to fly?

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Chapter 19

-Why have the broadcast media largely surpassed the print media as the public's main source of information?
-Explain why private ownership of the media is important in a democracy.

Chapter 20

-If the government's spending is greater than its income, identify the two ways it can raise additional money. Explain the effect that each might have on the budget and the economy.
-Explain how the Federal Reserve uses member banks to influence the nation's economy.

Chapter 21

-What are the costs to business and to the American people of achieving and maintaining an unpolluted environment?
-How might the states be affected if there were no federal control over public assistance programs and benefits were much better in some states than in others?

Chapter 22

-Did the end of Cold War make a return to conscription seem more or less likely? Explain your answer.
-What problems and challenges might exist in establishing democracy in a country where it has never before existed?

Chapter 23

-How are the structure and functioning of state legislatures similar to that of the United States Congress?
-Great differences exist among the governments and laws of the 50 states. What arguments could be made for and against abolishing state governments and bringing all Americans under the same set of laws regardless of where they live?

Chapter 24

-Compare the mayor-council and council-manager forms of city government. What advantages and disadvantages does each form have?
-Why is it more difficult for many small communities to provide water and sewage services to their citizens than it is to provide them with police and fire protection?

Chapter 25

-Explain why until recently Mexico has not been a true democracy.
-Compare the roles of the General Assembly and the Security Council in the United Nations' effort to maintain world peace.

Chapter 26

-Why is rapid population growth in a poor nation a major obstacle to economic development and a higher standard of living?
-For what reasons have many developing African nations rejected capitalism in favor of various forms of socialism?

Sample Answers to Paragraph Questions

Below are additional questions and samples on how they can be answered. Use these samples as a guide when writing your answers.

Chapter 1

-Why might the wealthy people of a poor country support an oligarchy when faced with a communist revolution in their country?

Oligarchies get their power from a wealth, military strength, and/or social position. They have a lot of control over their citizens. Wealthy people might seek military support and government control when faced with a movement that called for the redistribution of their wealth.

Chapter 9

-What checks does the Constitution give Congress on the president's powers as chief diplomat and commander in chief? How effective are these checks?

The requirements that the Senate ratify or approve treaties limits the president's powers over foreign policy. The power of Congress to declare war checks the president's control of the military. However, neither has worked very well. Executive agreements get around the Senate and many presidents have committed troops without a declaration of war.

Chapter 16

-Why do ideological third parties tend to be more successful than single-issue third parties?

A single-issue party loses its appeal once its issue is no longer important to voters, or a major party adopts the issue as its own. By focusing on overall change, an ideological party appeals to a wider range of voters. Its broad message stays attractive after individual issues no longer are relevant or attract support.

Chapter 24

-How and why will continued emphasis on urban renewal and economic development affect the need for infrastructure and mass transit improvements in many cities?

Pressures to improve these systems will increase. Renewal and economic growth will bring more people and businesses to the city center. This movement will put more pressure on roads, water and sewer lines, etc. The need for mass transit, if not met will put even more private vehicles on roads that are not prepared to meet the need.