

## Mini-Lesson: Party Systems

**Time Needed:** One class period

**Materials Needed:**

Student Materials

**Copy Instructions:**

Reading (*class set; 1 page*)

Activity pages (*class set; 1 page*)

**Learning Objectives** Students will be able to:

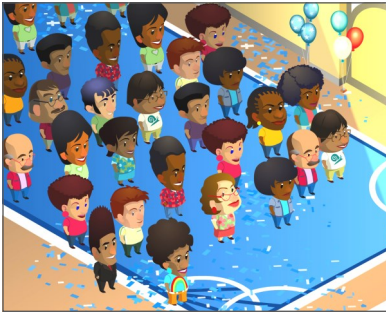
- Define "political party."
- Distinguish between single-party, two-party, and multi-party systems.
- Explain proportional representation.

### STEP BY STEP

- ANTICIPATE** the lesson by asking your students whether they think political parties are important. Would it matter if a country didn't have any? Do they think other countries have political parties? If so, why? Or if not, why not?
- DISTRIBUTE** the lesson pages to the class.
- READ** the reading page with the class, pausing to discuss as appropriate.
- ASSIGN** the activity page.
- PROJECT** the full-page "Party Systems Strengths & Weaknesses" projection master and use it to discuss the answers to Activity A. Please note that the teacher key shows the strongest answers, but there are arguments to be made for additional responses.
- REVIEW** the answers to Activity B with the class if you wish.
- CLOSE** by polling students on the following questions: Which system do they think best serves citizens? Which system do they think is easiest for a government?

# Party Systems

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## Everyone Loves a Party

Political parties, that is! A **political party** is an organized group of people who share similar political views and work to influence the government in support of those views. Countries all across the world have political parties. Why? Because organizing into parties is a powerful way for groups of people with similar views can work together to influence government. Political parties play different roles in different countries depending on the kind of party system a country has.

## No Democracy, No Party

Some countries have **no political parties** at all. Most of these countries are not democracies, so citizens have limited influence on government. For example, political parties are banned in the Middle East nation of Qatar. The nation is led by a monarch, who gets his position by birth and appoints most government officials.

A few countries that are not democracies have a **single-party system** with one major political party. China is a communist state with one political party, called the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Technically there are a few other parties, but they are all controlled by the CCP. In most single-party systems, it is illegal to oppose the main political party. The Chinese government does not allow citizens to form parties that oppose the CCP.

COUNTRY	# PARTIES IN OFFICE
Brunei	1
Eritrea	1
Kuwait	0
North Korea	1
Saudi Arabia	0
Vietnam	1

Source: The World Factbook, [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)

COUNTRY	# PARTIES IN OFFICE
Australia	12
Brazil	28
Canada	5
Denmark	9
Germany	4
Israel	10
Turkey	4

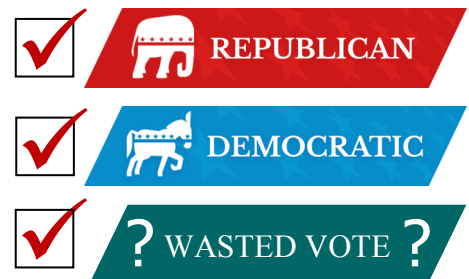
Source: The World Factbook, [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)

## Party On!

Most countries have **multi-party systems** where three or more political parties share power. In many of these countries, lawmakers are elected by **proportional representation**—each party gets a number of seats that corresponds to the amount of support the party gets from voters. Almost all European governments work this way. In other countries, such as Japan and Australia, voters elect individual candidates to each seat. However the voting works, multi-party systems always have at least three parties with members elected to government office. There may be one or two parties with more support and influence, but many parties are represented. Often no party has a clear majority, so parties must work together in government.

## Either This Party or That One

A few countries with multi-party systems have developed into a **two-party system** with two major political parties that hold most of the power. Other parties exist, and they sometimes gain enough support to win a few seats in the nation's legislature, but they never get enough representation to have any national influence. This is the least common system around the world—and it's the one we have in the United States. Here, the vast majority of Americans identify with either the Democratic or Republican parties. The U.S. has many "third parties" that often put candidates on the ballot. Some are occasionally elected, but none of these parties has gained a foothold in national government.



*In a two-party system, voters may worry that a vote for a party with little influence is a wasted vote. This is one reason the two-party system can be difficult to change.*

# Party Systems

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**A. Strengths & Weaknesses.** Read each statement. Decide which party system (or systems) it describes and whether it sounds like a strength or a weakness of that system.

1) Citizens may feel it's pointless to vote for the party they actually support.

<input type="radio"/> Strength	<input type="radio"/> Weakness
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1
<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> Multiple

2) Citizens have no real voice in government.

<input type="radio"/> Strength	<input type="radio"/> Weakness
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1
<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> Multiple

3) Citizens don't have to deal with political party drama.

