

Comparative Government: Japan and the United States

Purpose:

Compare the parliamentary system of Japan to the presidential system of the United States.

Target Grade Level: 9

Essential questions:

1. Is democracy similar in major countries?
2. What is the difference between a prime minister and a president?
3. Do legislative bodies operate similarly?
4. Where is the power in a parliamentary form of government?

Rationale:

Studying a similar democratic legislative process will permit students to understand the legislative process in the United States with greater insight.

Materials:

1. "Checks and Balances" (Handout A)
2. "How a Bill Becomes Law" (Handout B)
3. "How a Bill Becomes Law in Japan" (Handout C)
4. "Comparing Japan's Parliamentary System to the U.S.A.'s Presidential System" (Handout D)
5. "Parliamentary vs. Presidential" (Handout E)

Activities:

1. Introduce the lesson by asking the students to discuss the following question: "Who is more powerful, a president or a prime minister?"
2. Distribute student handouts A, B, and C for the students to examine.
3. Have a class discussion as to the differences between the Japanese and U.S.A. system of government based upon a study of student handouts A, B, and C.
4. Permit students working in pairs to complete student Handout D.

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5. Have the students discuss again “Who has more power, Japan’s prime minister or the United States’ president?”

Assessment:

1. Handout E may be used for this purpose.

Grade Adaptation:

Elementary Level:

1. Ask the following brainstorming questions:
 - a. What does a queen, emperor or monarch do?
 - b. What does a president or prime minister do?
 - c. How does the work of a monarch or emperor get done in a presidential system like ours?

Relationship to Social Studies Standards:

Grade 9, Government, Grade-level Indicator 1

Explain how various systems of government acquire, use and justify their power.

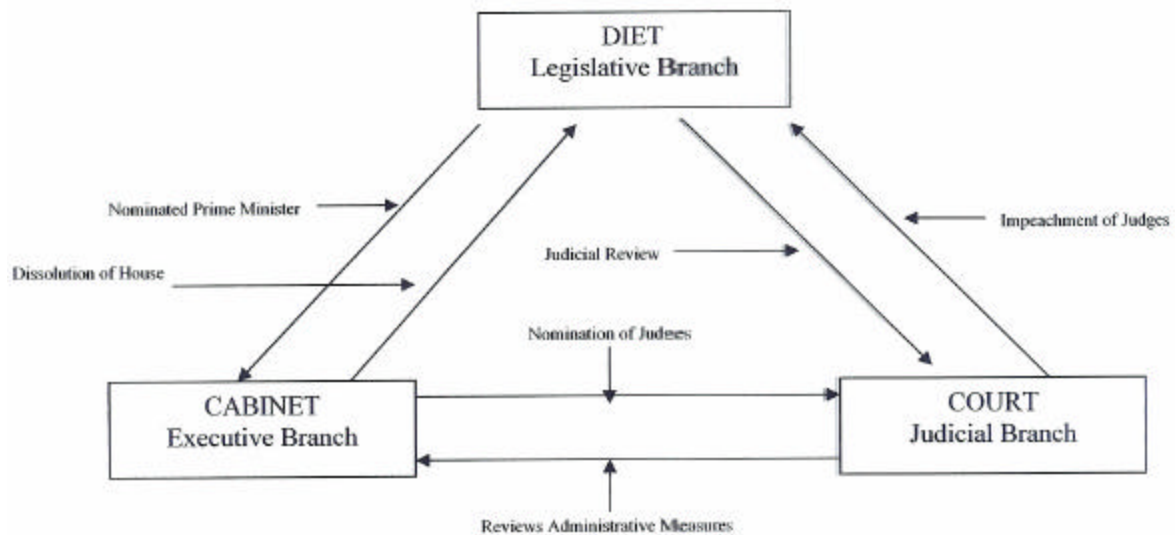
Grade 9, Government, Grade-level Indicator 2

Analyze the purposes, structures, and functions of various systems of government including: (a) absolute monarchies, (b) constitutional monarchies, (c) parliamentary democracies, (d) presidential democracies, (e) dictatorships, and (f) theocracies.

