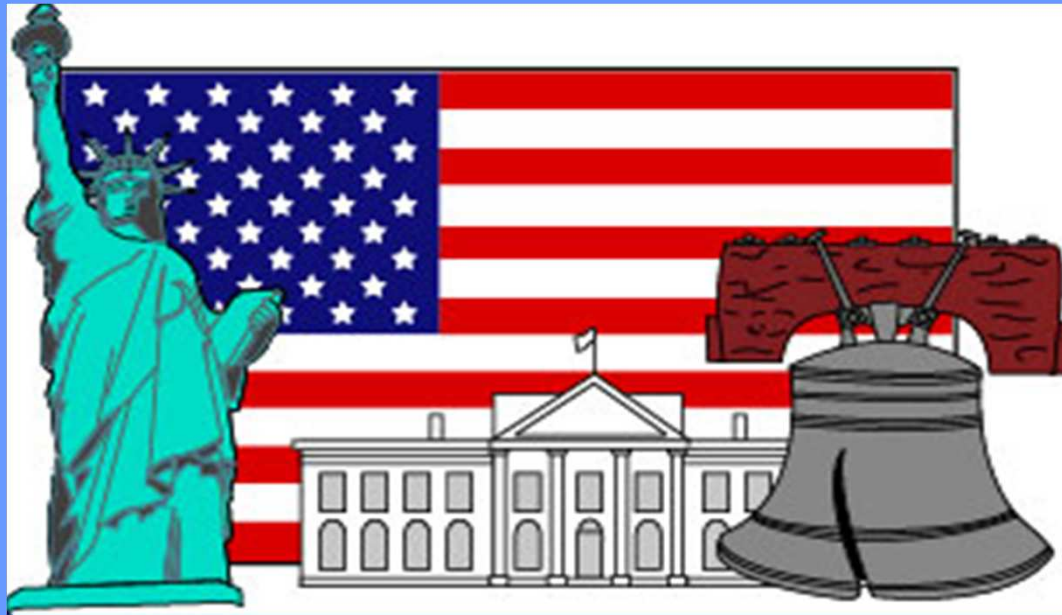


Government of the United States



Cross Curricular Writing Activity
Social Studies Grade 4

Fourth Grade Social Studies Standard

- **The learner will be able to identify the 3 branches of federal and state governments**
- **The learner will be able to relate various members of government to their functions.**
- **The learner will be able to identify the current President of the United States.**
- **The learner will be able to identify the role of a citizen in a democratic society, including the role of the citizen in state and local elections and sing/recite the Star Spangled Banner and explain its history.**
- **The learner will be able to understand that voting is part of the election process.**
- **The learner will be able to identify historical figures who helped to shape the principles and values of American Democracy.**

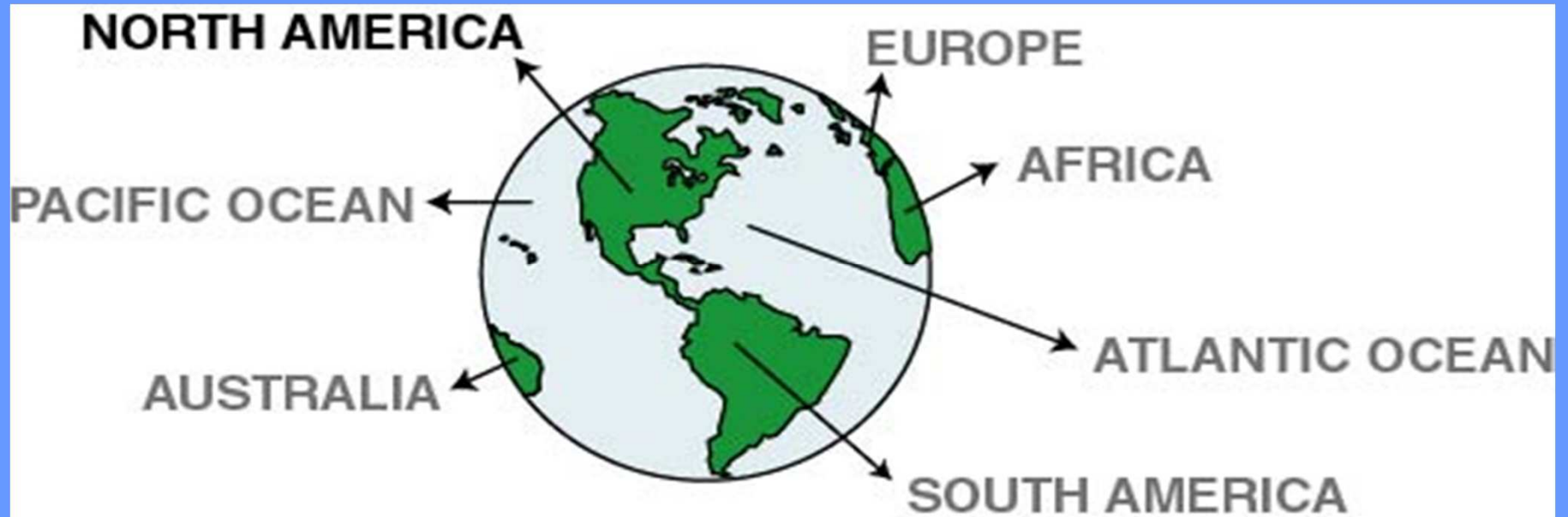
At the end of this activity:

