

Teaching notes

This resource is meant to encourage students to work together and bond as a group in the early part of the course. It is also designed to improve their subject specific vocabulary and promote a love of words. Ideas for teaching are below. These resources are adapted from those of a colleague (Hopper, 2011) and can be used in a variety of contexts. The following are suggested activities that might take approximately one lesson to complete.

1. Print out the diagram cards (pp.3-11) and give one card to each student/pair (depending on your class size). Ask the class to use the etymology of the different words as clues, and to work together, to build up a diagram of the federal system of government. This could be stuck up on the board. The correct version on p.2 can be used to review the task.
2. Split the class into five groups and ensure each group has access to the internet (alternatively, most text books on the topic contain suitable information). Allocate one of the following topics to each group and ask them to prepare a short summary for the rest of the class.
 - A. Historical context of the federal system (why did it develop?)
 - B. The role of the president
 - C. The role of Congress
 - D. The role of the Supreme Court
 - E. The political parties and their beliefs
3. Using the following passage as stimulus, discuss the possible weaknesses of the system:

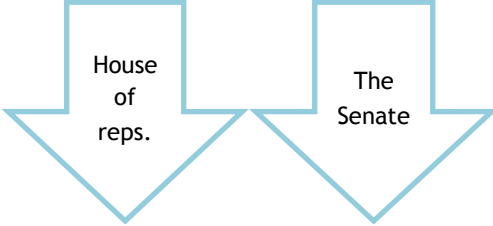
‘Although there was much interest in politics, with political campaigns often generating real excitement and high voter turnouts, government, especially at federal level, had a limited impact on the lives of most Americans ... The Constitution’s system of ‘checks and balances’ meant that it was very difficult for one party to control the presidency, the Senate, the House of Representatives and the Supreme Court at the same time. Therefore, it was very difficult for federal government to do very much.

The role of the federal government and the presidency was further limited by the belief by many, especially the Democrats, that the normal work of government should be carried out at state rather than central level ... Presidents were often figureheads rather than policy-makers and Congress, which was not often in session, passed few laws.’

From: Waugh and Clements, *USA 1865-1975: The Making of a Superpower*, Hodder, 2015, pp.3-4

How does the US federal system of government work?

Answers to diagram:

The Executive	The Legislature	The Judiciary
The President	Congress	The Supreme Court
The vice president will step in if s/he dies, resigns or is impeached.	 <p>House of reps.</p> <p>The Senate</p> <p>435 members represent constituencies based on population.</p> <p>Consists of 100 members, two from each state.</p>	This body is made up of nine judges who are appointed for life.
The president is elected every four years.	<p>This body is elected every two years.</p> <p>This body sits for six years. 1/3 of members come up for re-election every two years.</p>	Its members are appointed by the President.
<p>This president:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recommends legislation can veto bills appoints a cabinet is the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. 	<p>The legislature:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> makes the laws has power of the purse declares war may override a presidential veto can impeach the president. 	<p>The Supreme Court:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> approves laws and decides whether they are constitutional.

THE EXECUTIVE

From the Latin *executivus*, from past participle stem of *exequi* meaning 'follow after; carry out, accomplish'

THE LEGIS LATIVE

From the Latin *legis*, genitive of *lex* meaning 'law'

From the Latin *lator* meaning 'proposer'

THE JUDICIARY

From the Latin *judiciarius* meaning 'of or belonging to a court of justice'

THE PRESIDENT

From the Latin *praesidere* meaning 'stand guard; superintend,' literally 'sit in front of,' from *prae* 'before' + *sedere* 'to sit'

CONGRESS

From the Latin *congressus* meaning 'a friendly meeting; a hostile encounter,'

THE SUPREME COURT

From the Latin *supremus* meaning 'highest'

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

From the Latin *repraesentare* meaning
'make present, set in view, show,
exhibit, and display'

THE SENATE

From the Latin *senatus* meaning
'highest council of the state in
ancient Rome', literally 'council of
elders'

The vice president will step in if
s/he dies, resigns or is
impeached.

The president is elected every
four years.

This president:

- recommends legislation
- can veto bills
- appoints a cabinet
- is the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.

The legislature:

- makes the laws
- has power of the purse
- declares war
- may override a presidential veto
- can impeach the president.

The Supreme Court:

- approves laws and decides whether they are constitutional.

Its members are appointed by
the President.

This body is made up of nine judges who are appointed for life.

435 members represent constituencies based on population.

Consists of 100 members, two from each state.

This body is elected
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This body sits for six years.
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