

One Big Party?

Time Needed:

1-2 class periods

Materials Needed:

Student Materials

Transparencies

Copy Instructions:

- Two transparencies
- Reading (2 pages)
- Review worksheet (2 pages)
- Political spectrum activity (3 pages)

Learning Objectives Students will be able to:

- Identify and describe the five functions of political parties: nominating, creating policy, informing citizens, uniting levels of government, providing opposition.
- Identify ways that political parties influence public policy.
- Describe the strengths and weaknesses of party systems including single party, two parties, and multiparty.
- Differentiate between the two major political parties in the United States.

STEP BY STEP

- ANTICIPATE** the lesson by asking your class to name the two major political parties in the United States. Then ask whether they can name any other political parties. Assuming they have trouble with this, ask why they think it is so hard to name other parties.
- DISTRIBUTE** reading pages 1-2 to the class and read through both pages with the class, pausing to review new vocabulary and reinforce new concepts.
- DISTRIBUTE** review pages 1-2 to the class.
- PROJECT** the "Strengths & Weaknesses" transparency, working through completing the chart.
- EXPLAIN** the "Party Systems Strengths and Weaknesses" activity. Tell students that you will project nine statements. The students must decide as a class if the statement is a strength or weakness of a party system. They must then decide if it applies to one-, two-, or multi-party systems. Students should then write the underlined phrase in the appropriate place on the "Party Systems" chart on their review worksheets.
- ASSIGN** the rest of the review pages after reviewing the instructions for the rest of the activities. Allow students to complete these as a class, in small groups, or individually.
- REVIEW** student work aloud as a check for understanding.
- PROJECT** the "Political Spectrum" transparency. Use the Political Spectrum Activity Guide to introduce the concept to students.
- DISTRIBUTE** the political parties packet. Read the first page as a class, pausing to review new vocabulary and reinforce new concepts.
- ASSIGN** activity pages 1-2, allowing students to complete these as a class, in small groups, or individually.
- CLOSE** the class by reminding students that political leanings and affiliations are very personal decisions and the views of political parties are broad and vary over time.

One Big Party?

Name: _____

It's a Party...

...but not the kind with ice cream and cake (usually). **Political parties** are groups of people who share similar beliefs about how the government should be run and how the issues facing our country should be solved. By organizing into political parties, people have more power to make their voices heard than they would have if they acted alone. Political parties are powerful organizations that fight to get the government to act in ways the political party believes is best. Political parties are organized at every level of government, from the national level right down to your own neighborhood.



Five Roles of Political Parties

Nominate Candidates



Political parties are responsible for selecting candidates who will run for political office. The parties choose candidates who believe in the party's platform. These candidates represent the party's

members and help to spread the party's message during elections.

Influence Policy



Members of the Senate and the House of Representatives are also members of political parties. The senators and representatives from each party often work together as a group to create

and pass laws that support their party's platform. The laws Congress passes affect the policies of our government. People in each political party want the government's policies to reflect their own party's platform.

Unite Government



People in the same political party are connected because they are members of the same organization. Most members of the government on the local, state, or national level are party members. A party can link

its members at different levels of government to achieve big goals for the party.

Create Balance



The most powerful political party is the one that has the most members elected to office. Being in the **majority** means the party can focus the

government's attention on issues that are important to the party's platform. The party in the **minority** works hard to oppose the majority party and keep it in check. Usually the majority party is able to get many laws passed.

Depending on the minority party's strength, the majority may need to compromise with the minority before a law will pass. In this way the opposing party protects the interests of its own party supporters. A similar balance exists when the president and the majority in Congress are from different parties.

Inform Citizens



Political parties run campaigns for candidates. During campaigns, political parties run television ads, distribute pamphlets, post blogs, and help candidates give speeches. All of this media helps people understand what the

political issues are and how government works. But beware: All of the information a political party distributes is *biased* toward its own party platform. Because of this, a political party should not be a citizen's only source of information.

One Big Party?

Name: _____



The Party Platform

People in political parties need a simple way to explain their beliefs so they can attract other people to join their party. Political parties take the complicated issues we hear about every day and create easy-to-understand statements that describe the party's views about those issues. This set of statements is called the party's **platform** because it is what the political party stands on. Political parties keep their platforms broad and simple to attract as many supporters as possible. The ultimate goal of political parties is to get their candidates elected to office. Once in office, the elected official can create policy that supports the party's platform.