- **You will be asked to write about the U.S. Government.**



Our Nation

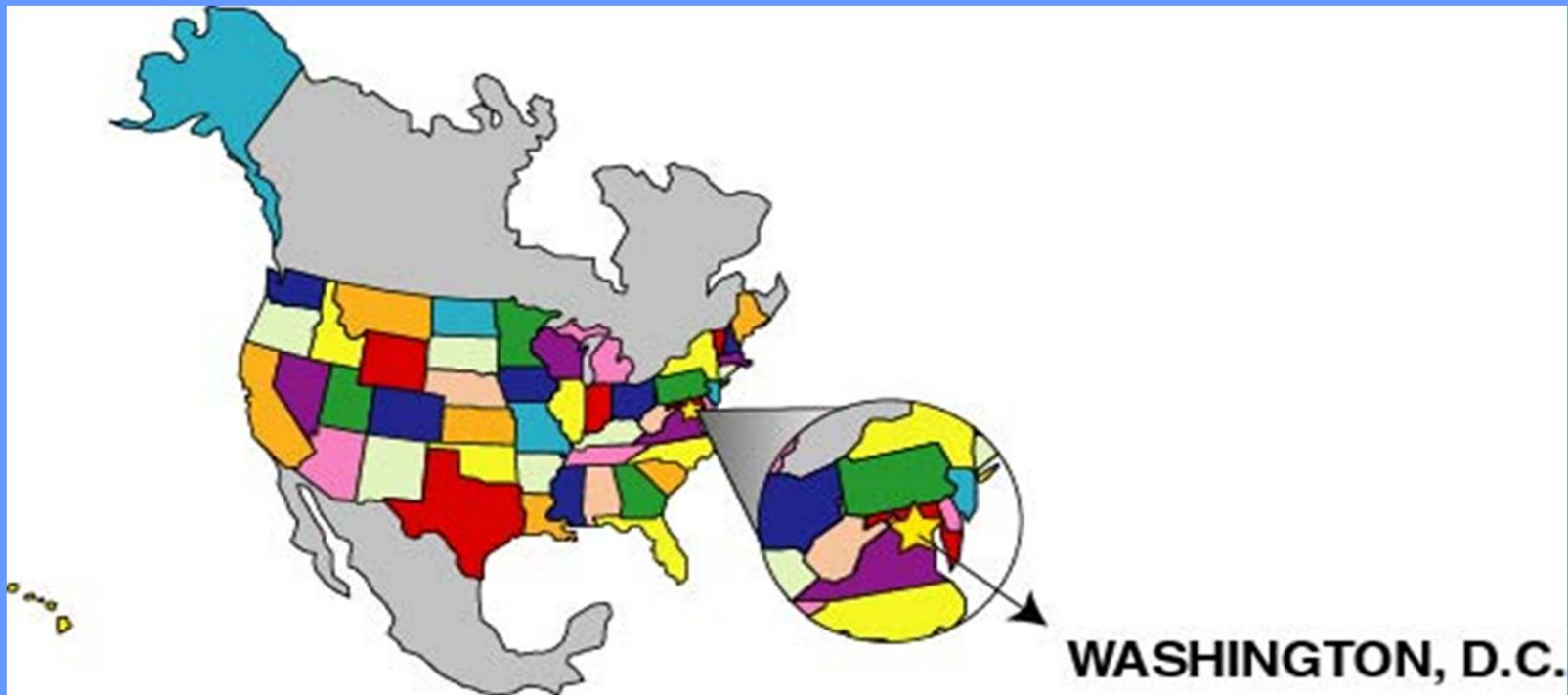
The world is mostly made up of water and seven large land areas known as continents. Our country is called the United States of America. It is located on the continent of North America.



