OBJECTIVE
Texas’ state government was formed by elected officials upon its annexation to the United States in 1845. At that time, a state constitution was drafted, laying the foundation for our present system and establishing the structure and function of the government for the State of Texas. The Constitution of the State of Texas established the executive, legislative, and judicial branches and provided for a separation of powers, similar to the Constitution of the United States. However, the responsibilities of state government and the unique make-up and history of Texas resulted in provisions that are unique to the state, such as expanded protections to local governments.

This lesson plan asks students to examine the functions of state government, as well as the duties, responsibilities, and powers of state office holders. Students will be expected to combine an analysis of archival footage of state political activity with outside research into the current structures and functions of the government of the State of Texas. Focusing on films that were created to communicate the workings of state government to the public, as well as political ads, archival news footage, and other films, students will gain a greater understanding of the historic actions and the participants within state government. In both the lesson and extended learning sections, students will conduct outside research to determine the current composition of Texas government and will be expected to think critically about the differences between the modern political system in Texas and how the system operated in the past.

PROCESS:
Prior Knowledge
The following lesson assumes that students:

- Have a basic understanding of the operation of state government – that state officials and representatives are elected and that they have their own duties, responsibilities, and powers that are distinct from the federal government.

- Understand that the creation of state laws, budgets, and regulations follow an established, formal process.

- Are capable of making and recording observations on lesson material independently or in groups.
LESSON PLAN

- Should have the skills to conduct independent research and create a basic presentation on the subject matter.
- Have access to technology that allows them to view streaming video individually or in a group setting.

Hook

Explain to students that you will be discussing the government of the State of Texas.

Draw three squares on the board, on an overhead, or on a large sheet of paper. Label these squares “Executive,” “Legislative,” and “Judicial.”

Brainstorm with students what offices at the state level fit into each of the boxes. Ask them if they know the names of people who currently hold any of these offices.

Students can either call out answers or write their ideas on paper that is collected. At this point you can make suggestions, such as telling them that the executive branch is usually led by individual officeholders or giving them the names of current office holders.

When you have gathered the students’ ideas, write them in the correct box on the board or overhead.

Lesson

Tell your students that they will be watching a video focusing on a typical day for the Speaker of the House during the Texas legislative session in 1965. This video should give them an idea of the work that the members of the state legislature undertake and the roles of the participants in state government. Instruct students that, as they watch the video, they should be thinking about the similarities and differences of the state legislature today and that which the video depicts.

Hand out a worksheet with questions over the video (see Worksheets). This worksheet will highlight some of the key areas mentioned in the video, as well as require critical thinking at the end where students must analyze what they have seen and draw conclusions based on the information.

Show students the video ‘Mr. Speaker,’ which follows Speaker of the House, Ben Barnes, for a day during the 59th Legislative Session. Have students complete the worksheet as they watch the video.
After the video is completed, students should conduct research using the Legislative Reference Library of Texas (https://lrl.texas.gov/index.cfm) to complete the worksheet questions related to the current composition of state government.

When students have completed their worksheets, ask if they were surprised by the composition of the state legislature in the 1960s? Do students feel that the current makeup of today’s legislature well represents the people of Texas?

**Extended Learning**

Depending on the size of your classroom and your available resources, break students into groups or let students work independently.

Assign students or groups to a particular position in government in the State of Texas. Students will be responsible for researching the position and presenting on the roles and responsibilities of that position, the current office holder, requirements/qualifications needed to hold office, terms of office, what key issues that this position has addressed, how to contact or petition the office, and any interesting facts about their subject. Students may use the worksheet in the worksheet tab to compile their information. Research sources for each of these positions is outlined in the ‘Resources’ tab.

After all students have completed their work, group each position under the appropriate branch of government and discuss any checks and balances between branches that are evident in the listed responsibilities. Depending on your space availability, you can create this listing of all branches (with their associated positions) can create this digitally through an overhead slide, Google Slides/PowerPoint presentation, a Prezi, or you can have each group be responsible for a section of a paper ‘Branches of Texas Government’ diagram on a classroom wall or chalkboard/whiteboard.

**Executive**

Texas has a plural executive branch with several positions overseeing the functions of state government.

- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- Attorney General
LESSON PLAN

- Comptroller of Public Accounts
- Land Commissioner
- Railroad Commissioner
- Agriculture Commissioner

Legislative

Considered the most powerful body in the State of Texas, the state legislature has financial control over the activities of state government.

