

# Subject Guides

## American Government

Greenwood Public Library



This pathfinder is designed to help you locate all kinds of information on the American government system. It focuses on materials relevant for students grades K-12; these materials include [keyword and searching tips](#), [fiction and nonfiction books](#), [multimedia items](#), and [teacher resources/activities](#).

This pathfinder provides resources to help you learn all about the American government—its divisions, how it works, and who is involved. The resources are also excellent in studying how the American government has changed. By clicking on the resource links, you can access many materials to help you in your study of the American government.

The print materials and multimedia materials were located using the Greenwood Public Library Evergreen search website, and they may all be located at Greenwood Public Library. The electronic materials were located through Google searches and other online databases.

## Keywords & Searching Tips

**When searching for information through an electronic database or Internet search engine, you may find more or stronger resources by using the following tips:**

When looking for a particular phrase, such as *American government*, surround the phrase with quotation marks (“American government”). This ensures that your results will include this entire phrase, rather than just “American” or “government.”

If you do not want something in your results, put a minus sign (-) in front of it. For example, if I do not want information regarding Congress in my American government search, I could type: “American government”- Congress.

If you want to search for more than one phrase at the same time, use the word “OR” between the phrases. For example, if I searched “American government” OR “American courts,” I can locate materials that use either of these phrases.

You can narrow down your search even further by using the word “AND.” If I want to research how American bills are passed, I can search “American government” AND “bills” to get more appropriate results.

Try using the following search terms to locate various materials regarding the American government.

- American government
- American legislation
- United States government
- United States legislation

If looking for information on a particular branch or topic regarding the American government, type the name of that branch. Here are some examples of well-known keywords:

- Congress
- House of Representatives
- Senate
- Legislative branch
- Judicial branch
- Executive branch
- Constitution
- American elections
- American presidency
- White House
- Republican
- Democratic

Use the website <http://www.whitehouse.gov/our-government> as a starting point for researching the American government.

If looking for information on government topics of a particular United States state, use the search terms above and the name of the state (for example: “elections” AND “Pennsylvania”)

If looking for information on a particular United States leader (either current or previous), type their last name, first name. For example, “Jefferson, Thomas.”

## Multimedia

The following multimedia items contain both educational and recreational materials regarding the American government.

[Mr. Smith Goes to Washington](#) (DVD); Washington's youngest senator exposes corruption in high places, almost at the cost of his career.

[America Rock](#) (DVD); Scholastic Rock, Inc A series of fast-acting musical vignettes teach American history and government in a fun and easy way.

[The Presidents: the Lives and Legacies of the 43 Leaders of the United States](#) (DVD); The lives and legacies of the 43 leaders of the United States. Based on the book *To the Best of My Ability*, The Presidents features insight from journalists, scholars, and politicians, as well as rare and unseen photographs and footage.

[Fahrenheit 451](#) (sound recording); Novel of the despair faced by a simple man of the future, at the hollowness of his life and the increasing public disinterest in the workings of the government, which has taken complete control.

[Understanding Government](#) (DVD); The Constitution of the United States established three distinct branches of government - the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches. The founding fathers, formed this division to establish the principle of separation of power and maintain an internal system of checks and balances.

# Fiction/Nonfiction Books

## Nonfiction : Grades K-5

[\*Your Right to Vote\* by Mark Sanders](#) Explains the voting and election processes in the United States. (J 324.6 SAN)

[\*How Congress Works: A Look at the Legislative Branch\* by Ruth Tenzer Feldman](#) Explores the establishment and history of the U.S. Congress, its organization, duties, and limits, and a typical day for its members. (J 328.73 FEL)

[\*The United States Constitution\* by Karen Price Hossell](#) Provides a history of the Constitution, explains each section including the Bill of Rights and subsequent amendments, and describes how historical documents such as this can be restored and preserved. (J 324.73 PRI)

[\*Running for Office: A Look at Political Campaigns\* by Sandra Donovan](#) Describes what is involved in running a political campaign, from deciding to run for office through election night. (J 324.7 DON)

[\*My Senator and Me: A Dog's-Eye View of Washington, D.C.\* by Edward M. Kennedy](#) Senator Edward M. Kennedy's dog, Champion Amigo's Seventh Wave, or Splash, introduces readers to Washington, D.C., as he follows the senator around for a day. (J 328.73092 KEN)

[\*Vote!\* by Eileen Christelow](#) Using a campaign for mayor as an example, shows the steps involved in an election, from the candidate's speeches and rallies, to the voting booth where every vote counts, to the announcement of the winner. (J 324.973 CHR)

## Fiction : Grades K-5

[\*Thomas Jefferson: Letters from a Philadelphia Bookworm\* by Jennifer Armstrong](#) An educated, inquisitive young girl in Philadelphia corresponds with President Thomas Jefferson about current events, including the Lewis and Clark expedition, new inventions, and life at Monticello. (J FIC ARM)

[\*Lincoln and His Boys\* by Rosemary Wells](#) Brothers Willie and Taddie share stories about their father, Abraham Lincoln, focusing on the years they lived in the White House. (J Fic WEL)

[\*A Spy in the White House\* by Ron Roy](#) KC tries to uncover the White House spy who is leaking secrets about the upcoming wedding of her mother and the president. (JEC ROY)

[\*Marvin Redpost: Class President\* by Louis Sachar](#) Even though they have all come to school in holey clothes, Marvin and his third grade class manage to impress their surprise visitor--the President of the United States. (JEC SAC)

[\*The Election Day Disaster\* by Ron Roy](#) KC and Marshall throw a Halloween party at the White House, wake up the next day to discover fake, damaging photos of President Thornton on the Internet, and try to help save his election. (JEC ROY)

