SS.7.C.3.2-Compare parliamentary, federal, confederal, and unitary systems of government.

Different Governments: Federal, Confederal and Unitary

What role does the central government play?

Federal: “Set of Chairs”

A federal form of government splits power between independent states and a central government. The power rests in both places, and each gets its authority from a governing document, like the U.S. Constitution. Independent branches inside the central government may also share power.

Mark each characteristic of federalism S if it’s a strength of that type of government and W if it’s a weakness.

___ There is national unity, but local governments can act as well
___ Citizens have more opportunities to be heard
___ Services can be duplicated by different levels of government
___ Disputes occur between national power and states’ rights

Confederal: “Many Different Chairs”

The confederal form of government is an association of independent states. The central government gets its authority from the independent states. Power rests in each individual state, whose representatives meet to address the needs of the group. America tried a confederal system before writing an entirely new constitution. This type of plan didn’t work for us because the states did not give the central government enough power to do its job.

Mark each characteristic of a confederal form of government S if it’s a strength of that type of government and W if it’s a weakness.

___ Keeps the power of government at the local level
___ States cooperate without losing their independence
___ Central government may be too weak to be effective
___ Laws may differ from state to state; no uniformity

Unitary: “One Big Chair”

In a unitary form of government, all the power rests in a central government. The country may be divided into states or other sub-units, but they have no power of their own. For example, England depends on its Parliament, a legislative body, to create and enforce the laws in the country. The leader of the nation, the Prime Minister, is a member of the Parliament and does not have any more power than its members.

Mark each characteristic of a unitary government S if it’s a strength of that type of government and W if it’s a weakness.

___ Uniform laws, policies, and enforcement across the country
___ Little conflict between state and national governments
___ Government may be slow to meet local problems
___ Difficult to meet all the needs of all the citizens
SS.7.C.3.2 - Compare parliamentary, federal, confederal, and unitary systems of government.

Imagine you are in charge of creating a government for a brand new country! Which system would you choose if...

A. FEDERAL       B. CONFEDERAL       C. UNITARY

___ 1. You want the central government to have the most power?

___ 2. You want laws to be the same throughout the country?

___ 3. You want the central government to have the least power?

___ 4. You want individual states to keep as much independence as possible?

___ 5. You want both national laws and state laws to exist?

___ 6. You don't care whether individual states have any power?

___ 7. You want a balance between power in the states and the central government?

___ 8. You want there to be few, if any, national laws?

Extension:
Imagine you are a member of a constitutional convention for a new country. Prepare a short speech on whether or not this new country should adopt a unitary, federal or confederal form of government. Use at least three textual references from either the Gateway book (341-343) or this handout to support your choice. Answer should contain at least 6 sentences.

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