

Erutan



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“Erutan”



In this lesson students will construct their own understanding of the purposes and powers of government by thinking through a scenario in which a group of people survive a near extinction–level event but are returned “to a state of nature” (erutan backwards) i.e., a life without government.

Rationale: This lesson is designed to help students understand why governments exist and why they are given certain powers. Citizens are often critical of government and question its actions, but they should know that democratic governments usually act on the will of the people and provide valuable services and protections.

Audiences: Grades 4–5 and 6–8.

Benchmark Addressed: Civics 1 [Government]

Grades 4-5: Students will understand that governments...exist for many purposes....

Grades 6-8: Students will understand that governments have the power to make and enforce laws and regulations, levy taxes, conduct foreign policy, and make war.

Assessment: see Handout 4.

Content: While governments serve many important purposes, they also wield enormous power and can be viewed as possible threats to freedom and individual liberty. Students in grades 4–5 should understand that governments are human inventions and that those who have chosen to live in social groups find them to be of great value. Governments can serve the common good by maintaining social order, providing public services, providing national security, managing conflict, establishing and administering justice, and managing resources.

Students in grades 6–8 should understand that, in order to fulfill their purposes, governments have to have certain powers without which they could not do what they are created to do. For example, governments cannot provide national security or necessary public services, such as building and maintaining roads, unless they have funds from sources such as taxes. Essential powers include making and enforcing laws and regulations, levying taxes, conducting foreign policy, and making war. Historians often point to the Articles of Confederation as an example of a plan for government that did not endure because it was not given sufficient powers to accomplish the goals that its framers had in mind.

Essential Questions:

Grades 4–5 – Why do governments exist?

Grades 6–8 – Why are governments given certain powers? What is the relationship between the purposes and powers of government?

Vocabulary: public services, national security, justice, manage, levy, enforce, foreign policy.

Materials Needed

- Optional: Video clips from *Deep Impact*, *Lost*, or *Lord of the Flies*.
- Handout 1: *Life on the Island of Erutan*.
- Handout 2: *Analyzing Life on the Island of Erutan*.
- Handout 3: *Contemporary Examples of the Purposes and Powers of Government*.
- Transparency 1: *Purposes of Government*.
- Transparency 2: *Powers of Government*.
- Transparency 3: *Relationship between the Purposes and Powers of Government*.
- Copies or sections of recent newspapers for the student to examine.
- Handout 4 & 5: Assessments.

Time to Complete: 1–2 class periods.

Procedures

1. If possible, open the lesson by showing a scene from a movie or television show such as *Deep Impact*, *Lost*, or *Lord of the Flies* that sets the stage for a scenario in which a group of people face the possibility of life without government. In *Deep Impact*, the President makes the nation aware of an inevitable extinction-level event (giant comet crashing into earth). In *Lord of the Flies* and *Lost*, a plane crashes on a remote and uninhabited island. In all three cases, survivors are about to witness the breakdown or absence of government.
2. Distribute Handout 1. Ask students to read and summarize the story of “Erutan.”
3. Think-Pair-Share: Tell students to read the two questions at the bottom of Handout 1, take a minute to think about their answers, and then share their thoughts with a partner.
4. Whole Class Discussion: Ask the students to describe some problems that they believe will arise on Erutan. List their responses on the board. Point out that there is no government on Erutan. Then ask...given the problems that you have described, why might the survivors want to form a government?
5. Mini-Lecture: Display Transparency 1 - *Purposes of Government*. Tell students that, although governments around the world may differ in a variety of ways, it is reasonable to suggest that all governments exist for a handful of common reasons. Describe each purpose on the transparency and offer an example of a government action that is designed to fulfill each of the six purposes (e.g., manage resources – establishing limits on fish catches). Ask students to offer examples of their own. Then, ask students to think about the problems on Erutan and how each of the purposes of government relates to those problems.

6. Small Group Work: Place students in triads (i.e., groups of 3). Distribute copies of Handout 2: *Analyzing Life on the Island of Erutan*. Ask the students to use the information on Transparency 1 to fill in the second column of the handout. The question “Which purpose of government relates to each problem?” should guide their analysis.
7. Display Transparency 2 – *Powers of government*. Describe the powers of government that students are expected to understand under Civics Standard 1 for grades 6–8.
8. Draw students’ attention to Handout 2, Column 3. Ask them to complete column 3 on Handout 2 after looking at columns 1 and 2. What power listed on Transparency 2 might a government need to address the problems listed in Column 1 and the purposes listed in Column 2? Have students share and discuss their answers and the relationships between problems, purposes, and powers. The essential understanding that you want them to arrive at is that governments need to have certain powers to fulfill the purposes for which they are created. Emphasize this point if the students do not articulate it.
9. Ask the students to speculate about which problems might go unsolved on Erutan if there was no government or if there was a government that did not have adequate powers. What might life on Erutan (or any other place where humans gather in groups) be like if there was no government?
10. Scavenger Hunt: Distribute copies of Handout 3a (grades 4-5) or 3b (grades 6-8) and sections of recent newspapers. Ask students go through the newspaper and briefly summarize articles, headlines, or cartoons that illustrate the purposes and powers of government. Have them write their summaries in the appropriate sections on Handout 3 then share their findings. Alternatively, convert Handouts 3a and 3b into posters and have the students cut out sections of the newspapers that illustrate the purposes and powers. They can glue or tape these in the appropriate cells on the posters, and you can display them around the room.
11. Conclude the Lesson. Display Transparency 3: *Relationship between the Purposes and Powers of Government*. Explain that government exist to fulfill the purposes that appear in the left-hand column and that, in order to fulfill these purposes, governments need the powers listed in the right-hand column of the transparency. Ask students if there are any other powers that governments would probably need to fulfill their purposes.