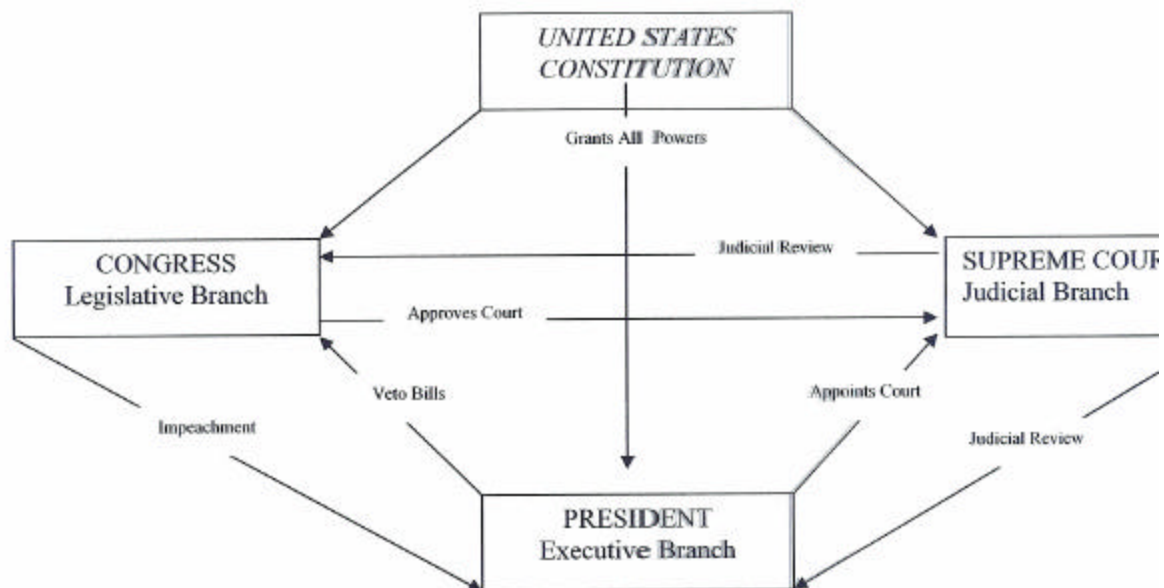
This lesson was developed by Roberta Mucha, teacher, Westerville South High School, Westerville City Schools.

