



4th Grade Government and Citizens Inquiry

Why Does New York Have a State Snack?



Screen shot of a student who appears in a video about yogurt becoming the official state snack of New York. Video created by Ken Rogoyski. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LIlxRPGnro>.

Supporting Questions

1. Where does our government get its power?
2. Why do we need government?
3. How is our government organized?
4. How can citizens influence government?



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Why Does New York Have a State Snack?

New York State Social Studies Framework Key Idea & Practices	4.4 GOVERNMENT: There are different levels of government within the United States and New York State. The purpose of government is to protect the rights of citizens and to promote the common good. The government of New York State establishes rights, freedoms, and responsibilities for its citizens. ✓ Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence ✓ Comparison and Contextualization ✓ Civic Participation
Staging the Compelling Question	Brainstorm reasons why New York would have an official state snack.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3	Supporting Question 4
Where does our government get its power?	Why do we need government?	How is our government organized?	How can citizens influence government?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Write a paragraph that addresses the supporting question.	Discuss the supporting question with a partner.	Complete a graphic organizer comparing the organization of the federal and New York State governments.	Write an editorial for your school's newspaper making an argument for or against the following idea: Citizens can and should influence government.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Source A: Excerpt from <i>The U.S. Constitution and You</i> Source B: Preamble to the United States Constitution	Source A: "What Do Governments Do?" chart Source B: Excerpt from New York City's 2002 Smoke Free Air Act	Source A: "3 Branches of Government" Source B: Excerpts from "Branches of Government in New York State"	Source A: "Step Inside the Voting Booth" graphic Source B: <i>Yogurt for New York State Snack</i> video Source C: "Governor Cuomo Designates Yogurt as Official New York State Snack"

Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT Why does New York have a state snack? Construct an argument that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and evidence. EXTENSION Debate the value of having a symbol or logo that represents the local community.
Taking Informed Action	UNDERSTAND Brainstorm issues or problems affecting the local neighborhood or community. APPLY Identify ideas to solve one of these problems or issues. ACT Identify a government official who could address this issue or problem and write a letter explaining the problem and ideas for solving it.



Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry is an exploration into government that begins by looking at the historical roots of democracy in the United States and then focuses on state government. The inquiry features a case study of a piece of legislation, initiated by a class of New York State elementary school students that resulted in yogurt becoming the official state snack of New York. In examining the idea that we have a voice in our government, especially through state representation, students develop an argument supported by evidence that answers the compelling question “Why does New York have a state snack?”

In addition to the Key Idea expressed earlier, this inquiry covers the following Conceptual Understanding:

- (4.4b) The New York State Constitution establishes the basic structure of government for the state. The government of New York creates laws to protect the people and interests of the state.

NOTE: This inquiry is expected to take five to six 30-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame might expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiries to meet the requirements and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities..

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “Why does New York have a state snack?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct an argument supported by evidence while acknowledging competing perspectives.

Staging the Compelling Question

To open this inquiry, teachers may point out that New York has an official state bird (Eastern bluebird), a state reptile (snapping turtle), and a state tree (sugar maple). (See the State Symbols USA website at http://www.statesymbolsusa.org/New_York/NewYorkStateSymbols.html for other New York State symbols.) Brainstorm why such symbols are important in general and why New York might have an official state snack (yogurt) in particular.

Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question—“Where does our government get its power?”—asks students to set aside their natural tendency to assume that government is all-powerful and to entertain the idea that the United States



government was established specifically to derive its power from the people. In the formative performance task, students use information from the featured sources to write a paragraph that answers the supporting question. Assuming that this inquiry follows one on the American Revolution, Featured Source A provides a general background to the formation of the United States government, while Featured Source B presents the Preamble to the United States Constitution (with an explanation), which cites “We the people of the United States” as the source of governmental power.

Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question—“Why do we need government?”—grounds the inquiry in a question that many students have. Establishing the idea of government as a means to address citizen interests helps students understand the value of government and why they should become involved. In the formative performance task, students discuss the supporting question with a partner and share their conclusions with the class. The featured sources—a chart showing how government intersects with people’s lives and an example of a new New York City law—demonstrate some of the ways government connects with daily life and helps people.

Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question—“How is our government organized?”—suggests that our government has a specific structure and is set up to provide a division of power at the federal, state, and local levels. In the formative performance task, students complete a Venn diagram that compares the structure of the United States government with that of New York State. The featured sources provide general information about the structures of the national and New York State governments.