<input type="radio"/> Strength	<input type="radio"/> Weakness
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1
<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> Multiple

4) Parties have to work together to get things done.

<input type="radio"/> Strength	<input type="radio"/> Weakness
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1
<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> Multiple

5) Citizens can join a party they support, knowing their party will likely be represented in government.

<input type="radio"/> Strength	<input type="radio"/> Weakness
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1
<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> Multiple

6) There is no opportunity for opposing views to be represented.

<input type="radio"/> Strength	<input type="radio"/> Weakness
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1
<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> Multiple

7) Lots of different parties make it hard for the government to accomplish reform.

<input type="radio"/> Strength	<input type="radio"/> Weakness
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1
<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> Multiple

8) Reform is easy because there is no opposition.

<input type="radio"/> Strength	<input type="radio"/> Weakness
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1
<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> Multiple

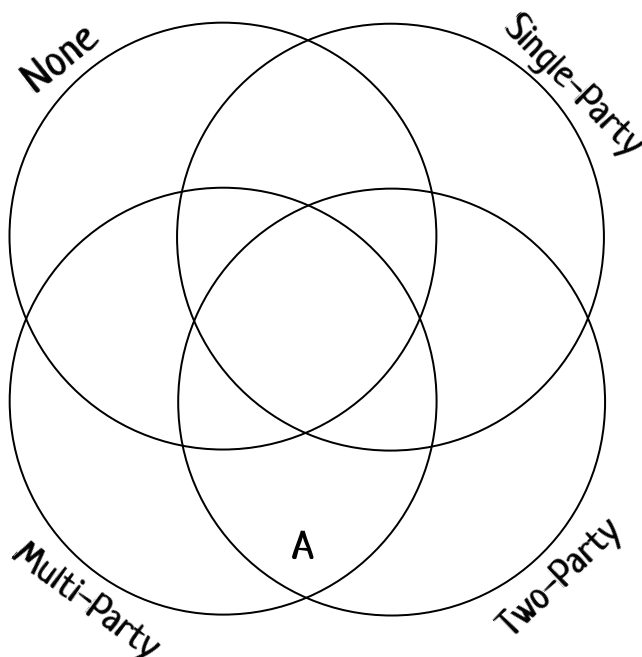
9) Parties are motivated to embrace views that include most groups of people in society.

<input type="radio"/> Strength	<input type="radio"/> Weakness
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1
<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> Multiple

10) Large groups with opposite views can lead to a divided nation.

<input type="radio"/> Strength	<input type="radio"/> Weakness
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 1
<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> Multiple

**B. Crazy Quadra-Venn!** Do the different party systems have anything in common? Decide whether each characteristic on the list applies to party systems with 0, 1, 2, or multiple parties. Find the right spot on the 4-way Venn diagram (if you can!) and write the letter there. The first one is done for you.



- A. Likely to be found in a democracy.
- B. Illegal to oppose the main party
- C. Usually found in countries that are not democracies.
- D. Citizens can belong to a political party.
- E. Some parties don't have as much power as others.
- F. Two parties hold all the power
- G. Individual citizens have personal political views.
- H. Government includes elected officials from more than two parties.
- I. Political parties don't exist.
- J. Usually found where citizens have little or no influence on government.
- K. Found in the United States.
- L. Citizens are ruled by a government.

# PARTY SYSTEM

## STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

	Strength or weakness?	Which kind of party system?
1) Citizens may feel it's pointless to vote for the party they actually support.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi
2) Citizens have no real voice in government.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi
3) Citizens don't have to deal with political party drama. (But is it worth it?)	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi
4) Parties have to work together to get things done.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi
5) Citizens can join any party they support, knowing their party will likely be represented in government.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi
6) There is no opportunity for opposing views to be represented.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi
7) Lots of different parties and make it hard for the government to accomplish reform.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi
8) Reform is easy because there is no opposition.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi
9) Parties are encouraged to support views that include most groups of people.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi
10) Large groups with opposite views can lead to a divided nation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strength <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi

# PARTY SYSTEM

## STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

**\*\* TEACHER GUIDE \*\***

**Strength or  
weakness?**

**Which kind of  
party system?**

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 1) Citizens may feel it's pointless to vote for the party they actually support. | <input type="checkbox"/> Strength            | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1                |
|  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weakness | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi |

*Answers on this page reflect the strongest match. A case could be made for additional responses.*

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 2) Citizens have no real voice in government. | <input type="checkbox"/> Strength            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 0 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 |
|   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weakness | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi                   |

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 3) Citizens don't have to deal with political party drama. (But is it worth it?) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strength | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness            | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi        |

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| 4) Parties have to work together to get things done. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strength | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1                           |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multi |

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 5) Citizens can join any party they support, knowing their party will likely be represented in government. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strength | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1                |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness            | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multi |