Debrief: Pose the following questions to the students...

- Why do governments exist? What are the main purposes for which government are created?
- What are some of the key powers that governments possess?
- Why are governments given certain powers?
- Explain the relationship between the purposes and powers of government. What are some examples that illustrate this relationship?



Handout 1: LIFE ON THE ISLAND OF ERUTAN

Scenario

An event of cataclysmic proportions has affected the planet earth. A comet the size of Manhattan smashed into the Atlantic Ocean somewhere in the Northern Hemisphere. Aware of the inevitability of the collision as well as the probable point of impact, you booked a flight along with 119 other people to what you hope will be a secure location on a well-equipped island in the South Pacific.

Just as your plane was nearing its final destination, a massive explosion occurred. Violent air waves caused by the explosion forced the plane down onto an island approximately 236 miles short of your “safe” destination. You have found evidence of some large wildlife predators. While the island appears to be uninhabited by humans, there is evidence on the beach of human conflict. It appears that local inhabitants were wiped out following a warlike assault. It also appears that inhabitants from other islands return periodically to the island.

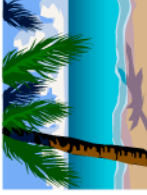
The physical damage from the comet’s impact now appears to be over. However, the 106 survivors, including you, now find yourselves stranded. All of your communication equipment is destroyed. It is not clear whether others on the planet survived the impact, but you appear to be without prospect for rescue.

For Discussion:

- 1. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of the situation in which you find yourselves?**
- 2. Given your understanding of human nature and how humans behave in groups, what are some problems that are likely to arise in this situation?**



Handout 2: Analyzing Life on the Island of Erutan

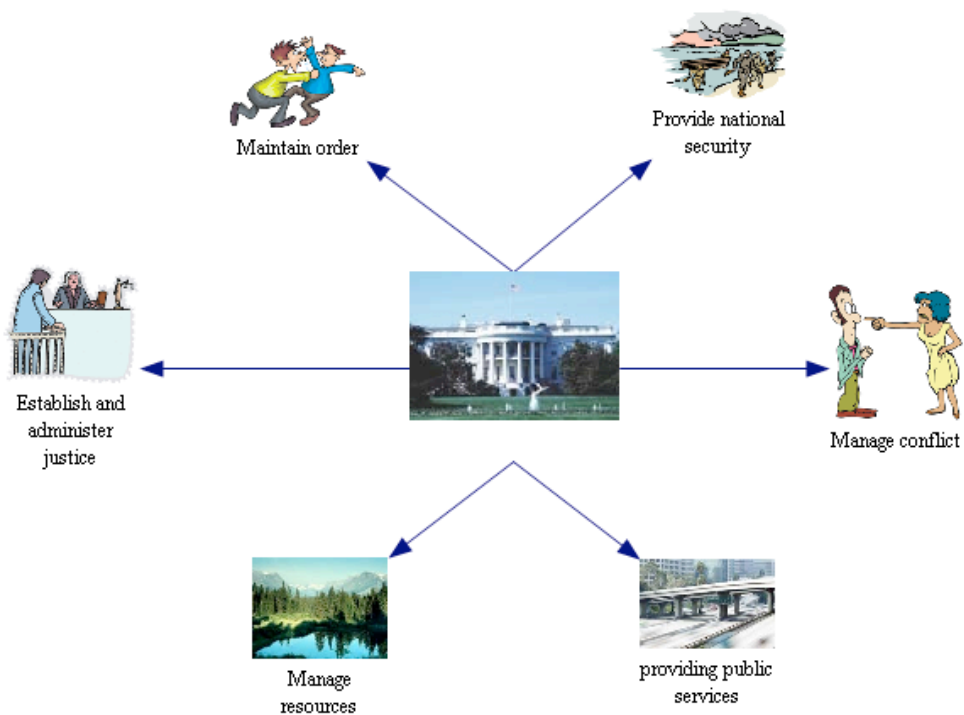


Directions: read the problems in column 1 then answer the questions posed in columns 2 and 3.