Influence of Political Parties on Policy

Political parties do not pass policy, but they do have a big impact on the way policy is shaped. These are just a few of the ways that political parties influence policy:

- Organize people that can put pressure on their legislators to impact public policy.
- Bring officials on the local, state, and national level together to communicate about common goals.
- Support candidates' platforms and make sure that elected officials follow through on supporting the party's platform.



COUNTRY	# PARTIES IN OFFICE
Australia	7
Denmark	11
Germany	5
Guatemala	11
Iceland	5
Israel	12
Turkey	4
United States	2
Vietnam	1

Source: CIA World Factbook 2011

How Many Parties Are There?

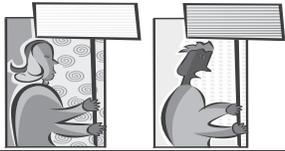
Countries can have different numbers of political parties. Some countries have no political parties at all. Most of these countries are either very small or are controlled by military or theocratic governments.

Countries with a **single-party system** have one major political party. These countries are not considered democracies because there is no opposition or choice in candidates. China is an example of a single-party system.

Countries with a **two-party system** have two major political parties that hold all of the power. Third parties may exist, but they hardly ever gain enough support to win elections. This is the least common system around the world. In the United States we have a **two-party system**.

Countries with **multi-party systems** have three or more political parties with members holding office in the government. (Some countries have as many as 20 or more)! Usually no party gains control of the government, so parties must work together to get things done.

Party System Strengths & Weaknesses

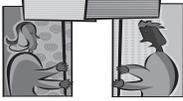


	Strength or weakness?	Which kind of party system?
1) There are <u>too few parties for citizens to choose from.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> multiple
2) The <u>public has almost no voice.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> multiple
3) Party <u>platforms must appeal to so many people</u> that party members can't agree on core beliefs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> multiple
4) <u>Parties have to work together to get things done.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> multiple
5) More parties have a say in government so <u>everyone can join a party they believe in.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> multiple
6) There is <u>no opportunity for opposing views</u> to be represented.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> multiple
7) Too many parties create divisions and make it <u>hard for the government to accomplish reform.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> multiple
8) <u>The government can easily accomplish its goals</u> because there is no opposition.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> multiple
9) Encourages parties to create broad <u>platforms that include many types of voters.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> multiple

One Big Party?

Name: _____

Party Systems. Use the strengths and weaknesses your teacher gives you to complete the chart.

# of Political Parties	Strengths	Weaknesses
None or One 		
Two 		
Multiple 		

Define. Circle the correct phrase on each line to make a sentence that defines political parties.

- A) Political parties are groups of people / Political parties are silly people / Political parties are individuals
 B) who all like to hang out together / who feel the same about key issues / who are really into politics
 C) that have organized to work together / that don't really get along / that plot against politicians
 D) to throw a really big party / and fight a lot / to gain political power by electing
 E) candidates to office. / donkeys and elephants into power. / their friends to power.

Key Terms. Match the following terms with their definitions.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. political parties | A. Having the most people as supporters; means the party can set the agenda for the government |
| _____ 2. nominate | B. Countries can have none to many political parties. The number of political parties is described as the _____. |
| _____ 3. policy | C. A set of simplified statements that explains a party's beliefs. |
| _____ 4. majority | D. Principles, rules, or laws. Parties can influence this. |
| _____ 5. minority | E. Groups of people who share similar beliefs about how the government should be run. |
| _____ 6. platform | F. Having fewer supporters; means the party must work hard to oppose the majority party. |
| _____ 7. party system | G. Selecting candidates who will run for political office and announcing their intent to run. |

One Big Party?

Name: _____

Party Functions. Label the five functions of political parties on the lines in the example pamphlet below.

For the last four years, our party has been the minority. We have done our best to oppose the other party's actions, but now it is our turn.

We have found the best possible candidate for office... a truly great person... and we are proud to announce his candidacy!



One of the reasons that we think our candidate is the best person for the job is his ability to work with people from all levels of government. He has proven his willingness to work with other party members on all levels to

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The important issues in this campaign are:

- providing health care for senior citizens
- using natural resources wisely
- improving education

Our candidate, with the support of the party, will do his best to create laws and policies that support these goals.