- State Senator
- State Representative

Judicial

Established by Article 5 of the Constitution of the State of Texas, the Judicial branch of Texas is unusually complicated with many distinct court systems with overlapping jurisdictions.

- Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas
- Justice of the Court of Criminal Appeals
- Justice of the Court of Appeals
- District Court Judge
- Probate Court Judge
- Justice of the Peace

RESOURCES

General Information about State Government

Legislative Reference Library of Texas

The Legislative Reference Library serves as the official reference house of the Texas Legislature.
The Legislative Library holds records of past bills, constitutional amendments, and other legislative information of interest in the State of Texas.

https://lrl.texas.gov/index.cfm

State of Texas Law Library

The Texas State Law Library serves the legal research needs of the Texas Supreme Court, the Court of Criminal Appeals, the Office of the Attorney General, other state agencies and commissions, and the citizens of the state. This website serves as a reference for the state Constitution, administrative rules, and statutes.

https://www.sll.texas.gov/law-legislation/texas/constitution/
**Executive Position Resources**

**Governor**
Office of the Governor of Texas (official website)
https://gov.texas.gov/

**Governor Price Daniel Addresses 57th Texas Legislature (1962)**
On January 3, 1962, Governor Price Daniel delivered the opening message at the start of the third special session of the 57th Texas Legislature. Governor Daniel introduces and solicits support for the consideration of four proposed bills.
https://www.texasarchive.org/2010_01518

**Paid Political Telecast for the Reelection of Governor Price Daniel, 1962**
Daniel rebuts his detractors and campaign opponents while touting his successful leadership on a number of issues, including improvements to public schools and institutions of higher education, raising of teachers' salaries, establishment of industrial attraction program to bring new industry to Texas, highway construction and road improvement, implementation of highway safety program, and improved senior and health benefits.
https://www.texasarchive.org/2008_00395

**Don Yarborough Political Telecast (1968)**
Yarborough lays out his proposed education policies, including insuring more of Texas’ students to attend college, increasing the value of education by attracting high quality teachers and professors to work in Texas from other states, and raising professor salaries.
https://www.texasarchive.org/2011_03669

**Lieutenant Governor**
Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Texas (official website)
https://www.ltgov.state.tx.us/
The Ron and Joanna Clark Collection - Austin Update with Ron Clark and Rick Perry (1999)
Austin Update, a broadcast initiative by the Texas House of Representatives Video and Audio Services, features interviews with various members of the Texas government. In this segment, State Representative Ron Clark speaks with Lieutenant Governor Rick Perry. Perry discusses the powers given to lieutenant governor, which exceed those of the same position in other states.
https://www.texasarchive.org/2017_03622

The Man from Gober (1962)
In the campaign film The Man from Gober, Speaker Turman promises to "preserve the God-given personal and political liberties of all citizens" if elected Lieutenant Governor.
https://www.texasarchive.org/2006_00035

Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General of Texas (official site)
https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/

Waggoner Carr Political Telecast for Attorney General (1960)
On the eve of the 1960 election, Waggoner Carr stresses the power held by the people on election day and decries the "wasted term" of incumbent Will Wilson.
https://texasarchive.org/2012_04230

Longines Chronoscope With Price Daniel (1952)
Attorney General Daniel discusses his ongoing campaign for the U.S. Senate, his battle against organized crime in Texas, and his involvement in the controversial Supreme Court ruling in the Tidelands Controversy.
https://www.texasarchive.org/2013_02599

Comptroller of Public Accounts
Office of the Comptroller (official website)
https://comptroller.texas.gov/
The Ron and Joanna Clark Collection - Austin Update with Ron Clark and Carole Keeton (1999)
State Representative Ron Clark speaks with Comptroller of Public Accounts and infamous political personality “Grandma” Carole Keeton Rylander (also known as Carole Keeton Strayhorn). Keeton explains her duties, which include tax collection, fiscal management, and accounting.
https://www.texasarchive.org/2017_03620

Land Commissioner
General Land Office (official site)
http://www.glo.texas.gov/

“General Land Office” from Handbook of Texas
https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/mcg01

Railroad Commissioners
Office of the Railroad Commissioners (official site)
https://www.rrc.state.tx.us/
State Representative Ron Clark speaks with Railroad Commissioner Michael Williams. Williams discusses the roles and responsibilities of the Texas Railroad Commission, which has little to do with railroads and everything to do with oil and gas. He explains regulatory reform, technology modernization, and environmental protection.

