

## American Government Resource List for Grades 5 through 8

The Resources in this document can be used with the American Government Curriculum Packet for grades 5 through 8.

### Books

#### Non-fiction and Biography

- How Does the US Government Work? 2017 by Universal Politics (Author).  
For kids learning about the many federal bodies and regulations that keep a government working, this is the book to have. This book discusses how government collect taxes and for what purpose. It provides relatable accounts on how the government serves as the central force that makes living in the USA possible.
- Inside Elections series: This series examines political issues that are pertinent to an informed citizenry participating in a democracy. Each book covers some phase of the voting process and provides enough information for a basic understanding of the selected topic.
  - Media: From News Coverage to Political Advertising, 2015 by Sandy Donovan (Author).
  - Political Parties: From Nominations to Victory Celebrations, 2015 by Stephanie Sammartino McPherson (Author).
  - Special Interests: From Lobbyists to Campaign Funding, 2015 by Sandy Donovan (Author).
  - Voters: From Primaries to Decision Night, 2015 by Robert Grayson (Author).
- A Kids' Guide to America's Bill of Rights, 2015 by Kathleen Krull (Author), Anna Divito (Illustrator).  
Beginning with the text of the Bill of Rights and an overview of its history and importance, the book is divided into chapters focusing on each amendment. Legal cases (often involving children's rights) are clearly explained. Final chapters discuss later amendments and constitutional controversies.
- Our Supreme Court: A History with 14 Activities (For Kids series), 2006 by Richard Panchyk (Author), Nadine Strossen (Introduction), James Baker Iii (Afterword), & 1 more.  
This lively and comprehensive activity book teaches young readers everything they need to know about the nation's highest court. Organized around keystones of the Constitution, including free speech, freedom of religion, civil rights, criminal justice, and property rights, the book juxtaposes historical cases with similar current cases.
- Those Rebels, John & Tom, 2012 by Barbara Kerley (Author), Edwin Fotheringham (Illustrator).  
These two very different gentlemen did have two things in common: They both cared deeply about the American colonies, and neither cared much for the British tyrant, King George. This title blends biography and history to create a brilliant portrait of two American heroes who bravely set aside their differences to join forces in the fight for our country's freedom.
- The United States Constitution: What It Says, What It Means: A Hip Pocket Guide, 2005

by JusticeLearning.org, David Eisenhower (Afterword).

This slim title allows you to put the most important document in American history in your back pocket. In conjunction with Justice Learning and The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands and with an introduction written by Caroline Kennedy and an afterword written by David Eisenhower, this pocket guide appeals to the broadest possible audience. Each Article and each Amendment is followed by a clear and concise explanation, in plain English.

- What Are the Articles of Confederation? And Other Questions About the Birth of the United States, 2015 by Laura Hamilton Waxman (Author).  
Six Questions of American History series. Informative sidebars and colorful graphics enhance this lively narrative. The book provides a linear, factual account of the “Birth of the United States,” clearly showing the development of the American federal system of government.
- The US Congress for Kids: Over 200 Years of Lawmaking, Deal-Breaking, and Compromising, with 21 Activities (For Kids series), 2014 by Ronald A. Reis (Author), Rep. Kristi Noem (Afterword), Rep. Henry A. Waxman (Foreword).  
Providing a historical perspective on all that is going on today, US Congress for Kids examines the major milestones in congressional history, including the abolition of slavery, extending the vote to African Americans and to women, and investigating misconduct in both government and private institutions.
- The White House for Kids: A History of a Home, Office, and National Symbol, with 21 Activities (For Kids series), 2014, by Katherine L. House (Author).  
Have you ever wondered what it’s like to live and work in the most important house in the country, or what it’s like to grow up there? Now, with this book as your guide, you can explore the Executive Mansion for yourself. This intriguing, in-depth history of the White House explains its role as a home, an office, and a powerful symbol of the United States and tells both famous and little-known stories about some of the surprising—and sometimes surprisingly ordinary—things that go on there.
- Who's in Charge? 2010 by Andrew Marr (Author).  
Introduces politicians and how laws are made, what happens in government and how the reader can get involved.
- You Rule! Create Your Own Country, 2015 by Scott Forbes (Author), Emma Laura Jones (Illustrator).  
This thought-provoking book encourages young readers to think through all the necessary steps to create and run their own countries. Location, kinds of leadership and government, infrastructure, currency and economics, and applying to the United Nations are just some of the many topics covered

## Fiction

- Cooper and the Enchanted Metal Detector, 2013 by Adam Osterwiell (Author).  
Eleven-year-old Cooper searches for treasures for his mother's antique shop. When he uses a metal detector, and finds Revolutionary War artifacts in his backyard, the city government want to take his home to preserve the finds.
- The Great Greene Heist, 2015 by Varian Johnson (Author)  
Jackson Greene swears he's given up scheming. Then school bully Keith Sinclair announces he's running for Student Council president, against Jackson's former friend Gaby de la Cruz. Gaby wants Jackson to stay out of it, but he knows Keith has "connections" to the principal, which could win him the presidency no matter the vote count.

- How Not to Run for President, 2002 by Catherine Clark (Author).  
When the middle school band is called to play for a presidential campaign rally, a young hero is right there with his clarinet, just in time to save the candidate's life. Interviewed by the media, he speaks up in favor of the need to save jobs, like his mom's, for instance. Even though he's in the middle of Little League season, for pete's sake, the candidate convinces him to join her tour of the Midwest.

### Magazines, Journals, Miscellaneous

- American Government by Kids Discover  
For students studying American government, Kids Discover American Government offers a compelling narrative about how our government functions. There is an overview of the executive, the legislative, and the judicial branches, and the balance of power at the federal level. Then an introduction to state and local governments, including their structure and responsibilities.  
<https://www.kidsdiscover.com/shop/issues/american-government-for-kids-2/>
- Constitution by Kids Discover  
Imagine if the U.S. had no national laws and no president, and every state had a different kind of money, this is what life was like for Americans after the Revolution. Even though there was a Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation, there were no real guidelines for running the new country. This is where the Constitution came in; for students learning about the birth of the nation, this issue is critical in showing how this essential document came to be, and how it has shaped American life ever since then.  
<https://www.kidsdiscover.com/shop/issues/constitution-for-kids/>
- How America Works by Kids Discover  
We know that our government collects taxes and creates laws, but how much do we know about all the other things it does, like cleaning the streets, promoting the arts, and overseeing public transportation? The structure and many functions of the American government is the focus here, and the process of electing officials to represent and answer to the concerns of the public is also examined.  
<https://www.kidsdiscover.com/shop/issues/american-government-for-kids/>

### Online Links

- Abraham Lincoln's Crossroads: In this online game, learn about Lincoln's leadership by exploring the political choices he made.  
<http://constitutioncenter.org/lincoln/>
- Congress for Kids: Learn American Government  
<https://www.congressforkids.net/>
- Engaging Congress is a fun, interactive game that uses primary source documents to explore the basic tenets of representative government and the challenges they face in contemporary society.  
<https://engagingcongress.org/>
- George Washington's Mount Vernon: tons of things to explore and learn.  
<https://www.mountvernon.org/>
- Seize the Vote: Learn all about voting rights throughout history in this online game  
<http://constitutioncenter.org/seize-the-vote/>

### **Background information for the Educator**

- Annenberg Classroom: Civics sites for Educators.  
<http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/page/best-civics-sites-for-teachers>
- Icivics: iCivics works to ensure every student in America receives a quality and engaging civic education and graduates from high school well prepared and enthusiastic for citizenship. Contains lessons, ideas, and much more.  
<https://www.icivics.org/teachers>