Influence. Put a ✓ next to statements that demonstrate the way political parties influence public policy.

- ___ 1. Political parties inform and organize people around issues.
- ___ 2. Political parties write and pass laws for our country.
- ___ 3. Political parties nominate and support political candidates with certain platforms.
- ___ 4. Political parties hold people responsible for the job they are doing while in power.
- ___ 5. Political parties are individuals that are trying to take over the government to achieve goals.
- ___ 6. Political parties actively fight to break down the government.
- ___ 7. Political parties elect our governing officials and then teach them how to do their jobs.
- ___ 8. Political parties ensure that politicians follow through on their campaign platforms.

Matching. In the United States we have had a two party system for most of our political history. Match the general descriptions of a two-party system to the descriptions of the way things work in the U.S.

In two party systems...

Two party systems usually include a conservative and a liberal party that have broad platforms. ○

Third parties rarely gain enough support to win elections. ○

Most citizens under a two party system identify with one of the major parties. ○

In the United States...

○ In 2010, 44% of the U.S. identified with the Democratic party and 40% with the Republicans.

○ The Republican and Democratic parties try to reach as many voters as possible through multiple issues.

○ Only twice between 1990 and 2010 was a Senator elected who was neither a Democrat or Republican.

Note to Teacher: Teaching the two major political parties in the United States can be extremely challenging. The next four pages will walk you through explaining the nuances of the political spectrum to your students. While we make every effort to explain the platforms of the Republican and Democratic parties, you will find reiterated in our materials an emphasis on the fact that political affiliation is not a clear cut issue. Please take time to review all the materials before you start your class, to best prepare for conversations that may arise.

The Political Spectrum

Teacher Activity Guide

Project the “The Political Spectrum” transparency.

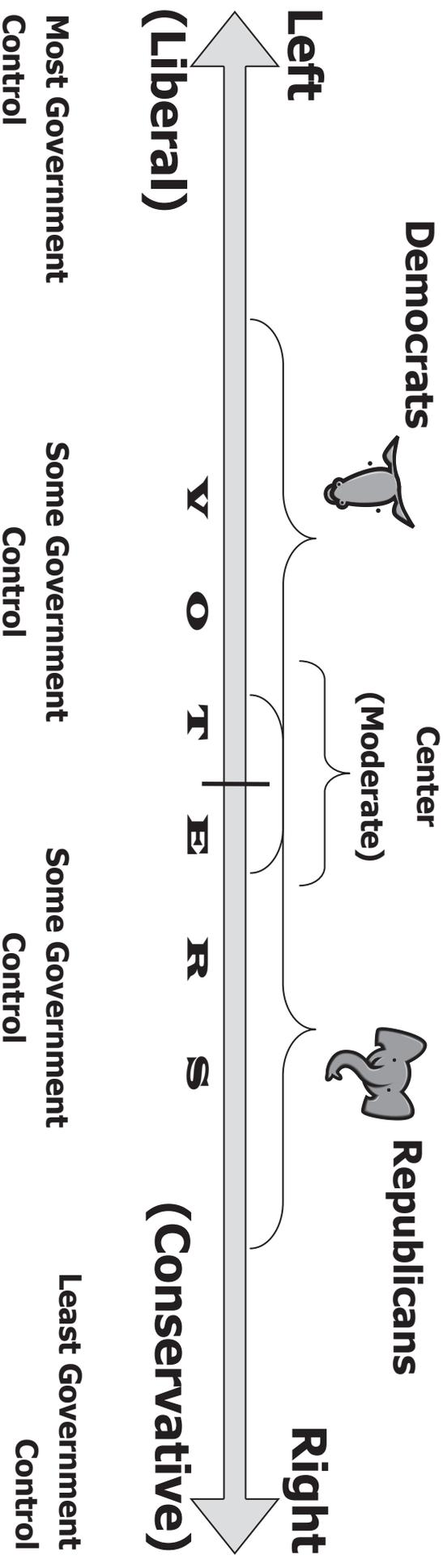
Point out all the key terms on the spectrum: left, liberal, center, moderate, right, conservative.

Read each of the following bullet points to your class, omitting its place on the spectrum. Break down each statement with your students as much as necessary. For the first four items, tell your students where they fall on the political spectrum and fill in on the transparency. For the last four items, ask your students to determine where they fall on the political spectrum, providing corrective feedback as needed.