Supporting Question 4

The final supporting question—“How can citizens influence government?”—proposes the notion that citizens can influence government. Although students may consider participation in government an adult responsibility, this question leads them to the conclusion that they, too, are part of “We the People.” In the final formative performance task, students are asked to write an editorial for their school newspaper making an argument for or against the idea that citizens can and should influence government. Featured Source A provides general information for how citizens can be involved in government. Featured Sources B and C—a video and an announcement from Governor Cuomo’s office designating yogurt as the official state snack of New York—demonstrate a recent example of students getting involved in the creation of a New York State law.

NOTE: Prior to the summative assessment, teachers may want to emphasize the importance of the dairy industry to New York State. The following source is helpful for this purpose: [Yogurt—The Official State Snack](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3Ox97suyCA) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3Ox97suyCA>).



Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined the sources of our government's power, how our government is organized, what societal purpose it serves, and how citizens can influence government. Students should be able to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to construct an evidence-based argument responding to the compelling question "Why does New York have a state snack?"

Students' arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- New York has a state snack because students in New York got involved and were able to influence their state government.
- The governor of New York got the idea that New York should have an official snack from students in his state and signed a bill into law that named yogurt the state snack.
- The reason New York has a state snack is because the people of New York wanted it, and the government represents the people.

Students could extend these arguments by investigating whether their local community has any representative symbols or logos and, if so, debating the meaning and usefulness of those images. If there are no local symbols or logos, debate the value of having one.

Students will have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by drawing on their knowledge of how their government works to represent the people and to promote the common good. As a set of exercises to encourage acting on these ideals, students *understand* by brainstorming issues or problems that affect their local neighborhoods or communities. They *assess* the situation by identifying ideas that might lead to a solution to one or more of these issues or problems. And they *act* by writing a letter to a community or state government official describing the issue or problem and proposing a solution. Some examples of possible issues include installing a stop sign at a dangerous intersection, opening the local library earlier in the day, and enforcing no-idling laws outside of schools.

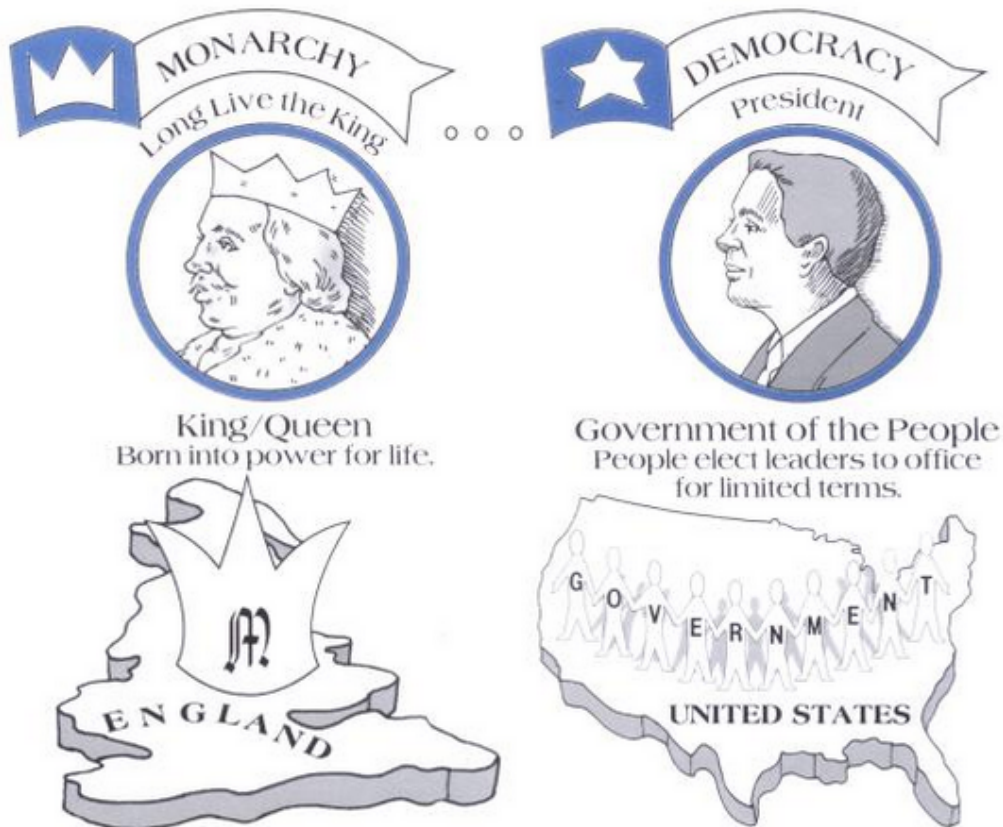


Supporting Question 1

Featured Source

Source A: Syl Sobel, description of the difference between monarchy and democracy, *The U.S. Constitution and You* (excerpt), 2001

The Framers remembered what America was like when the king of England was in charge. They thought the king treated the people badly, and the people had no way to stop him. England was a *monarchy*. A monarchy is a country in which one person—usually a king or queen—has complete control of the government, usually for life. The Framers did not want the leaders of their government to become too powerful. They believed the people should be in charge of the government and not the other way around. We call a country whose government gets its power from the people a *democracy*.