Our Capital: Washington, D.C.

Every country has a capital. This is where the government makes important decisions, such as laws. It is also where the President lives and Congress meets. The Supreme Court judges work here too.

The capital of the United States is Washington, D.C. It is named after George Washington, who was the first President of the United States, and Christopher Columbus, a famous explorer.



Our Government



Why do we need a government? Imagine what your school would be like if no one was in charge. Each class would make its own rules. Who gets to use the gym if two classes want to use it at the same time? Who would clean the classrooms? Who decides if you learn about Mars or play kickball? Sounds confusing, right?

This is why schools have people who are in charge, such as the principal, administrators, teachers, and staff. Our nation has people who are in charge and they make up the government.

Declaring Independence

Watch the movie "[Declaring Independence](#)" to learn about the writing of the Declaration of Independence, the document that formed our new nation. Click on the picture to begin.

After watching the movie, click on the back to come back to page. Then answer questions below.



The Star-Spangled Banner

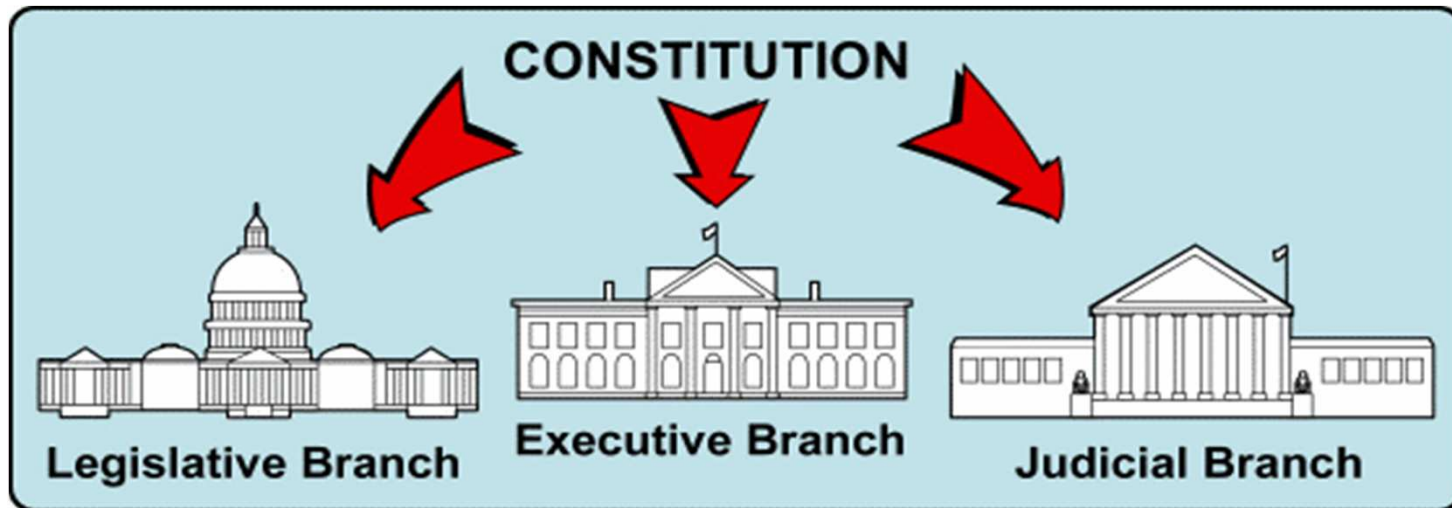
By Francis Scott Key

**Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro' the perilous fight;
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming.
And the rockets red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?**