Comparative Government: Japan and the United States

Handout A



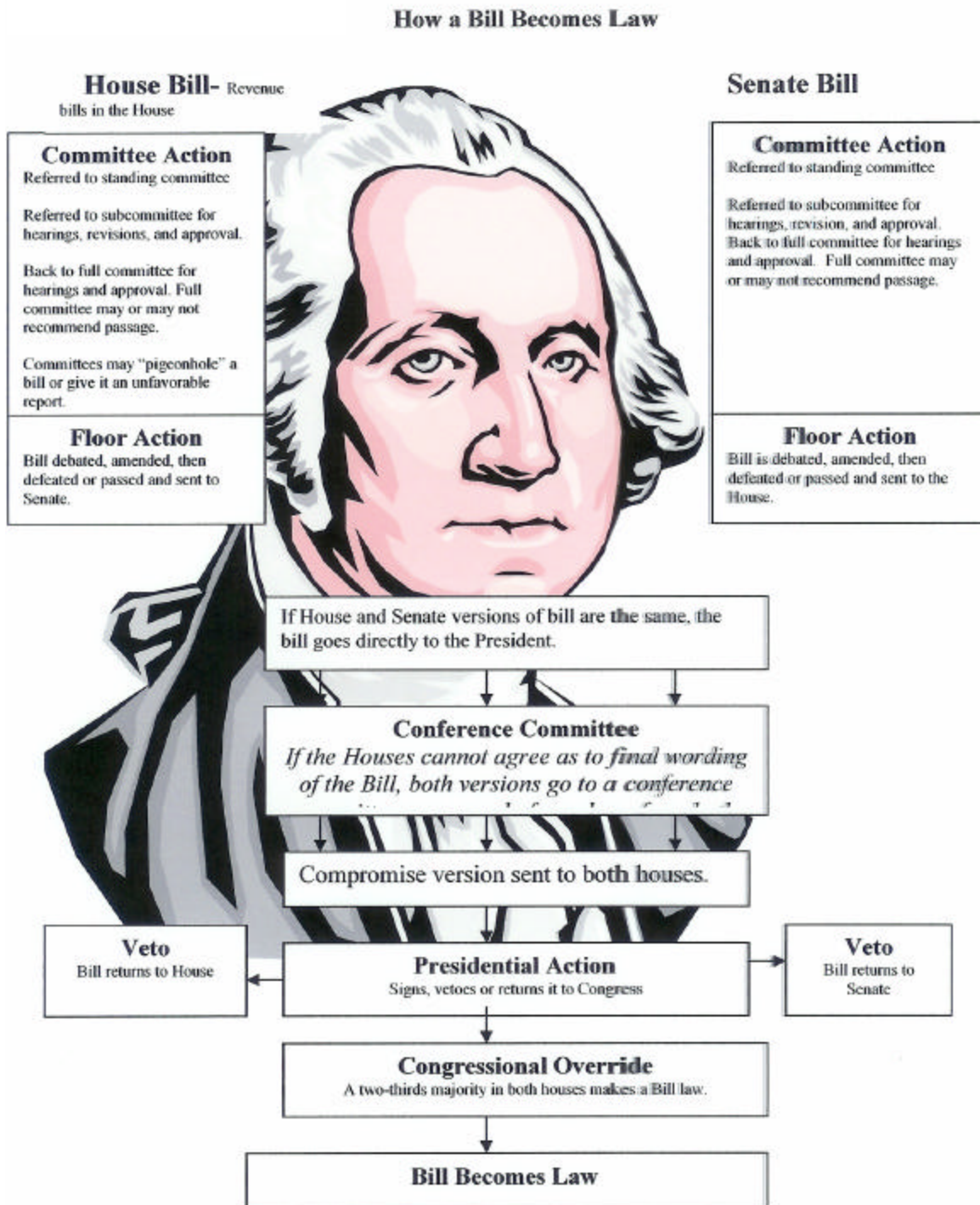
United States



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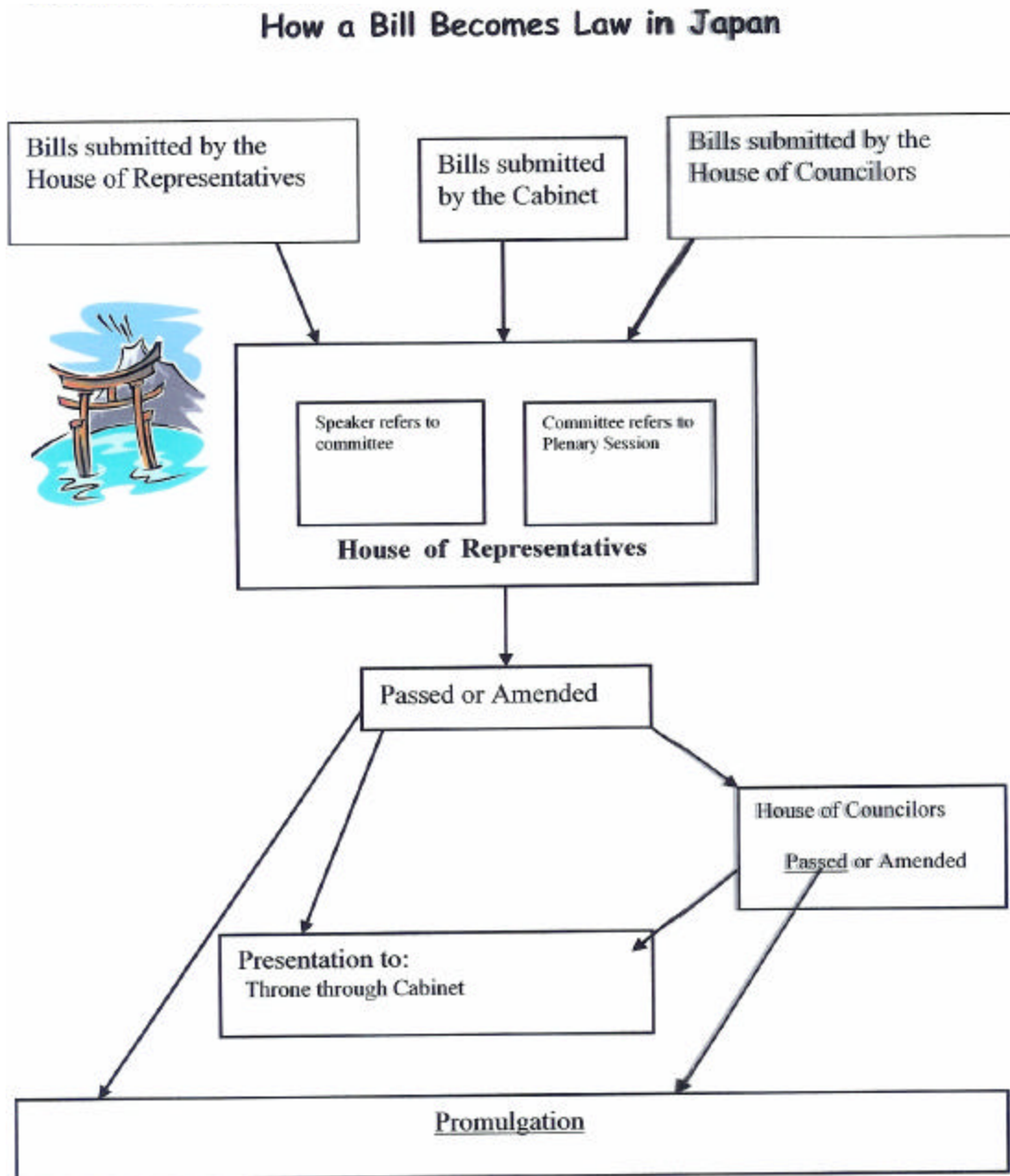
Handout B