https://www.texasarchive.org/2017_03621

Produced by the Railroad Commission Centennial Committee, this short documentary chronicles the history and legacy of the Railroad Commission of Texas. The film traces the development of the agency over the past 100 years, from its original role of regulating the railroad industry to its expanding influence over the booming oil and gas business.

https://www.texasarchive.org/2016_02400

In this political advertisement, Ben Ramsey asks voters for their support in the 1962 Democratic primary election for Railroad Commissioner. As he speaks about his qualifications for the office, Ramsey outlines the duties of the Texas Railroad Commission, emphasizing the role that it plays in overseeing the state’s oil and gas industry.

https://www.texasarchive.org/2011_03697

Office of the Texas Agricultural Commissioner (official site)
http://www.texasagriculture.gov/Home.aspx
Combs begins by discussing the relevance of the Department of Agriculture, which encompasses numerous sectors of everyday life. She then describes various outreach programs aimed at promoting Texas agriculture, such as the Go Texan campaign. She outlines various goals to boost sales revenue and jobs within the state.

https://www.texasarchive.org/2017_03623

Legislative Position Resources
Texas Legislature (general)
Texas Legislature Online (official site)
https://capitol.texas.gov/

Speaker Barnes Comments on Conference Committees (1967)
https://www.texasarchive.org/2010_01495

State Senator
The Texas Senate (official site)
https://senate.texas.gov/

State Representative
Texas House of Representatives (official site)
https://house.texas.gov/

Throughout the debate, Sanders and Clark discuss their positions on campaign finance reform, the prevention of juvenile crime, tort/judicial reform, education, and tax relief. However, the majority of the debate involves both candidates criticizing each other for campaign spending and contributions.

https://www.texasarchive.org/2017_03618

Judicial Position Resources
Judicial Branch (General)
https://www.txcourts.gov/
LESSON PLAN

Our Uncommon Law (1971)
Through a brief commentary on trials in the past, an explanation of contemporary law, and a glance at a–staged–trial, this film provides basic information for the public.

https://www.texasarchive.org/2010_00705

Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas
Texas Supreme Court (official site)
http://www.txcourts.gov/supreme/

Justice of the Court of Criminal Appeals
Texas Court of Criminal Appeals
http://www.txcourts.gov/cca/

Worksheets
Worksheet - Mr. Speaker - A Lesson in Texas State Government - Grades 4 and 7
https://texasarchive.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/Worksheet%20Mr.%20Speaker%20Lesson%20in%20Texas%20Government%20Grades%204%20and%207.pdf

Worksheet Teacher Key - Mr. Speaker - A Lesson in Texas State Government - Grades 4 and 7
https://texasarchive.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/Worksheet%20Teacher%20Key%20Mr.%20Speaker%20Lesson%20in%20Texas%20Government%20Grades%204%20and%207.pdf

Extended Learning Worksheet - Mr. Speaker - Grades 4 and 7
https://texasarchive.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/Extended%20Learning%20Worksheet%20Mr.%20Speaker%20Grades%204%20and%207.pdf

TEKS

Social Studies, Grade 4
15A – Identify the purposes and explain the importance of the Texas Constitution.

15B – Identify and explain the basic functions of the three branches of government according to the Texas Constitution.

17E - Explain how to contact elected and appointed leaders in state governments.

18A – Identify leaders in state governments, including the governor and members of the Texas Legislature.

18B – Identify leadership qualities of state and local leaders, past and present.

21B – Analyze information by categorizing, comparing, and summarizing.
LESSON PLAN

21C – Organize and interpret information in outlines, reports, databases, and visuals.

21D – Identify different points of view about an issue, topic, historical event, or current event.

22C – Express ideas orally based on research.

22D – Create written and visual material.

22E – Use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.

Social Studies, Grade 7

14A – Identify how the Texas Constitution reflects the principles of limited government, republicanism, checks and balances, federalism, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights.

14B – Compare the principles and concepts of the Texas Constitution to the U.S. Constitution, including the Texas and U.S. Bill of Rights.

15A – Describe the structure and functions of government at state levels.

16B – Explain and analyze civic responsibilities of Texas citizens and the importance of civic participation.

17A – Identify different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important Texas issues, past and present.

18A – Identify the leadership qualities of elected and appointed leaders of Texas, past and present.

21B – Analyze information by categorizing, comparing, and summarizing.

21C – Organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases, and visuals.

21G – Evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the author.

22B – Use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and proper citation of sources.

22C – Transfer information from one medium to another, including written to visual and statistical to written or visual, using computer software as appropriate.

22D – Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information