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| 6) There is no opportunity for opposing views to be represented. | <input type="checkbox"/> Strength            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 0 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 |
|  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weakness | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi                   |

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 7) Lots of different parties and make it hard for the government to accomplish reform. | <input type="checkbox"/> Strength            | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1                |
|  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weakness | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multi |

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 8) Reform is easy because there is no opposition. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strength | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 0 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness            | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi                   |

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 9) Parties are encouraged to support views that include most groups of people. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strength | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1                |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Weakness            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi |

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 10) Large groups with opposite views can lead to a divided nation. | <input type="checkbox"/> Strength            | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1                |
|  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Weakness | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Multi |

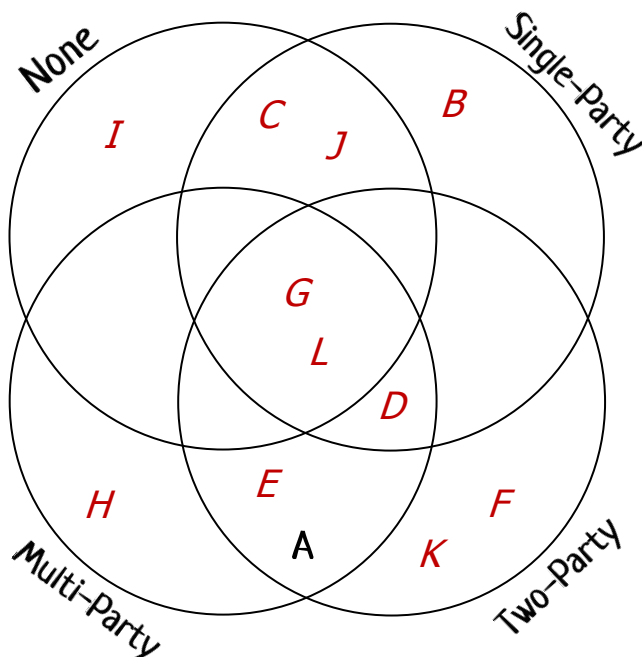
# Party Systems

Name: **\*\* TEACHER GUIDE \*\***

**A. Strengths & Weaknesses.** Read each statement. Decide which party system (or systems) it describes and whether it sounds like a strength or a weakness of that system.

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>1) Citizens may feel it's pointless to vote for the party they actually support.</p>                           | <input type="radio"/> Strength <input checked="" type="radio"/> Weakness<br><input type="radio"/> 0 <input type="radio"/> 1<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> Multiple            | <p>6) There is no opportunity for opposing views to be represented.</p>                         | <input type="radio"/> Strength <input checked="" type="radio"/> Weakness<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> 0 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 1<br><input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> Multiple |
| <p>2) Citizens have no real voice in government.</p>  | <input type="radio"/> Strength <input checked="" type="radio"/> Weakness<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> 0 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 1<br><input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> Multiple | <p>7) Lots of different parties make it hard for the government to accomplish reform.</p>       | <input type="radio"/> Strength <input checked="" type="radio"/> Weakness<br><input type="radio"/> 0 <input type="radio"/> 1<br><input type="radio"/> 2 <input checked="" type="radio"/> Multiple            |
| <p>3) Citizens don't have to deal with political party drama. (But is it worth it?)</p>                           | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Strength <input type="radio"/> Weakness<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> 0 <input type="radio"/> 1<br><input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> Multiple            | <p>8) Reform is easy because there is no opposition.</p>  | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Strength <input type="radio"/> Weakness<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> 0 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 1<br><input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> Multiple |
| <p>4) Parties have to work together to get things done.</p>   | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Strength <input type="radio"/> Weakness<br><input type="radio"/> 0 <input type="radio"/> 1<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> 2 <input checked="" type="radio"/> Multiple | <p>9) Parties are motivated to embrace views that include most groups of people in society.</p> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Strength <input type="radio"/> Weakness<br><input type="radio"/> 0 <input type="radio"/> 1<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> Multiple            |
| <p>5) Citizens can join any party they support, knowing their party will likely be represented in government.</p> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Strength <input type="radio"/> Weakness<br><input type="radio"/> 0 <input type="radio"/> 1<br><input type="radio"/> 2 <input checked="" type="radio"/> Multiple            | <p>10) Large groups with opposite views can lead to a divided nation.</p>                       | <input type="radio"/> Strength <input checked="" type="radio"/> Weakness<br><input type="radio"/> 0 <input type="radio"/> 1<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> Multiple            |

**B. Crazy Quadra-Venn!** Do the different party systems have anything in common? Decide whether each characteristic on the list applies to party systems with 0, 1, 2, or multiple parties. Find the right spot on the 4-way Venn diagram (if you can!) and write the letter there. The first one is done for you.



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