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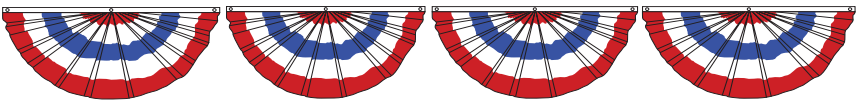
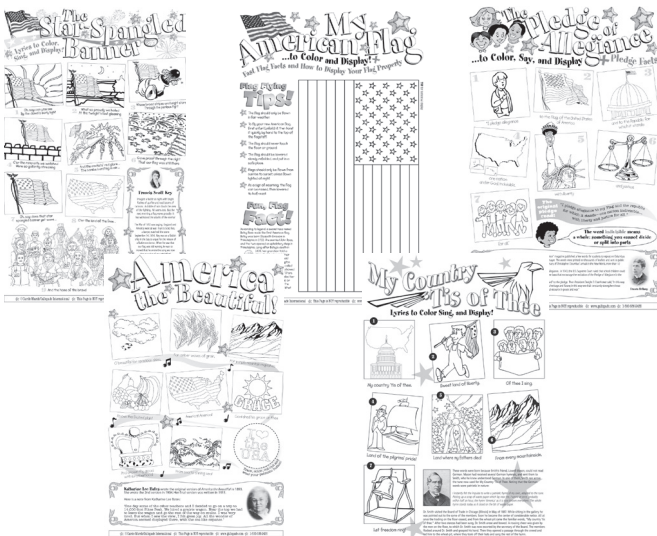
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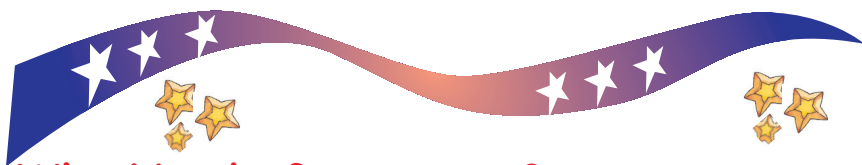


Other Related Books



Related Activity Packs





Who Needs Government?

Before students can understand the importance of elections, they need to understand government and what it does for them. What role does government play in their daily lives? Why do societies need a government? Why are government leaders important?



government: organization that has the power to make and enforce laws for a certain territory

To explain the role of government, start with a vision of your everyday town...a public school, hospital, fire department, police department, library, court, and highways.

Start with the school and explain how the government helps to fund public schools. The money for desks, computers, supplies, books, and teachers' salaries comes largely from the government. And don't forget transportation! The buses and the roads they travel on are paid for by the government (with tax money, of course!).

Next, explain that the government helps finance the building of some hospitals and has programs to make sure that people get the care they need even if they can't afford to pay for it. The government funds the police force, fire department, libraries, and the courts. The government makes sure that people have access to water and power. The government protects the safety of citizens in many ways—like establishing building codes for houses and speed limits for highways.



Why do societies need a government?

James Madison once wrote:

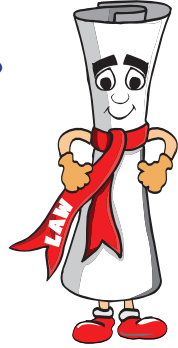
"If men were angels, no government would be necessary."



People are not perfect, are they? Therefore, every society needs an institution to make and enforce rules. These rules are based on moral principles. Government maintains order and security, provides necessary services, and resolves conflicts!

☆☆ Why are government leaders important?

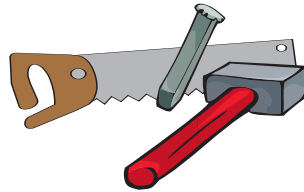
If a society is to live under certain laws, and those laws are put in place by government leaders, then the quality of leadership is critically important! That's the bottom line of why voting is so important; so that citizens can choose the people who make so many critical decisions about their lives!



Build a Town!

Description:

This is a town made of shoeboxes where students draw and construct government buildings.



Objective:

Students will think about all the things that government does for them on a daily basis, and recognize government facilities.

Materials:

Shoe boxes, art supplies including crayons, colored pencils, glue, and decorative items like pipe cleaners, toothpicks, ribbon, cardboard, buttons, construction paper, modeling clay, etc. Students may also want to bring in rocks, leaves, or other natural items.

What to Do:

1. Divide the class into teams. Ask teams to pick something to build. Choices include a hospital, school, fire station, police station, library, or highway.
2. Decorate your box! Create the inside of the building. For example, the hospital will have beds and an operating room, and the police station will have a jail. The highway box might include a bridge, trees, highway signs, and cars, of course.



3. Put all the boxes together to make a town. Create an entrance with a sign. Ask each group to explain the role that their "box" plays in the life of a town. Ask each group where their "box" is located in their town!

Don't Forget Local Government!

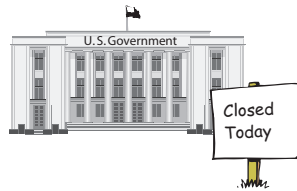
Explain to students that our federal system of government divides power between the federal, state, and local governments. Government has a very big job to do in a very big country!



No Government Today!

Description:

Students will look at examples of government services on index cards. They will be told that this particular service is not available today, and will have to think about the consequences.



Objective:

Help students see that government is not a vague, faraway entity with no impact on their daily lives.

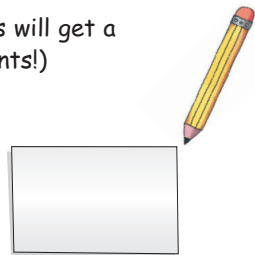
Materials:

Index cards or pieces of paper

What to Do:

Write the following examples of local government services on index cards (plus any others you can think of!):

- Traffic lights
- Clean water
- Trash pickup
- Electricity
- Ambulance service
- Road repair
- Bus service
- Police
- Hospital
- Animal shelter
- Parks
- Sewer system (this will get a reaction from students!)



Put one card face down on students' desks. Announce to the class: "Sorry, we have NO local government today." One by one, have each student turn over his or her card and read what it says. To each, respond, "Sorry, there are NO traffic lights today," or "Sorry, we can't flush our toilets today." Ask students to describe the problems they will have without this service! (What? No electricity? I can't use the computer today???) Which service would they miss the most? Which service is most important for their safety and well-being?

At the end of the activity, ask students if they are glad that this activity was "just pretend!"

