

# Government

## Adventures in Reading:

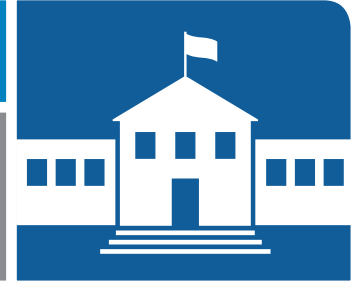
*Reading Adventure Packs from Reading Rockets*



Funded in part by the  
Park Foundation, Inc.

### Contents:

- Two books — one fiction, one nonfiction
- Parent information sheet
- Three activity sheets
- Bookmark
- Parent survey



# For teachers and librarians

This Reading Rockets reading adventure pack is designed to support reading activities at home. We've chosen a fiction and nonfiction book about the United States government, appropriate for a second and third grade interest level, and included related activities to encourage some hands-on fun and learning. Just assemble the packet and books in a two-gallon zip top bag, and send home with your students.

When packing for this reading adventure about our government we suggest you include *Madame President* by Lane Smith and *How the U.S. Government Works* by Syl Sobel. In *Madame President*, a little girl does what all kids do at some point—imagines that she is the President of the United States—and cleverly introduces readers to the duties of the President. *How the U.S. Government Works* introduces the powers and responsibilities of all the branches of government and covers the basics of our federal system.

Reading Rockets carefully chose these titles because they are widely available in libraries and appealing to young readers. If they are not available, or you prefer other titles, substitute books related to the theme. You'll find more titles about the U.S. government included on the bookmark and at [www.worldcat.org/profiles/ReadingRockets/lists](http://www.worldcat.org/profiles/ReadingRockets/lists).

The parent information sheet includes an introductory note that you can personalize with your own instructions, and tips for sharing fiction and nonfiction books with children

The activities are designed to encourage further exploration and learning at home:

- Creativity Activity: a hands-on craft project
- Imagination Activity: encourages imaginative play, writing or drawing
- Get Real Activity: focuses on real-world experiences for parent and child
- The bookmark lists both the featured titles and additional titles

### Putting it all together

Print out copies of the Welcome sheet, How To sheet, the three activities, and the bookmark/survey.

Into a two-gallon zip top bag, place:

- Two books — one fiction and one nonfiction
- Parent information sheet
- Three themed activity pages
- Bookmark
- Survey for parents

Send the packet home with your student. Encourage parents to keep the parent information sheet, the activities and bookmark, and return the books and survey to you.

Let reading rockets know what you think of the family activity packets by e-mailing us through our website: [www.readingrockets.org/sitecontact](http://www.readingrockets.org/sitecontact). Click on "Reading Adventure Packs."

# START YOUR READING ADVENTURE!

# Welcome

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Exploring new ideas and enjoying books with you sends a powerful message to your child: Reading and learning are fun, and happen everywhere — not just at school. This Reading Rockets reading adventure pack about the **United States government** was created to help you and your child enjoy reading and learning together.

Start your learning adventure by reading some books with your child about this popular topic. Then explore the topic with three activities. Enclosed you'll find what you need:

- How to use your reading adventure pack
- Two books to share with your child
- Three related activities
- Bookmark with a list of other books to extend the fun, if you wish
- Short survey to tell me if you enjoyed using the packet

The “how to” sheet, bookmark, this parent information sheet, and the activities are yours to keep.

When you've finished with the materials, please return the books and the completed survey to school in your child's backpack. Please return the Reading Rockets activity packet by \_\_\_\_\_ .

I hope you'll enjoy reading and learning together!

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Teacher signature

*To learn more about children's books, reading with your child, and information about helping kids become confident readers, please visit [www.ReadingRockets.org](http://www.ReadingRockets.org)*



**Reading Adventure Packs: Hands-on fun & learning from Reading Rockets**  
Find more themes and activities at [ReadingRockets.org/readingadventurepacks](http://ReadingRockets.org/readingadventurepacks)

# How to use your Reading Adventure Pack

## Getting ready

1. Before you read the books to your child, be sure to read them yourself.

One book is fiction — a “make-believe” story. The other book is nonfiction, or informational and true. Reading the books first will give you the “inside scoop” to the twists and turns of the story, the interesting information inside, and the parts of the books that will appeal most to your child.

2. Next, read the three activities to see which of them you think your child will enjoy most, and which one you have the time and materials on-hand to do right away. Chances are, after you read one (or both) of the books with your child, he or she may want to do an activity right away.

## Start the fun

3. When you know you’ll have at least enough time to read and talk about one of the books, grab your child and a book, and dive right in. Start with the fiction selection. Talk about the cover of the book with your child — can he guess what it is about? Have they ever read a book by the same author or illustrator or about the same topic?