- Teacher Guided
- The government should take strong action to solve society’s problems—*far left*
 - Pay for government-run programs to help people—*center left*
 - The government should encourage people and businesses to solve society’s problems themselves—*center right*
 - The government should not get involved in solving society’s problems—*far right*
- Student Guided
- Offer tax breaks to people and businesses who do good things or stop doing harmful or unfair things—*center right*
 - The government should regulate people and businesses to promote the common good on all issues—*far left*
 - The government should leave people and businesses alone to do what they want to do—*far right*
 - Pass laws to keep people and business from doing harmful or unfair things—*center left*

Every voter falls somewhere on...

The Political Spectrum



One Big Party?

Name: _____

Donkeys to the Left, Elephants to the Right

The two major political parties in the United States are the Democrats and the Republicans. When you turn 18 and get ready to vote, you will listen to many candidates from both sides (and also some from smaller parties). But what makes someone a Republican or a Democrat? What is the difference? And how will you decide which party best fits the way you think? It's important to remember that these platforms are written to be broad on purpose, and that people who identify strongly with one party may still disagree with the party platform on other issues. Here is a quick comparison:



DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The Democratic Party is concerned with equality, cooperation, and social progress. Supporters of this party are more likely to be concerned with civil rights issues, stronger government regulation in business, and social support networks for those in need of assistance. Democrats are more likely to believe that the federal government has a responsibility to be involved solving problems.

Where Democrats stand on...

Environment: The environment is important and it should be protected and kept clean

Health Care: The government should help make health care available to people who can't afford it

Energy: The U.S. should focus on renewable energy sources to achieve independence

Education: The government should support teachers and public school funds to make existing public schools better

Economy: During hard times, the government should help create jobs

Source: 2008 Democratic National Platform



REPUBLICAN PARTY

The Republican Party and its supporters want the government to spend less money and have less of a say in business and society. Most Republicans believe people and businesses should have the liberty to do what they want without much government interference. This party also tends to believe the government should protect traditional social values.

Where Republicans stand on...

Defense: Keep peace by having a strong military

Health Care: The government should not pay for peoples' health care

Energy: The U.S. should rely on oil as well as renewable sources to be independent

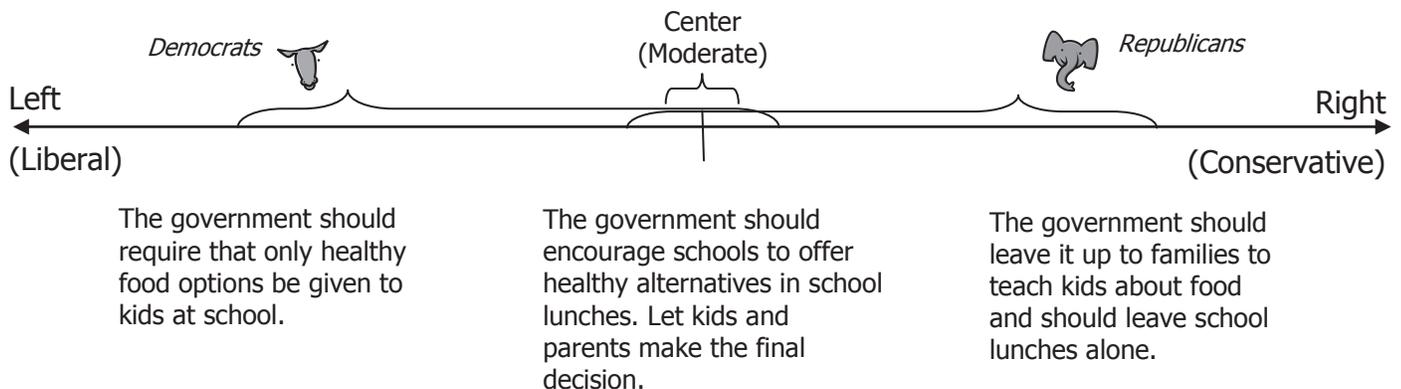
Education: Schools must have high standards, and students should be able to use public education funds to attend private schools if those schools are better than public schools

Economy: Businesses will create jobs and opportunities for people to prosper

Source: 2008 Republican Party Platform

The Political Spectrum

Example Issue: Healthy Choices for Kids



One Big Party?

