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.
**Comparative Government: Japan and the United States**

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.
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Handout A

United States

UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

Grants All Powers

CONGRESS Legislative Branch

Supreme Court Judicial Branch

Impeachment

Veto Bills

Appoints Court

Judicial Review

PRESIDENT Executive Branch

This handout was developed by Roberta Mucha, teacher, Westerville South High School, Westerville City Schools from the bibliography.
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Handout B

How a Bill Becomes Law

House Bill - Revenue

Committee Action
Referred to standing committee
Referred to subcommittee for hearings, revision, and approval
Back to full committee for hearings and approval. Full committee may or may not recommend passage.
Committees may "pigeonhole" a bill or give it an unfavorable report.

Floor Action
Bill debated, amended, then defeated or passed and sent to Senate.

If House and Senate versions of bill are the same, the bill goes directly to the President.

Conference Committee
If the Houses cannot agree as to final wording of the Bill, both versions go to a conference
Compromise version sent to both houses.

Veto
Bill returns to House

Presidential Action
Signs, vetoes or returns it to Congress

Congressional Override
A two-thirds majority in both houses makes a Bill law.

Bill Becomes Law

Senate Bill

Committee Action
Referred to standing committee
Referred to subcommittee for hearings, revision, and approval
Back to full committee for hearings and approval. Full committee may or may not recommend passage.

Floor Action
Bill is debated, amended, then defeated or passed and sent to the House.

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How a Bill Becomes Law in Japan

Bills submitted by the House of Representatives

Bills submitted by the Cabinet

Bills submitted by the House of Councilors

Speaker refers to committee

Committee refers to Plenary Session

House of Representatives

Passed or Amended

Presentation to: Throne through Cabinet

Promulgation

Passed or Amended

House of Councilors

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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.
## Answer Key to Handout D

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>United States of America</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The National Diet consists of two houses.</td>
<td>1. true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The two houses of the National Diet are: House of Representatives and House of Councilors.</td>
<td>2. true...House of Rep and State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Diet, which is elected by the people, makes law, decides government budget and conducts impeachment trials for judges.</td>
<td>3. true...but Senate conducts impeachment trials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The two houses of the Diet must agree before a bill becomes law.</td>
<td>4. true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Most investigation and work done by the two houses occur in the standing committees.</td>
<td>5. true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The Prime Minister is chosen by the Diet.</td>
<td>6. false...President chosen by general election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The Cabinet consists of mostly members of the House of Representatives.</td>
<td>7. Cabinet apart of Executive Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The Cabinet carries out the decisions of the Diet.</td>
<td>8. Cabinet is advisory staff of President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The Cabinet and Prime Minister lack a veto power.</td>
<td>9. false</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The House of Representatives can be dissolved but the House of Councilors cannot.</td>
<td>10. false</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. If the House of Representatives pass a non-confidence resolution, the Cabinet resigns.</td>
<td>11. false</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The Cabinet handles diplomatic issues and agrees to treaties.</td>
<td>12. Sec. of State negotiates/Senate agrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The judicial branch has judicial review over the Diet’s laws.</td>
<td>13. true</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The Emperor convokes each session of the Diet with the approval of the Cabinet.</td>
<td>14. false</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The Emperor acts only in matters of state and has no powers relating to government.</td>
<td>15. false</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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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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