

To **govern** means to exercise authority over people. "Govern" comes from the Greek word meaning "to steer," so governing means steering the people in a certain way, like a captain steers a ship. The purpose of a good government is to use power and authority to give order and stability to people's lives. **Government** is the act or process of governing. **Government** can also mean the political institutions, laws, and customs used to govern a people. **Government** can even mean the people who govern.

Throughout human history, different forms of government have been used to govern people. One of the oldest and most common is a monarchy. **Monarchy** is the absolute rule by an individual person (usually called a king or a queen) over a kingdom or empire, which is also called a monarchy. "Mono" means "one" and "arch" means "chief" or "principal," so a monarchy is rule by one person. **Oligarchy** is a type of government in which a small group of people have control, usually for corrupt or selfish purposes. "Olig" means "few," so an oligarchy is rule by a few.

A **dictatorship** is absolute power by a single person or a small group that works for a dictator. "Dict" means "to say," so a dictatorship is where one person says what everyone else is to do. A dictator is a person with complete control, and a dictatorship is often an oppressive form of government. A **democracy** is rule by the people. "Dem" means "people," so a democracy is a form of government in which the people rule themselves, usually through elected officials who speak for them.

Because the people rule, the government of the United States of America is a type of democracy, but it is also a **republic** because its citizens elect representatives to represent them. This is why the United States of America is called a **democratic republic**. Although this democracy was the first of its kind in the world, it had its roots in Greek, Roman, and British government and ways of thinking. The men who established the United States of America (we call these men the **Founding Fathers**) relied on those roots and ways of thinking when they created our country.

### Answer the Following

1. What does it mean to govern someone? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What is "government?" \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Name and explain two types of government. \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. What type of government does America have? \_\_\_\_\_  
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