

WORLD DEMOCRACIES TODAY

TEXT SUMMARY

Not all democracies have the same structure. Each democratic country has created a system of government that is unique to that country's history and values.

The government of Great Britain does not have a single written constitution. Britain is also still a monarchy, although

the queen has no actual power to govern. Instead, Britain is governed by its parliament, which includes the House of Lords and the House of Commons. Instead of a president, Britain has a prime minister, who is always the leader of the largest party in the House of Commons. The prime minister chooses the other **ministers** in

the government from among the members of his party in Parliament. Since voting in Parliament is almost always along party lines, the Prime Minister only rarely

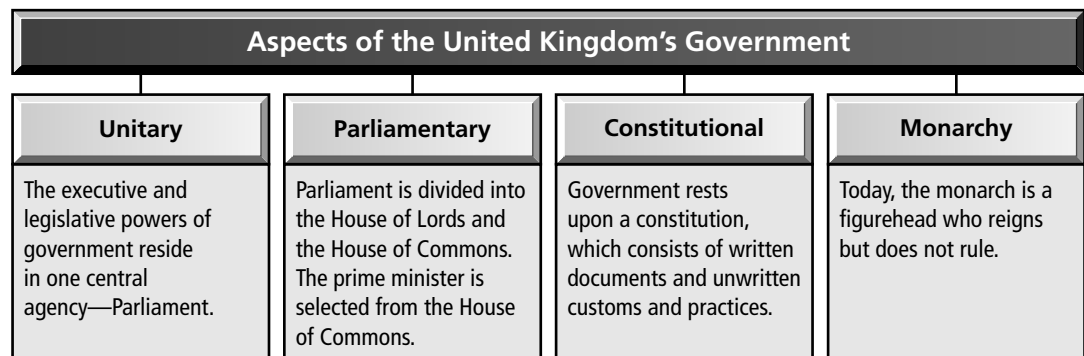
fails to get a bill passed. When an important bill fails, the Prime Minister usually resigns and asks the monarch to call a new election of Parliament.

Mexico's government is more similar to American government. Mexico has a president, who is elected to a single six-year term. Unlike in the U.S., the president of Mexico can propose constitutional amendments and enact laws by decree. Mexico's legislature consists of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. Mexico's senate has two representatives from each Mexican state. Mexico, like the U.S. and unlike Britain, is a federal system; Mexico's 31 states are governed by separate state governments. For years, Mexico was governed by just one party, the PRI. PRI's monopoly on power weakened beginning in the 1980's, and was broken with the election of president Vicente Fox in 2000.

THE BIG IDEA

Great Britain and Mexico are two examples of successful democracies that differ from American democracy in key ways.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: *The United Kingdom's Government*



Although the UK is a monarchy, the real exercise of governmental power is by the prime minister and Parliament.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. The structure of Mexican government is similar to America's, yet Mexico was for many years considered undemocratic. How did the PRI's rule make Mexico undemocratic?
2. **Diagram Skills** What are the most important differences between the governmental systems of the United States and Britain?