Read the book to your child. If you are using the fiction title, you will be sharing a make-believe story. As you read and explore the pictures, you should note to your child that the author might include real facts in fiction writing. Talk with your child about how to confirm factual information found in works of fiction. Then, try the nonfiction book or one of the activities.

4. When you read the nonfiction book, take a moment to explain to your child the difference between the two types of books. The fiction book told a made-up, make-believe story, and a nonfiction book focuses on real people, places, and things. The information in nonfiction books can answer lots of questions and confirm facts. You don’t have to read a nonfiction book straight through — you might want to focus on one section, such as “the Legislative branch.”

5. Feel free to pick and choose from the activities, or change them to suit your child’s interests. Read the books again over the next few days and try different activities. Most important: have fun!

## When you’re done...

6. Keep the bookmark, the activities and this page. Complete the survey and return it with the books to your child’s school.

Make the most of the excitement the books create, and try some hands-on learning or make-believe fun. Exploring new ideas alongside you lets your child see you learning — and reading — too, and gives your child personal experiences to support her growing knowledge.

## Tips for reading nonfiction books with kids:

- Wonder out loud. As you are reading, or after talk about facts you find interesting or questions you have.
- Show your child how to use the table of contents, section headings, index and word list (glossary) to find answers to specific questions.
- Don’t be afraid to jump around, reading pages that especially interest your child. You don’t have to read a nonfiction book straight through.

## Tips for reading fiction books with kids:

- Take your time and talk about the story with your child. Ask your child questions.
- Explore the pictures with your child.
- Read with expression. Change your voice or how fast you read to create excitement. Ham it up!
- You don’t need to read every word. Keeping your child interested is the goal.



**Reading Adventure Packs:** Hands-on fun & learning from Reading Rockets  
Find more themes and activities at [ReadingRockets.org/readingadventurepacks](http://ReadingRockets.org/readingadventurepacks)

# Balanced government



Mobiles often look effortless as they balance gracefully in the air. But balancing anything — whether it is a mobile or the powers of government — is hard work! Help your child learn more about balance in our government when he makes a mobile that represents its three branches. Here's what you'll need:

## Supplies

- Scissors
- Yarn or twine
- Rubber bands
- Three sticks that are roughly the same length (20 inches long is a good size). Choose sticks with several twigs in the middle of the stick. Use bamboo skewers if you can't gather sticks.
- Construction paper
- Crayons and markers
- A computer and printer (optional)

## Getting Started

- Head outside to collect some sticks. While you and your child are looking for sticks, talk about the various meanings and usage of the word branch — it's not just the limb of a tree! Relate the word back to the nonfiction book you read together and explain how "branch" is used to describe a related part of a larger system — such as a branch library or the three branches of government.
- Bring your three sticks inside and have your child arrange them into a triangle with the ends of the sticks overlapping. Arrange the sticks so that any short twigs are on the outside edges of the triangle. While your child is working, talk about how the federal government has three branches that share the power, privilege and responsibility of running the government.
- Cut a length of yarn that is twice as long as one of the sticks. With one end of the yarn lash two sticks together. Use the other end of the yarn to lash the next corner of the base of the triangle.
- Cut another length of yarn that is twice as long as the sticks. Use one end to lash the remaining sticks together. Pull the remaining yarn through the center point of the first yarn length you tied. Pull all the yarn pieces up together and you should have a pyramid. Secure a knot in the top of the pyramid and use the remaining yarn tail for hanging the mobile.

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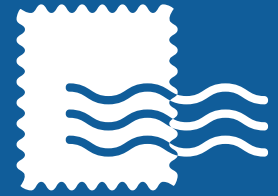


# Balanced government

## Getting Started *(continued from previous page)*

- Provide your child with construction paper to create “leaves” to describe each branch of the government. On the leaves, your child can draw pictures that illustrate or symbolize the branches, write information about what each branch does, and include the roles and people involved in each branch. Your child may want to go beyond the book you read together to see and learn more the branches of government. The website [www.whitehouse.gov/our-government](http://www.whitehouse.gov/our-government) has descriptions, photos and links to all the branches. Print photos and facts to include on the leaves if desired.
- Let your child arrange his leaves for each branch and help him secure them to the twigs using tape or by tying leaves with yarn to the branches. Talk about how the U.S. Constitution uses “checks and balances” to keep any one branch from having too much power. Encourage him to make sure his mobile is also balanced! (The interactive Mobile Maker at [www.nga.gov/education/classroom/interactive/mobile.htm](http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/interactive/mobile.htm) is great for learning more about making mobiles balance.)
- Hang the mobile where your child can read and reach it should he want to add more to it as he continues to read more about our government.