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Supporting Question 1

Featured Source

Source B: Constitutional Convention, opening paragraph of the United States Constitution and explanation, "Preamble" (with explanation), 1787

Preamble to the Constitution

Original Text

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Explanation

The Preamble explains the purposes of the Constitution and defines the powers of the new government as originating from the people of the United States.

Public domain. Available from the National Archives: http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html.
Explanation created for the New York State K–12 Social Studies Toolkit by Binghamton University, 2015.



Supporting Question 2

Featured Source

Source A: Chart describing the functions of government at different levels, “What Do Governments Do?”

What Do Governments Do?			
The national government deals with issues that affect all Americans.	State governments focus on issues that matter to the people in a particular state.	Local governments respond to issues of local importance.	Some issues are important to all three levels of government.
Examples	Examples	Examples	Examples
Printing money	Issuing fishing licenses	Fixing potholes in local roads	Fighting crime
Declaring war	Setting a drinking age	Putting out fires	Educating children
Creating post offices	Creating hunting laws	Cleaning local parks	Supporting museums and libraries
Governments at all three levels collect taxes to help pay for these activities.			

Created for the New York State K–12 Social Studies Toolkit by Binghamton University, 2015.



Supporting Question 2

Featured Source

Source B: New York City Council, law to prohibit smoking in public areas, 2002 Smoke Free Air Act (NYC) (excerpts), New York City Administrative Code, 2002

NOTE: The Smoke Free Air Act (SFAA), which went into effect on March 30, 2003, prohibited smoking in virtually all workplaces and indoor recreational venues. An amendment to the city's 1995 Smoke-Free Air Act, the new law extended rules on smoking to cover all restaurants and most bars regardless of seating and size. The law also restricts smoking in some outdoor restaurant and bar seating areas.

§ 17-503 Prohibition of smoking.

a. Smoking is prohibited in all enclosed areas within public places except as otherwise restricted in accordance with the provisions below.

Such public places include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Public transportation facilities, including, but not limited to, ticketing, boarding and waiting areas of public transit depots.
2. Public means of mass transportation, including, but not limited to, subway cars and all underground areas of a subway station, buses, vans, taxicabs and all for-hire vehicles, including but not limited to limousines, required to be licensed or franchised by the city of New York.
3. Public restrooms.
4. Retail stores (other than retail tobacco stores).
5. Restaurants.
6. Business establishments....
7. Libraries, museums and galleries.
8. Motion picture theaters, concert halls....
9. Auditoriums.
10. Convention halls.
11. Sports arenas and recreational areas.
12. Gymnasiums, health clubs and enclosed areas containing a swimming pool....
14. Health care facilities including, but not limited to, hospitals, clinics....
15. All schools other than public and private pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools providing instruction for students at or below the twelfth-grade level, including, but not limited to, community colleges, technical training establishments, specialty schools, colleges and universities.
16. Children's institutions.
17. Zoos.
18. Elevators....

Public domain. Available at the New York City website: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/smoke/tc7.pdf>.