Name: _____

Going to Extremes. One of the easiest ways to see the difference between the right and the left is to look at extreme viewpoints. Read each statement and decide whether it expresses a belief on the *right* or the *left*. Remember: These beliefs are not held by everyone who identifies as a liberal or a conservative, a Democrat or a Republican.

1. The government should not pay for any schools. All schools should be private.



- Extreme Right
 Extreme Left

4. The government should not provide services that a person or business could provide.



- Extreme Right
 Extreme Left

2. The government should guarantee that everyone will have a job and receive an annual income.



- Extreme Right
 Extreme Left

5. The government should own all of the forests to make sure timber is managed properly.



- Extreme Right
 Extreme Left

3. People should pay for their own retirement. Social Security should be abolished.



- Extreme Right
 Extreme Left

6. The government should ban the use of pesticides on food crops.

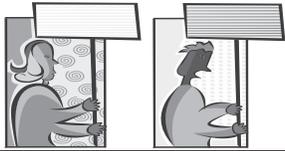


- Extreme Right
 Extreme Left

Left or Right? Read each proposed government action. Would it be supported by people on the left or the right? How *far* to the left or the right? Or is it a moderate plan? Place an **X** where you think the proposed government action lies on the political spectrum.

If the government decided to...	Where is that on the political spectrum?
Support community programs that encourage parents to get involved in lowering the high school dropout rate.	
Pass a law raising the minimum wage, helping workers earn more by making businesses pay more.	
Repeal a law requiring businesses to install pollution filters in factory smokestacks.	
Start a government program that lets kids eat dinner free every night at school if their parents won't be home.	
Create public charter schools that students can choose to attend instead of their regular public school.	
Encourage everyone to get health insurance by letting people deduct the cost of health insurance from their taxes.	

Party System Strengths & Weaknesses

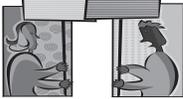


	Strength or weakness?	Which kind of party system?
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One Big Party?

Name: **TEACHER GUIDE**

Party Systems. Use the strengths and weaknesses your teacher gives you to complete the chart.

# of Political Parties	Strengths	Weaknesses
None or One 	- The government can easily accomplish its goals	-Public has almost no voice -No opportunity for opposing views
Two 	- Platforms that include many types of voters	-Too few parties for citizens to choose from -Platforms must appeal to so many people
Multiple 	-Parties have to work together -Everyone can join a party they believe in	- Hard for the government to accomplish reform

Define. Circle the correct phrase on each line to make a sentence that defines political parties.

- A) Political parties are groups of people / Political parties are silly people / Political parties are individuals
 B) who all like to hang out together / who feel the same about key issues / who are really into politics
 C) that have organized to work together / that don't really get along / that plot against politicians
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 E) candidates to office. / donkeys and elephants into power. / their friends to power.

Key Terms. Match the following terms with their definitions.

- E 1. political parties A. Having the most people as supporters; means the party can set the agenda for the government
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- D 3. policy C. A set of simplified statements that explains a party's beliefs.
- A 4. majority D. Principles, rules, or laws. Parties can influence this.
- F 5. minority E. Groups of people who share similar beliefs about how the government should be run.
- C 6. platform F. Having fewer supporters; means the party must work hard to oppose the majority party.
- B 7. party system G. Selecting candidates who will run for political office and announcing their intent to run.

One Big Party?

Name: **TEACHERS GUIDE**

Party Functions. Label the five functions of political parties on the lines in the example pamphlet below.

Create Balance

For the last four years, our party has been the minority. We have done our best to oppose the other party's actions, but now it is our turn.

Nominate Candidates

We have found the best possible candidate for office... a truly great person... and we are proud to announce his candidacy!



Unite Government

One of the reasons that we think our candidate is the best person for the job is his ability to work with people from all levels of government. He has proven his willingness to work with other party members on all levels to get things done!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Inform Citizens

The important issues in this campaign are:

- providing health care for senior citizens
- using natural resources wisely
- improving education

Influence Policy

Our candidate, with the support of the party, will do his best to create laws and policies that support these goals.