# Government I.D.

Thanks to the books you've read and discussed together, your child is getting the picture that our government is not something that is far away in Washington, D.C., or your state capital. Evidence of our government is right on your own street and in your neighborhood! Enhance her understanding when you take your child on a scavenger hunt for things that represent government activity in your community. Use the checklist below, add to it, or create your own.

Traditionally, a scavenger hunt is a game that involves players collecting items from a list. Whoever collects all or the most items is the winner. This scavenger hunt makes use of your cell phone camera or digital camera. You and your child collect photos of items on the list and earn 5 points for each item collected. Earn 2 bonus points for noting which are items or services provided by the federal, state or local government.

We took a photo of	Points	Federal, state or local govt service?	Bonus Points	Total
Postage stamp				
Penny or other U.S. coin				
Driver's license				
License plate				
Library Card				
Public School				
Public Library				
Park				
Police car				
Fire truck				
Speed limit sign				
Traffic light				
Mailbox				
Bridge or hwy overpass				
Fire hydrant				
<b>TOTAL</b>				

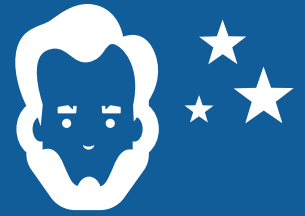
## How did you do?

**75 – 105 points:** Excellent! The Liberty Bell is ringing for you! You're a real Uncle Sam!

**50 – 75 points:** Great! Bring out the fireworks! You're a dandy Yankee Doodle!

**25 – 50 points:** You're more wild turkey than bald eagle. Keep trying!

**0 – 25 points:** You're bringing up the end of the parade. Keep trying!



# President for a day

In the United States, any native-born citizen over the age of 35 can be elected President. Your child won't be that old for many years, but she can have fun in the meantime imagining what it would be like to take on the role and responsibility of the presidency.

## Getting started

Here's what you'll need:

- A computer or device with an Internet connection
- Paper and pencil (or computer and printer)

The books you've read together provided some information on the duties and privileges of the presidency. Revisit those pages and further explore and discuss what the job of President entails. Find out what you child knows about the current President of the United States. What are some of the issues or problems facing the President? What kind of work does he do every day to solve these problems?

Talk with your child about what she thinks the President does on a typical day. Then check online together to see the President's actual schedule: [www.whitehouse.gov/schedule/president](http://www.whitehouse.gov/schedule/president).

Ask your child what problems or issues are important to her. If she were the President, what would she do to resolve issues and fix problems? What would her schedule as President look like?

Provide her with paper and pencil (or computer and printer) to create her own agenda for her day as President of the United States. Encourage her to also create any speeches, Presidential Memoranda, Executive Orders or Proclamations that she plans to deliver on her day as President. Let her be as silly or serious as she likes!

If she feels strongly about what she would do as President to deal with a specific issue, encourage her to share her ideas by writing to the President: [www.whitehouse.gov/contact/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/).

## Extend the fun of being President for a day!

Try these online interactives:

- Be President for a Day: [pbskids.org/democracy/be-president/](http://pbskids.org/democracy/be-president/)
- Executive Command: [www.icivics.org/games/executive-command](http://www.icivics.org/games/executive-command)
- Funny Fill-In: [kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/games/moregames/funnyfillinpresident/](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/games/moregames/funnyfillinpresident/)



# GOVERNMENT



## Featured Books

### Fiction

*Madame President* by Lane Smith

*Duck for President* by Doreen Cronin

*Grace for President*  
by Kelly S. DiPucchio

*Amelia Bedelia 4 Mayor!*  
by Herman Parish

*Votel* by Eileen Christelow

*D is for Democracy: A Citizen's Alphabet*  
by Elissa Grodin

### Nonfiction

*How the U.S. Government Works*  
by Syl Sobel

*Branches of Government*  
by John Hamilton

*We the Kids: The Preamble to the  
Constitution of the United States*  
by David Catrow

*What Are the Parts of Government?*  
by William Thomas

*Where Do Presidents Come From? And  
Other Presidential Stuff of Super Great  
Importance* by Michael Townsend

*National Government*  
by Ernestine Giesecke

## Reading Adventure Packs

from Reading Rockets



# READING ADVENTURE PACKS Parent Survey

Parents: Cut out the bookmark for your child to keep. Return the survey to your child's teacher,  
along with the book(s).

Tell us about your experience with the activities:

- ☐ Easy and fun to do
- ☐ The directions were difficult to understand
- ☐ My child enjoyed the activities

Did talking about what you were reading, and the activities help your child to learn? (on a scale of 1 to 5)

1	2	3	4	5
				(learned a lot)

(did not learn much)

Would you like to try another "read and learn together" activity with your child?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

What kinds of things is your child interested in?

Your name (and your child's name)