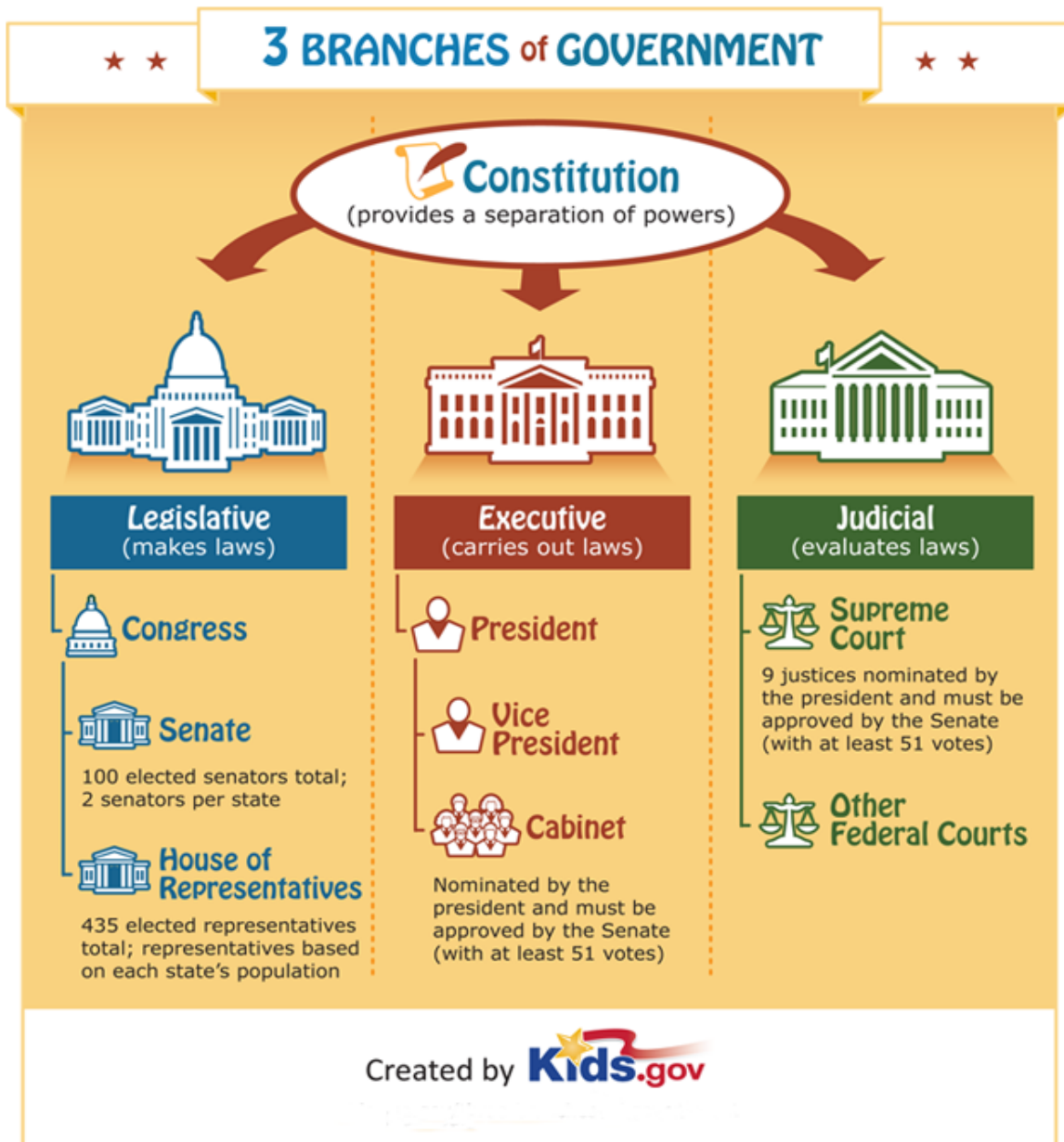


Supporting Question 3

Featured Source

Source A: Kids.gov, chart showing the structure of the United States government, “3 Branches of Government,” 2015

The Three Branches of Government



Public domain. Available at Kids.gov: <http://kids.usa.gov/three-branches-of-government/>.



Supporting Question 3

Featured Source

Source B: New York State Senate, description of the structure of government in New York State, "Branches of Government in New York State" (excerpts), 2015

Branches of Government in New York State

Legislative Branch

The Legislature is the lawmaking branch of state government. It is a...two-house, body composed of the Senate and the Assembly...Each member of the Legislature must be a United States citizen, a resident of the State for five years and, in most cases, of the Senate or Assembly district for one year preceding the election....

The most important [role of the] Senate and Assembly [is] to propose laws....These laws first take the form of bills, which may be introduced in either house. A bill passed by one house must be passed in the same form by the other before it can be sent to the Governor for his signature or veto....

The Legislature...[checks the power] of the Governor and helps [make sure] that the best interests of the State's citizens are...represented.

Executive Branch

The Executive Branch is headed by the Governor, who is elected for a term of four years. The Governor, who must be at least 30 years old, a citizen of the United States and a resident of New York for five years, serves as the State's chief executive and Commander-in-Chief of its military and naval forces....

The Lieutenant Governor is elected for the same term and must possess the same qualifications for office as the Governor. The Lieutenant Governor's main function is to serve as President of the State Senate, but he/she [becomes] the governorship in case of impeachment, resignation, absence or death of the Governor....

Judicial Branch

... The Court of Appeals is the State's highest court. It [is composed of] the Chief Judge and six associate judges who are appointed by the Governor for 14-year terms....The Court hears cases on appeal from the other...courts....