Problem	At Which <u>Purpose</u> of Government does this Problem Hint?	What <u>Power</u> might a Government Need to Deal with this Problem?
1. A vicious wildlife beast attacked a young child while all were sleeping.		
2. One small source of fresh water has been located. Food supplies leftover from the crash are extremely limited.		
3. The source of fresh water is located deep in the forest and is extremely difficult to access.		
4. Competition for ideal shelters (caves) has pushed inhabitants to the brink of violence.		
5. One inhabitant is accusing another inhabitant of stealing her Swiss army knife.		
6. One group of islanders is accusing a second group of treating the situation like a vacation. The accusers claim that this second group is doing no work. The inhabitants are bitterly divided.		

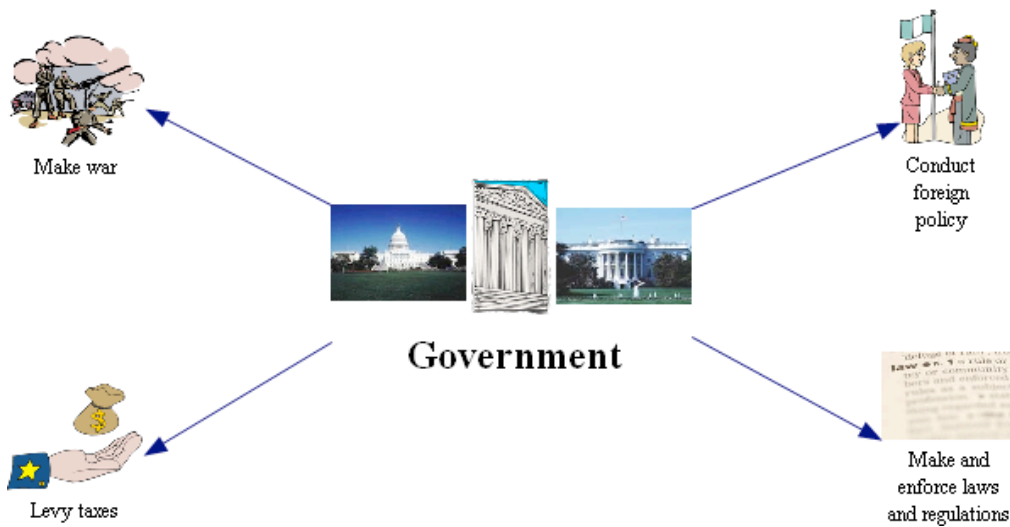
Transparency 1

Purposes of Government



Transparency 2

Powers of Government



Handout 3a
 Scavenger Hunt: Contemporary Examples of the Purposes
 of Government

Purposes of Government	Examples of a Government Fulfilling Each Purpose in Recent Newspapers
maintain social order	
provide public services	
provide national security	
manage conflict	
establish and administer justice	
manage resources	

Handout 3b
 Scavenger Hunt: Contemporary Examples of the Powers of
 Government

Purposes of Government	Examples of a Government Exercising Each Power in Recent Newspapers
Make and enforce laws and regulations	
Levy taxes	
Conduct foreign policy	
Make war	

Transparency 3

Relationship Between the Purposes and Powers of Government

Purposes of Government

In order to...

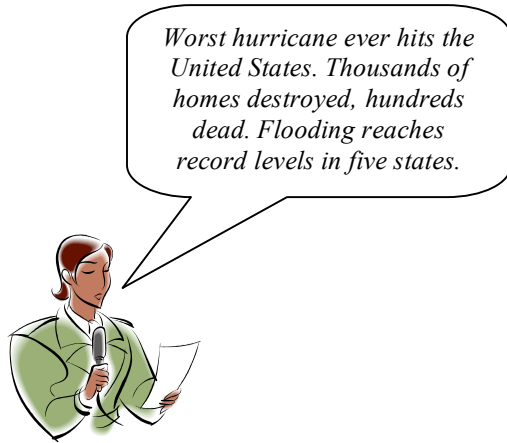


Powers of Government

Governments Must Have the Powers to...



Handout 4: Assessments



Prompt 1: Which of the following best explains why government would be needed in this situation?

- a. The problem affects people in several states.
- b. People never volunteer to do work in situations like this.
- c. Only governments have the power to conduct foreign policy.
- d. Individuals do not have the resources to solve problems of this size.

* * * * *

“A government ought to contain in itself every power requisite to the full accomplishment of the objects committed to its care, and to the complete execution of the trusts for which it is responsible...”

Alexander Hamilton, Federalist No. 31, January 1, 1788

Prompt 2: Suggest one power that Alexander Hamilton may have had in his mind in 1788 and explain why a government today would need that power just as much as it did in 1788.

2 = valid response with an accurate and relevant explanation
1 = valid response with an inaccurate, irrelevant, or no explanation
0 = inaccurate or no response.