Three Branches of Government

Our Government: The Constitution

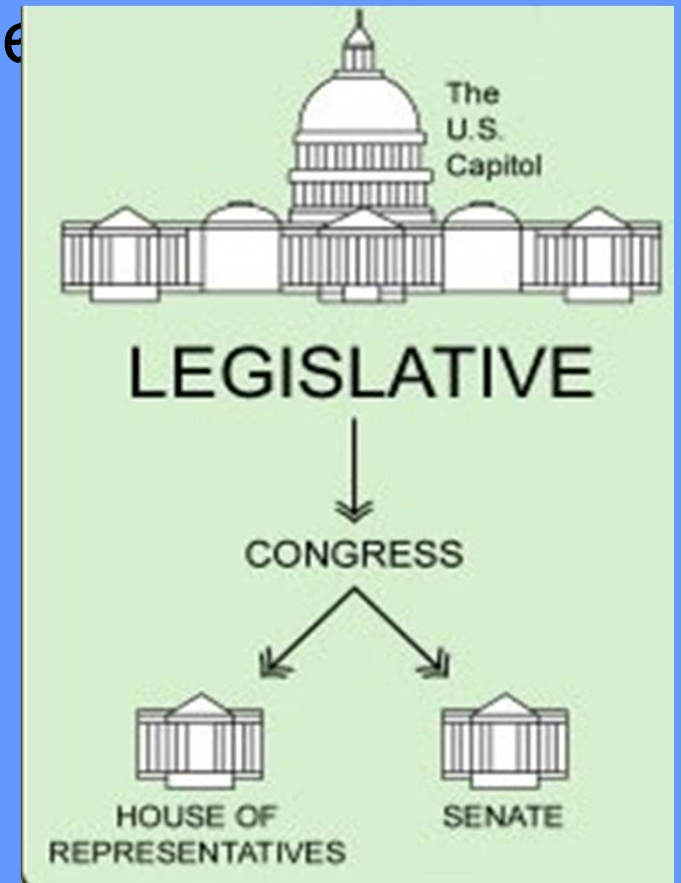


Over 200 years ago, our Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution. The Constitution is a basic design for how our government should work. The Constitution divides the government into three branches. They are the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

Legislative Branch

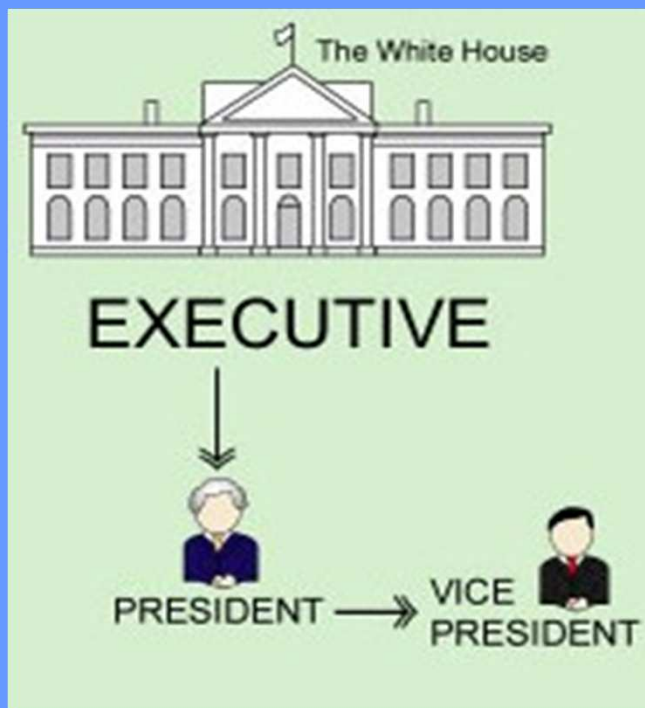
The legislative branch of government is made up of the Congress and government agencies.