The Supreme Court...is a court of unlimited [power]. However, it usually hears only cases outside the authority of other courts, such as civil cases over \$10,000....

The Judicial Branch is empowered to: provide a forum for the peaceful, fair and prompt resolution of civil claims, family disputes, criminal charges...disputes between citizens and their government and challenges to government actions....

The Judicial Branch serves as the enforcement body for the bills that are passed by the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor. It is the duty of the court to [decide] the practical application and to decide the constitutionality of laws that are already in effect. This is often a complex and challenging task, but the court system is organized to best meet the varied legal needs of all the State's citizens.

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<http://www.nysenate.gov/branches-government>.



Supporting Question 4

Featured Source

Source A: PBSKids, graphic depicting the importance of voting, “Step Inside the Voting Booth,” 2015

STEP INSIDE the VOTING BOOTH

- ☐ What a **DIFFERENCE** One Vote Makes
- ☐ Step into a Voting **TIME MACHINE**
- ☒ Cast **YOUR** Vote
- ☐ How **YOU** Can Be Part of an **ELECTION**

You've probably heard your parents or their friends talk about voting. Perhaps they discussed particular candidates who were running for office or important issues that affected the way you live.

Many people today think voting is the most important right Americans have. There are many places in the world where people do not have the right to vote. By voting, people can make sure that their opinion is shared with community leaders. If you are a citizen of the United States and eighteen or older, you have the right to vote in local, state and national elections. Voting may not be new to you, though — if you have helped to choose officers for a club or school government, you have already exercised your right to vote!

People vote for a number of reasons. They vote to decide how their cities, counties, states and the country should be governed and by whom. Are you attending a new school? Do you play at a new playground? If so, chances are that your parents and neighbors voted on whether to build that school or playground. No matter what the issue, voting gives people a say in how things are to be done.

But one of the biggest political problems in the United States today is the lack of voter turnout. In the 2000 election, just over half the population (51%) voted. As you can see, the people who did not vote were giving up a chance to make a difference!

© PBS Online®. <http://pbskids.org/democracy/vote/>.



Supporting Question 4

Featured Source

Source B: Ken Rogoyski, video describing a state snack campaign, *Yogurt for New York State Snack*, March 21, 2014

NOTE: This screen shot is from a video of the students at Byron-Bergen Elementary School, in Bergen, New York, who successfully lobbied for yogurt to be named the official state snack for New York.



Video created by Ken Rogoyski. Available at YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LlIXRPGnro>.



Supporting Question 4

Featured Source

Source C: New York City Press Office, announcement of the official designation of yogurt as the state snack, "Governor Cuomo Designates Yogurt as Official New York State Snack," October 15, 2014

Governor Cuomo Designates Yogurt as Official New York State Snack

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today signed legislation making yogurt the official snack of New York, in advance of the second New York State Yogurt Summit being held today. The Summit will bring together industry experts to discuss how to further grow the yogurt business and continue creating new jobs. The Empire State is the top producer of yogurt in the nation, generating 741 million pounds of yogurt in 2013 alone.

"This designation is a fitting recognition of the importance of this state's yogurt industry, which has experienced tremendous growth over the past few years, making New York the top yogurt producer in the nation," Governor Cuomo said. "We will continue to work with New York producers and dairy farmers to build upon this progress and further strengthen this critically important industry."

The tremendous boon in Greek-style yogurt has been the catalyst for the dairy industry's revitalization in New York. The State produced 741 million pounds of yogurt in 2013, up from 695 million pounds in 2012, accounting for 15.7% of the total U.S. yogurt production. Additionally, dairy manufacturers in New York employed an estimated 9,478 people with total wages of \$513 million in 2013, an increase from 7,749 jobs and \$401 million in wages in 2010.

Designating yogurt as the official state snack will continue to raise public awareness of the economic and health benefits of yogurt and the dairy industry. The Yogurt Summit convened in 2012 resulted in a number of initiatives to eliminate barriers to business growth and help manufacturers continue to grow.

State Senator Michael H. Ranzenhofer said, "Yogurt is now the official snack of New York State, and the fourth-graders at Byron-Bergen Elementary School deserve all of the credit. From initially suggesting the idea to traveling to the State Capitol earlier this year, these students deserve high marks for their efforts to get this legislation signed into law. I am pleased that the Governor has signed my bill into law."

Assemblyman William Magee said, "I am pleased that the Governor is signing this bill, which recognizes the importance of the dairy and yogurt industry in New York."

Used with permission. Available at New York State website: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-designates-yogurt-official-new-york-state-snack>.