

# Lesson 2: California State Government

## Focus Questions:

What is the purpose of the California Constitution?

What are the basic structures and functions of California's Government?

## Activity # 1 The California Constitution

Materials needed: Harcourt *Reflections* page 471 or any other social studies textbook

Step 1: Review with students how the federal Constitution gives the states the right to write their own laws so long as they follow the federal Constitution. Each state, including California, has its own government and its own constitution. The California Constitution is the written plan for the state's government.

Step 2: Ask students to share their knowledge of how they think California's state government is organized.

Step 3: Explain that the California Constitution sets up the state's executive, legislative and judicial branches. Also, the California Constitution includes a Declaration of Rights similar to the Bill of Rights. It lists the rights and freedoms of citizens.

Step 4: Read the textbook selection about California's Constitution to explain the purpose of the state constitution. Harcourt *Reflections* page 471. If available, review a copy of California's Constitution.

**Teacher Background:** California became a state in 1850. At that time, the Constitution was the document in use to define how government should be run in California. After almost thirty years, there was a push to create a new constitution. A "constitutional convention" was held in order to write the constitution which took over a year to complete. Finally, in May of 1879, the new constitution was adopted by a majority of less than 8% of California's voters. The new constitution includes so many rules and restrictions on government that it is one of the longest constitutions in the world.

California is one of the few states in which voters have special powers such as the ability to recall officials and the ability to pass initiatives which are laws made directly by the voters instead of by the legislature. In order to pass a state initiative, voters must gather enough signatures on a petition (a request for action) so that it can be placed on the next election ballot. The initiative becomes law if more than one half of the voters agree. Changes can also be made to the state constitution following this procedure. Finally, if voters want to change a law that has already been passed by the state government, a referendum can be held in which voters decide to keep or get rid of that law.

## Activity # 2 Structures and Functions of California's Government

Materials needed: Copy of *California State Government Retrieval Chart* (Handout # 2.1) for each student. Also, using a document camera or a transparency, display a copy of Handout #2.1.

Step 1: Review with students the branches of the federal government. Introduce the *California State Government Retrieval Chart* (Handout # 2.1) and explain that California also has three branches of government.

Step 2: Organize the class into three groups and assign each group one of the branches of state government. Direct group members to review the text and create a list of the functions of their branch of state government. Once completed, have each group present their section as others take notes to complete the chart. Refer to Harcourt *Reflections* pages 472 to 474.

**Key information for each branch includes:**

Legislative Branch

- Includes the Senate and Assembly
- State Senate: 40 senators elected to four-year terms for no more than 2 terms
- State Assembly – 80 representatives elected to 2-year terms for no more than 3 terms
- Meets at the state capitol in Sacramento
- Presents plans for new laws, called *bills*
- Votes on whether to pass bills into laws
- Decides how state taxes will be spent

Note: According to term limits, no one may serve in the legislative branch for more than 14 years combined.

Executive Branch

- Led by the governor elected to four-year terms
- Governor’s Office creates a plan for spending state money, called a *budget*
- Governors approves bills to become laws
- To stop bills from becoming laws, governor can veto or reject a bill

Judicial Branch

- Made up of state courts; Judges head and decide law cases
- California Supreme Court is state’s highest court
- Seven judges, called *justices*, make up Supreme Court
- Appointed by the governor for 12 year terms
- Supreme Court hears cases about the rights and freedoms of California citizens and questions about the state constitution
- California has 58 lower courts – one for each county. Judges in lowers cours are elected directly by the voters.

**Teacher Background:** California used to have two levels of lower courts – municipal and superior court. Voters passed an initiative in 1998 allowing county judges to merge the two court levels; as of 2001, all 58 counties had unified the states 220 trial courts into just 58.

**Activity # 3 Election of Classroom Officials (Optional)**

Elect or designate students for various key positions within your classroom. Revise, as needed.

Governor: the highest official in the state; head of the executive branch of government

Lieutenant Governor: serves as president of the senate and acts as second in command to fill in for the governor as needed.

Secretary of State: records decisions of the Legislature; responsible for the conduct of elections.

Treasurer: responsible for selling state bonds and preserving the state's valuables; the state's banker.

Auditor/Controller: in charge of collecting all money owed to the state; oversees state spending.

Attorney General: serves as the chief law officer of the state; decides if citizens should be tried for crimes against the state.

Superintendent of Public Instruction: serves as chief administrator of the public school system; directs the State Board of Education and various policies.

## **Activity # 4 Compare and Contrast the United States Constitution and the California State Constitution – a Three-Tab Book**

**Materials needed:** For each student, a copy *Handout #2.2*, a sheet of 8 ½" by 11" paper, scissors. Harcourt *Reflections* pages 470 to 476 or any state-adopted textbook.

**Prompt:** Construct a Three-Tab Book to compare and contrast the United States Constitution and the California State Constitution.

Label the three-tab book as follows: Write "United States Constitution" and "Differences" on the left tab; "Similarities" on the center tab; and, "California Constitution" and "Differences" on the right tab.

