"People shouldn't be afraid of their government. Governments should be afraid of their people."

Alan Moore, British writer

1. Government Discussion

1. What is the function of government? Why do we need governments? Do we even need governments?
2. Where do governments derive their power from?
3. What different types of government are there in the world?
4. Which countries have the best form of government? Which have the worst?
5. Does national culture determine the type of government a country has?
6. Has globalisation made the role of governments insignificant?
7. Can you explain how the system of government works in your country? What are the different branches and what are their responsibilities?
8. What determines whether a government is doing a good job or a bad job? Is your government doing a good job?

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2. Government Vocabulary

- **the corridors of power** (noun) – *the higher levels of government where important decisions are made.*
- **federal** (adjective), **federalism** (noun) – *a system of government in which states form a union but retain certain levels of independence; also used in this system to refer to the central government.*
- **to pull strings** (verb) – *to use one's influence or contacts to make something happen.*
- **big government** (AmE, insult), **the nanny state** (BrE, insult) (noun) – *a government and especially public sector that is considered excessively large to the extend it infringes on the rights and lives of citizens (used as an insult by the right to attack the left).*
- **the ruling class** (noun) – *the most powerful people in a society.*
- **sleaze** (BrE) (noun) – *dishonest or immoral behaviour, especially in politics.*

Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun):

1. For Karl Marx, **the ruling class** exploits and oppresses the working class.
2. Many historians believe that Rasputin was **pulling** the **strings** of Tsarina Alexandra, as well as other government ministers, in order to influence government policy.
3. The John Major Conservative government of the 90s was dogged by scandals and **sleaze** including extramarital affairs, accepting cash to ask questions in parliament, and criminal convictions for lying in court.
4. The United States operates a **federal** system of government where the various states retain the right to make their own laws in certain policy areas.
5. While conservatives criticise **big government** as an excessive waste of money, those on the left argue that it is necessary to provide valuable services like health, education and social security.
6. While **the corridors of power** in Britain are officially in the Houses of Parliament, many people believe they are really in the boardrooms of the major banks.

Government vocabulary comprehension questions

1. Have you ever visited the corridors of power in a country? Where did you go?
2. What are the pros and cons of a federal system of government as opposed to a centralised system? Which would you prefer?
3. Which people pull the strings of your government?
4. Would you prefer a big government or small government? Why?
5. What determines whether a person is a member of the ruling class in your country?
6. What kind of sleaze happens in your country?

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3. Video: Presidents & Prime Ministers

You are going to watch a video by TDC called "Parliamentary vs. Presidential Democracy Explained."

Watch the video here: https://yourenglishpal.com/blog/esl-conversation-lesson-plan-government/

While you watch the video, answer the following questions:

Multiple choice

1. How often do voters in the USA elect a president?
   a) 4 years *b) 5 years* *c) 6 years*
2. Why does the United States have an electoral college?
   a) to give voters a bigger voice ***b) to give states a bigger voice*** *c) to give the president a bigger voice*
3. How many terms does the Constitution limit presidents to?
   a) 2 *b) 4* *c) 6*
4. How many electoral constituencies are there in the UK?
   a) 630 *b) 640* ***c) 650***

Sentence completion

5. In the UK, the leader of whichever party wins the most seats in an election becomes the **prime minister**.
6. In the UK, cabinet appointments need no confirmation, whereas in the US, the **Senate** must confirm the president's choice of cabinet members.
7. In the US, for a **bill** to become law, the president must sign it after it has passed both chambers in Congress.
8. The upper chamber of the British Parliament, the House of Lords, is not **elected**.

Short answer

9. What does the president deliver every year to Congress? **The State of the Union Address**
10. Who does the British prime minister debate every week? **The leader of the opposition**
11. Who can impeach an American president? **The House of Representatives**
12. What is called if a no-confidence vote against the prime minister is passed? **A general election**

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4. Government Conversation Questions

1. Do you think governments act in the best interests of the people that elect them? If they don't, how is this possible?
2. Which people have the most influence over the government?
3. What kind of corruption happens in the government?
4. What causes governments to breakdown and fail? What are the consequences when this happens?
5. What are the main differences between a presidential system and a parliamentary system?
6. Which of these systems of government do you think is best? Which is more democratic? Which is more efficient?
7. Do you agree that presidents should be limited to one or two terms? Why shouldn't presidents be able to stand for election as many times as they want? Isn't it for the electorate to decide?
8. Do you agree with Professor Juan Linz when he said that presidential systems lead to civil war and political violence? Why do you think he came to that conclusion?

5. Government Writing Task

Write about your opinion of governments. Try to use some of the vocabulary you learned earlier in this lesson. In your answer, you could include some of the following topics:

- The responsibilities of a government.
- How your government works.
- What the best form of government is.

Alternative exam practice question:

Professor Juan Linz said that presidential systems are inherently unstable and are prone to inefficiency, political violence, and civil war. Do you agree or disagree with this?

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