Congress has two parts, the House of Representatives and the Senate.



Executive Branch

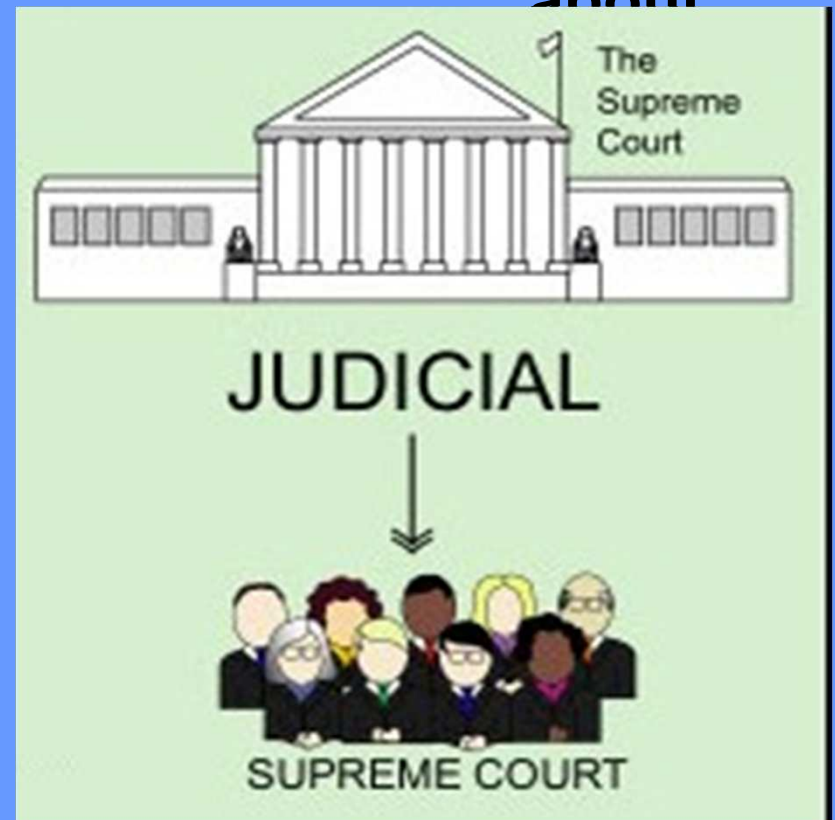
The executive branch of Government makes sure that the laws of the United States are obeyed. The President of the United States is the head of the executive branch of government.



- President:** Leader of the country and commands the military.
- Vice President:** President of the Senate and becomes President if the President can no longer do the job.

Judicial Branch

- The judicial branch of government is made up of the court system.
- The Supreme Court is the highest court in the land.
- Courts decide arguments about the meaning of laws, applied, and the Constitution.



The President of the United States



- On November 7, 2000, Americans elected the 43rd President of the United States. This process was set up in the United States Constitution. The Constitution requires a candidate for the presidency to be:

At least 35 years old

A natural born citizen of the United States

A resident of the United States for 14 years

Responsibilities of Citizens

- The most important right citizens have is the right to vote. By voting, the people have a voice in the government. The people decide who will represent them in the government. Every person's vote counts the same as another person's vote.



The Star-Spangled Banner



- During the War of 1812, Francis Scott Key visited the British fleet in Chesapeake Bay to secure the release of a prisoner. In the morning, Key peered through clearing smoke to see an enormous American flag flying proudly after a 25-hour British bombardment of Fort McHenry. He was so delighted to see the flag still flying over the fort that he began a poem to commemorate the occasion. In 1931, this poem became a song that is known as our national anthem.

Click here to listen to the music

[The Star-Spangled Banner](#)

Sites About Our Government

[On-line Quiz about Government](#)

[White House for Kids](#)

[See Originals of Early Documents](#)

[Our Democratic Values Explained](#)

[Symbols of America](#)

[The Star-Spangled Banner Project](#)

Fourth Grade Social Studies

- **Writing Situation: Pretend you have a penpal in a foreign country. Write a letter to your penpal explaining how the U.S. government works.**