Use the academic content vocabulary listed below to complete the diagram by writing each phrase in the correct area of the Venn diagram. Use each phrase only once. If a phrase is written in the part where the two circles meet, it must be true for both of the constitutions.

**Rubric:**

Indicator: Academic Content Language

Academic Content Vocabulary:

executive branch	initiatives	Declaration of Rights
Bill of Rights	referendum	recall of officials
judicial branch	written in 1787	Legislative branch
highest law of the land		

**Procedure:**

1. Fold a sheet of paper like a hot dog.
2. With the paper horizontal, and the fold of the hot dog up, fold the right side toward the center trying to cover one-third of the paper.
3. Fold the left side over the right side to make a book with three folds.
4. Open the folded book. Place your hands between the two thicknesses of paper and cut up the two valleys on the top layer along both folds. This will make three tabs.
5. Label the three-tab book as follows: Write "United States Constitution" and "Differences" on the left tab; "Similarities" on the center tab; and, "California Constitution" and "Differences" on the right tab.
6. Distribute a copy of *Handout # 2.2*. Students write the academic content vocabulary words in the correct area of the Three-Tab Booklet. Use each phrase only once. If a phrase is written in the center tab, it must be true for both of the constitutions.

**Answer Key:****United States Constitution****Differences**

Bill of Rights  
 Written in 1787  
 Highest law of the land

**Similarities**

Executive Branch  
 Judicial Branch  
 Legislative Branch

**California Constitution****Differences**

Declaration of Rights  
 initiatives  
 recall of officials, referendum

As an alternative, complete Harcourt *Reflections* Homework and Practice Book page 129

**Activity # 5 California's Symbols and Song**

**Materials needed:** For each student, a copy of *Symbols of California* (Handout # 2.3) and *I Love You California* (Handout # 2.4)

Have students research the symbols of California to complete the *Symbols of California* (Handout #2.3). An answer key is provided for the teacher. [http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/ca\\_symb.htm](http://www.netstate.com/states/symb/ca_symb.htm) is a useful website. Also, refer to <http://www.elcivics.com/state-lessons/sacramento-1> Scroll down and click on California PowerPoint for a presentation on the symbols of California.

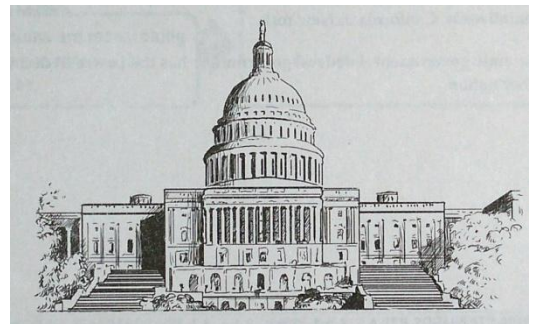
Share the state song, *I Love You California* (Handout #2.4) As a choral reading, have different students read each line and all of the students join in on the chorus.

**Assessment**

Standard	Lesson	Title	Teacher Directions	Handout for students with the prompt and rubric
4.5	2	Compare and Contrast the United States Constitution and the California State Constitution – a Three-Tab Book	pages 12-13	page 15, Handout # 2.2

Additional assessment of this lesson is integrated with the instruction and occurs throughout the lesson rather than just at the end. The focus questions provide a framework for the evaluation of the lesson. Work in a group to complete the “Who Makes the Rules” matrix (Handout #1.1)

- Read the textbook selection about California’s Constitution and explain the purpose of the state constitution.
- Working in a group, create a list of the functions of one branch of state government and present the section as others take notes to complete the *California State Government Retrieval Chart* (Handout #2.1).
- Research the symbols of California and complete the *Symbols of California* chart (Handout #2.3).
- Participate in a choral reading of the state song, *I Love You California* (Handout # 2.4).



## California State Government Retrieval Chart

Use this chart as a note-taking guide as you read and research information about California's state government.

California's Legislature

California's Executive Branch

California's Judicial Branch

## Compare and Contrast the United States Constitution and the California State Constitution – a Three-Tab Booklet

Prompt: Construct a Three-Tab Booklet to compare and contrast the United States Constitution and the California State Constitution. (Directions to construct a 3-Tab Booklet are provided by the teacher.)

Label the three-tab book as follows: Write “United States Constitution” and “Differences” on the left tab; “Similarities” on the center tab; and, “California Constitution” and “Differences” on the right tab.

Use the academic content vocabulary listed below to complete the diagram by writing each phrase in the correct area of the Three-Tab Booklet. Use each phrase only once. If a phrase is written in the part where the two circles meet, it must be true for both of the constitutions.