[\*Arthur Meets the President\* by Marc Brown](#) When Arthur wins a trip to Washington, D.C., for his essay, "How I Can Help Make America Great," he learns a lot about the White House, but frets about forgetting his speech in front of the president. (JUV PIC BRO)

[\*The Impossible Patriotism Project\* by Linda Skeers](#) Caleb has a hard time coming up with a way to symbolize patriotism for Presidents' Day until he realizes that his dad, who is away from home in the military, is what patriotism is all about. (JUV Parent Teach Collection SKE)

## NonFiction : Grades 6-12

[\*Campaigning for President\* by Jordan M. Wright](#) Based on the author's extraordinary personal collection of presidential election memorabilia, this book tells the colorful story of how presidents (and their losing rivals) have wooed voters since America was founded. (ADU 324.973 WRI)

[\*Electing a U.S. President\* by Diana Reische](#) Explains how the United States elects its president, discussing the party system, conventions, primaries, and the actual election day. (ADU 324 REI)

[\*The Most Democratic Branch: How the Courts Serve America\* by Jeffrey Rosen](#) A look at how the courts and judges work within the U.S. government. (ADU 347.7326 ROS)

[\*Our Constitution\* by Donald A. Ritchie](#) Looks at the historical context of the U.S. constitution and the laws that result from it. (ADU 342.7302 RIT)

[\*How Congress Works and Why You Should Care\* by Lee H. Hamilton](#) Offers a straightforward introduction to the United States Congress, explaining its responsibilities, function, and impact it has on American citizens. (ADU 328.73 HAM)

## Fiction : Grades 6-12

[\*All American Girl\* by Meg Cabot](#) A sophomore girl stops a presidential assassination attempt, is appointed Teen Ambassador to the United Nations, and catches the eye of the very cute First Son. (YA CAB)

[\*Vote for Larry\* by Janet Tashjian](#) Not yet eighteen years old, Josh, a.k.a. Larry, comes out of hiding and returns to public life, this time to run for President as an advocate for issues of concern to youth and to encourage voter turnout. (YA TAS)

[Hope Was Here by Joan Bauer](#) When sixteen-year-old Hope and the aunt who has raised her move from Brooklyn to Mulhoney, Wisconsin, to work as waitress and cook in the Welcome Stairways diner, they become involved with the diner owner's political campaign to oust the town's corrupt mayor. (YA BAU)

## Oppressive / Dystopian Governments

[The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins](#) In a future North America, where the rulers of Panem maintain control through an annual televised survival competition pitting young people from each of the twelve districts against one another, sixteen-year-old Katniss's skills are put to the test when she voluntarily takes her younger sister's place. (YA COL)

[Unwind by Neal Shusterman](#) In a future world where those between the ages of thirteen and eighteen can have their lives "unwound" and their body parts harvested for use by others, three teens go to extreme lengths to uphold their beliefs--and, perhaps, save their own lives. (YA SHU)

[1984 by George Orwell](#) Portrays life in a future time when a totalitarian government watches over all citizens and directs all activities. (ADU SCI/FI ORW)

[Brave New World by Aldous Huxley](#) The World Controllers have finally created the ideal society and genetic science has brought the human race to perfection. But Bernard is unhappy. Harboring an unnatural desire for solitude, he visits one of the few remaining Savage Reservations. (YA HUX)

[Feed by M.T. Anderson](#) In a future where most people have computer implants in their heads to control their environment, a boy meets an unusual girl who is in serious trouble. (YA AND)

## Teacher Resources

### All Ages

[The Center on Congress at Indiana University](#) This section covers the nuts and bolts of the legislative process, tracking the various stages a bill goes through to become law. It explains that the legislative process is more dynamic and fluid than the standard "How a Bill Becomes Law" diagrams capture.

[Listen to Actual Speeches](#) This site contains the audio files of many Presidential speeches. Listen to the speeches to learn more about our political history!

[Make a Flowchart of the Election Process](#) Using the choices from this website, put the items in order to create a flowchart of the U.S. election process!

[Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids](#) The Government Printing Office's (GPO) free online service of official Government information from all three branches of the U.S. Government. *Ben's Guide* provides information and activities specifically tailored for educators, parents, and students in K-12. These resources can help teach about our government and how it works.

## K-5 Activities

**Congress for Kids** Congress for Kids gives you access to interactive, fun-filled experiences designed to help you learn about the foundation of our federal government and how its actions affect you.

**First Day of Congress: Puppet Show** This activity is designed to help young learners retain a basic understanding of the different roles in the House of Representatives and how they relate to each other by using hand-made puppets to represent each key role. Students will retain each characters identity and function by performing a show using the puppets they create.

**First Day of Congress: Play House** This activity is designed to help students understand the process and procedures of the first day of Congress by re-enacting them in the classroom. Students have the opportunity to focus on and retain the key elements of beginning a new Congress, including electing a Speaker, taking the Oath of Office, choosing House Officers, and voting on the House Rules.

## 6-12 Activities

**All History Is Local** Creating an archive of primary source materials constitutes the principal activity of a year-long American Studies class focusing on historiography and the use of primary sources. Students understand and articulate the interplay between national, state, local, and personal history.

**In Congress Assembled** Students look at the Constitution and link early legislative debates to issues of today.

**Declaration of Independence : From Rough Draft to Proclamation** Students analyze Thomas Jefferson's "original Rough draught" of the Declaration of Independence, compare its text to that of the final document adopted by Congress, and discuss the significance of wording differences.

**George Washington** Students engage in three lessons examining George Washington's leadership. Lessons two and three relate to Washington's role in the development of American government and his tenure as president.

**First Day of Congress: Getting to know the House** This activity is designed to help students get to know the Representatives serving their district in the House. Students will be tasked with researching and analyzing the political background, voting history, and Floor activities of the Representatives serving several local districts.