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Handout C



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Handout D

Comparing Japan's Parliamentary System to the U.S.A.'s Presidential System

Directions: Read the following statements describing Japan's parliamentary government. Decide if the statement is also true for the United States and if so, write true. If the statement is not an accurate description for the United States, write false followed by an appropriate true statement about the United States. Refer to student handouts #1 and #2 for additional information.

Japan

1. The National Diet consists of two houses.
2. The two houses of the National Diet are:
House of Representatives and House of Councilors.
3. The Diet, which is elected by the people, makes law, decides government budget and conducts impeachment trials for judges.
4. The two houses of the Diet must agree before a bill becomes law.
5. Most investigation and work done by the two houses occur in the standing committees.
6. The Prime Minister is chosen by the Diet.
7. The Cabinet consists of mostly members of the House of Representatives.
8. The Cabinet carries out the decisions of the Diet.
9. The Cabinet and Prime Minister lack a veto power.
10. The House of Representatives can be dissolved but the House of Councilors cannot.
11. If the House of Representatives pass a non-confidence resolution, the Cabinet resigns.
12. The Cabinet handles diplomatic issues and agrees to treaties.
13. The judicial branch has judicial review over the Diet's laws.
14. The Emperor convokes each session of the Diet with the approval of the Cabinet.
15. The Emperor acts only in matters of state and has no powers relating to government.

United States of America

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.

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Answer Key to Handout D

Comparing Japan's Parliamentary System to the U.S.A.'s Presidential System

Japan

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12. The Cabinet handles diplomatic issues and agrees to treaties.
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United States of America

1. true
2. true...House of Rep and State
3. true...but Senate conducts impeachment trials
4. true
5. true
6. false...President chosen by general election
7. Cabinet apart of Executive Branch
8. Cabinet is advisory staff of President
9. false
10. false
11. false
12. Sec. of State negotiates/Senate agrees
13. true
14. false
15. false

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Handout E

Parliamentary vs. Presidential

Is what is true about Japan also true about the USA?

Directions: Find the true and correct the false for each statement as they pertain to Japan and the U.S.A.

True or False?

1. The National Diet consists of two chambers.
2. The Diet is the legislative branch.
3. The Prime Minister is chosen by the Diet.
4. The two houses of the Diet must agree before a bill becomes law.
5. The Cabinet carries out decisions of the Diet.
6. Checks and balances exist in the system.
7. The Judicial Branch can declare a law unconstitutional.
8. The court agrees to treaties.
9. A bill needs approval of the Throne.
10. Committees study bills.

True or False?

1. Congress consists of two bodies.
2. The Cabinet is the legislative branch.
3. The President is chosen by Congress.
4. The Senate and House of Representatives must agree before a bill becomes law.
5. The Cabinet carries out decisions of Congress.
6. Checks and balances exist in the system.
7. The Judicial Branch can declare a law unconstitutional.
8. The court agrees to treaties.
9. A bill needs approval of the President.
10. Committees study bills.

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Answers Key to Handout E

Parliamentary vs. Presidential

- | | |
|----------|------------------------------|
| 1. True | 1. True |
| 2. True | 2. False |
| 3. True | 3. False |
| 4. False | 4. True |
| 5. True | 5. False |
| 6. True | 6. True |
| 7. True | 7. True |
| 8. False | 8. False |
| 9. False | 9. True (with one exception) |
| 10. True | 10. True |

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