Academic Content Vocabulary:

Executive Branch	initiatives	Declaration of Rights
Bill of Rights	referendum	recall of officials
Judicial Branch	written in 1787	Legislative Branch
highest law of the land		

Rubric:

INDICATORS	ADVANCED	PROFICIENT	BASIC	BELOW BASIC
<b>USES ACADEMIC LANGUAGE ACCORDING TO POLITICAL CONTENT</b>	Student shows a deep understanding of political language that is woven in an interesting way whether written or oral.	Student shows an effective use of political language that is woven in an interesting way whether written or oral.	Student shows a limited use of political language whether written or oral.	Student shows little or no use of political language whether written or oral.

## Symbols of California

The “bear flag” of California was first designed during the Bear Flag Revolt in the town of Sonoma in 1846. A small group of Americans tried to take control of California, which was a part of Mexico at that time. The star was taken from the lone star of Texas. The bear was representative of the numerous grizzly bears in the state. In 1911, the legislature adopted the design for our state flag, and it must now be flown over all state buildings.

Other symbols include:

State Colors	
State Bird	
State Flower	
State Tree	
State Animal	
State Fossil	
State Marine Animal	
State Reptile	
State Nickname	
State Mineral	
State Song	
State Insect	
State Fish	

The “Great Seal of the State of California” contains the state motto – “Eureka,” which is a Greek word meaning, “I have found it.” Other features of the State Seal include: the Greek Goddess Minerva, a grizzly bear, a gold miner, a bay with ships, and 31 stars. We were the 31<sup>st</sup> state in the United States.

Name/s \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Symbols of California - Answer Key

The “bear flag” of California was first designed during the Bear Flag Revolt in the town of Sonoma in 1846. A small group of Americans tried to take control of California, which was a part of Mexico at that time. The star was taken from the lone star of Texas. The bear was representative of the numerous grizzly bears in the state. In 1911, the legislature adopted the design for our state flag, and it must now be flown over all state buildings.

Other symbols include:

State Colors	<b>Blue</b> and <b>Gold</b> were made the official colors in 1951. They are also the colors of the University of California.
State Bird	<b>California Valley Quail</b> are found throughout most of the state. You can identify them by their “topknot” – a special feather on the tops of their heads. Young quail often run in a line of a group following their mother. When quail are in a group, they are called a covey.
State Flower	The <b>Golden Poppy</b> is a delicate, bright orange wildflower that grows in many parts of the state.
State Tree	<b>California Redwood</b> – These ancient trees are found in the coastal mountains and the Sierra Nevada. Some redwoods have lived over 2000 years and are taller than a 30-story building.
State Animal	The <b>grizzly bear</b> appears on the State Flag and the Great Seal. These bears were once common in California but are now extinct.
State Fossil	The <b>Saber-toothed Cat</b> was a powerful tiger-sized cat with 8-inch fangs. It was common in California long ago, but has been extinct for 10,000 years. Skeletons of this cat have been found in La Brea Tar Pits in Los Angeles. Like many prehistoric animals, this cat’s extinction has been attributed to changes in climate.
State Marine Animal	<b>California Gray Whales</b> are 30 to 50 feet long, weighing up to 40 tons. Whales go on a yearly 14,000 mile migration from cold Arctic waters to the warmer lagoons of Baja California in December, January, and February each year.
State Reptile	The <b>Desert Tortoise</b> is an endangered species that lives in the deserts of California.
State Nickname	California is nicknamed <b>The Golden State</b> because gold was so important to the history of our state.
State Mineral	<b>Gold</b> is the State Mineral and “Eureka” is what you say when you find it.
State Song	<b>I Love You, California</b> was first sung in public in 1913.
State Insect	The <b>Dogface Butterfly</b> is sometimes called a flying pansy, because, like the flower, the males are yellow, black and lavender.
State Fish	<b>California Golden Trout</b> is native to no other state. It is only found in the cold waters of the Sierra Nevada mountains.



## *I Love You California*

Written by F. B. Silverwood  
Composed by A. F. Frankenstein

I love you California - you're the greatest state of all.  
I love you in the winter, summer, spring, and in the fall.  
I love your fertile valleys, your dear mountains I adore.  
I love your grand old ocean and I love her rugged shore.

### *Chorus*

*When the snow crowned Golden Sierras,  
Keep their watch o'er the valleys bloom.  
It is there I would be in our land by the sea,  
Every breeze bearing rich perfume.  
It is here nature gives of her rarest.  
It is Home Sweet Home to me.  
And I know when I die I shall breathe my last sigh,  
For my sunny California.*

I love your redwood forests - love your fields of yellow grain.  
I love your summer breezes, and I love your winter rain.  
I love you, land of flowers; land of honey, fruit and wine.  
I love you, California; you have won this heart of mine.

I love your old gray Missions - love your vineyards stretching far.  
I love you, California, with your Golden Gate ajar.  
I love your purple sunsets, love your skies of azure blue.  
I love you, California; I just can't help loving you.

I love you, Catalina - you are very dear to me.  
I love you, Tamalpais, and I love Yosemite.  
I love you, Land of Sunshine.  
Half your beauties are untold.  
I loved you in my childhood, and I'll love you when I'm old.