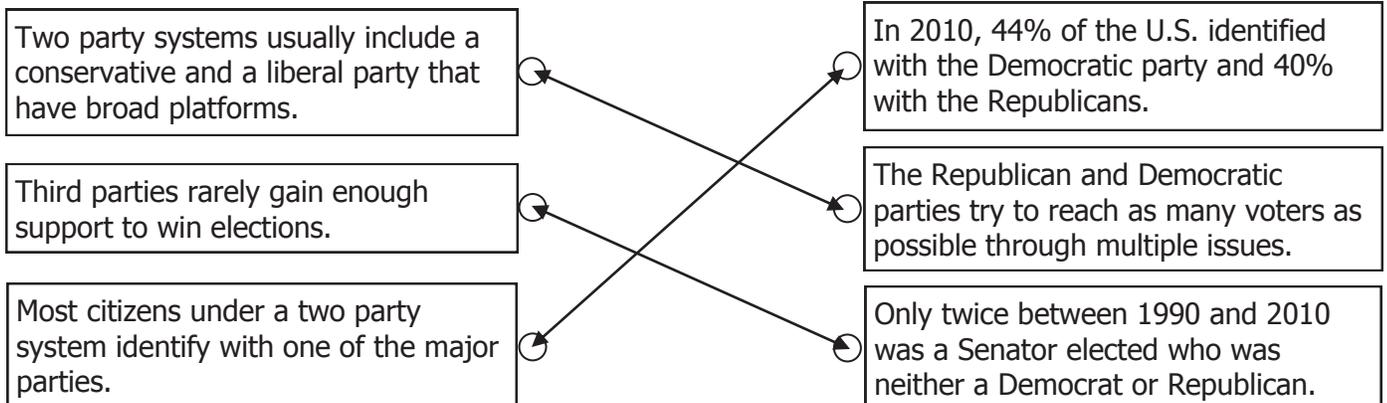
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- 4. Political parties hold people responsible for the job they are doing while in power.
- 5. Political parties are individuals that are trying to take over the government to achieve goals.
- 6. Political parties actively fight to break down the government.
- 7. Political parties elect our governing officials and then teach them how to do their jobs.
- 8. Political parties ensure that politicians follow through on their campaign platforms.

Matching. In the United States we have had a two party system for most of our political history. Match the general descriptions of a two-party system to the descriptions of the way things work in the U.S.

In two party systems...

In the United States...



One Big Party?

Name: ****TEACHER GUIDE****

Going to Extremes. One of the easiest ways to see the difference between the right and the left is to look at extreme viewpoints. Read each statement and decide whether it expresses a belief on the *right* or the *left*. Remember: These beliefs are not held by everyone who identifies as a liberal or a conservative, a Democrat or a Republican.

1. The government should not pay for any schools. All schools should be private.



- Extreme Right
 Extreme Left

4. The government should not provide services that a person or business could provide.



- Extreme Right
 Extreme Left

2. The government should guarantee that everyone will have a job and receive an annual income.



- Extreme Right
 Extreme Left

5. The government should own all of the forests to make sure timber is managed properly.



- Extreme Right
 Extreme Left

3. People should pay for their own retirement. Social Security should be abolished.



- Extreme Right
 Extreme Left

6. The government should ban the use of pesticides on food crops.



- Extreme Right
 Extreme Left

Left or Right? Read each proposed government action. Would it be supported by people on the left or the right? How *far* to the left or the right? Or is it a moderate plan? Place an **X** where you think the proposed government action lies on the political spectrum. **We have given you a range for the key.**

If the government decided to...	Where is that on the political spectrum?
Support community programs that encourage parents to get involved in lowering the high school dropout rate.	<p>LEFT ← ———— Dem. ———— Rep. ———— → RIGHT</p>
Pass a law raising the minimum wage, helping workers earn more by making businesses pay more.	<p>LEFT ← ———— Dem. ———— Rep. ———— → RIGHT</p>
Repeal a law requiring businesses to install pollution filters in factory smokestacks.	<p>LEFT ← ———— Dem. ———— Rep. ———— → RIGHT</p>
Start a government program that lets kids eat dinner free every night at school if their parents won't be home.	<p>LEFT ← ———— Dem. ———— Rep. ———— → RIGHT</p>
Create public charter schools that students can choose to attend instead of their regular public school.	<p>LEFT ← ———— Dem. ———— Rep. ———— → RIGHT</p>
Encourage everyone to get health insurance by letting people deduct the cost of health insurance from their taxes.	<p>LEFT ← ———— Dem. ———— Rep. ———— → RIGHT</p>