

**Narrative
Nonfiction**



A DAY IN THE SENATE

by **TERRY MILLER SHANNON**

**Mc
Graw
Hill**

**PAIRED
READ**

A New President Takes Office

STRATEGIES & SKILLS

Comprehension

Strategy: Ask and Answer
Questions

Skill: Cause and Effect

Vocabulary Strategy

Latin Roots

Vocabulary

amendments, commitment,
compromise, democracy,
eventually, legislation,
privilege, version

Content Standards

Social Studies

Civics and Government

Word Count: 856**

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**The total word count is based on words in the running text and headings only. Numerals and words in captions, labels, diagrams, charts, and sidebars are not included.



Genre

Narrative Nonfiction



Essential Question

Why do we need government?

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MEET A SENATOR

Senators do important work. They write laws that make our country better. They pass laws to build new highways and to improve schools.

Senators work in the **Senate**. The Senate and the **House of Representatives** make up Congress. Congress is the part of the government that makes the laws.

We need legislation, or laws, to help the country run well. Laws give us rules to follow.

★ Senators work in the Capitol building in Washington, D.C.





★ Candidates meet voters in their state to try to win a seat in the Senate.

Senators make new laws. They also change laws to make them work better.

Voters elect, or choose, senators to represent their state. There are two senators from each state in the Senate.

Let's look at a day in the Senate.

Who Can Become a Senator?

- A senator must be at least 30 years old.
- The senator must live in the state he or she represents.
- Senators make a commitment to serve for six years.

Many senators start their days by meeting with the people who work for them. People who work for senators are called staffers.

Staffers do many kinds of jobs. For example, they help find information for senators. If the senate is talking about a new highway, staffers find out how much it will cost. They find out how it will change the lives of people living nearby.

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U.S. Capitol Map

Key

- U.S. Capitol
- Supreme Court
- Senate Buildings
- Libraries of Congress
- Congressional Office Buildings
- Capitol Reflecting Pool

The senators' offices are in the Senate buildings. ★



Staffers for Senator Olympia Snowe of Maine (far left) do many jobs to help her.

Senators and staffers talk about the day ahead at their morning meeting. Most senators go to **committee** meetings each day. A lot of work of the senate's work is done in these small groups.

Some committees look at education issues. Other committees look at how the government spends money.

STOP AND CHECK

Why do we need laws?

WORKING TOGETHER

After meeting with his or her staff, a senator might go to a committee meeting. These take place in the Capitol buildings. Senators work on new **bills** at a committee meeting. A bill is a law that has not been passed by Congress yet.

The education committee might talk about a bill that makes class sizes in schools smaller. The bill wants to limit class size to only 18 students.

Senators may ride the subway to travel between the Capitol buildings.



The people who agree with the bill say that smaller classes will help students with their reading skills. If the bill is passed, more teachers will be needed.

The committee wants more information. Education experts talk to the committee and tell them that smaller classes help students learn to read.

Next, the committee might add amendments, or changes, to the bill.

The committee has to vote on whether to send the bill to the full Senate. Then all the senators can talk about the bill.

A senator asks a question during a committee meeting.



After a committee meeting, senators can take a lunch break. They don't have to go far to eat.

The Capitol and its buildings are like a small city. There are cafeterias, a gym, and even a barbershop.

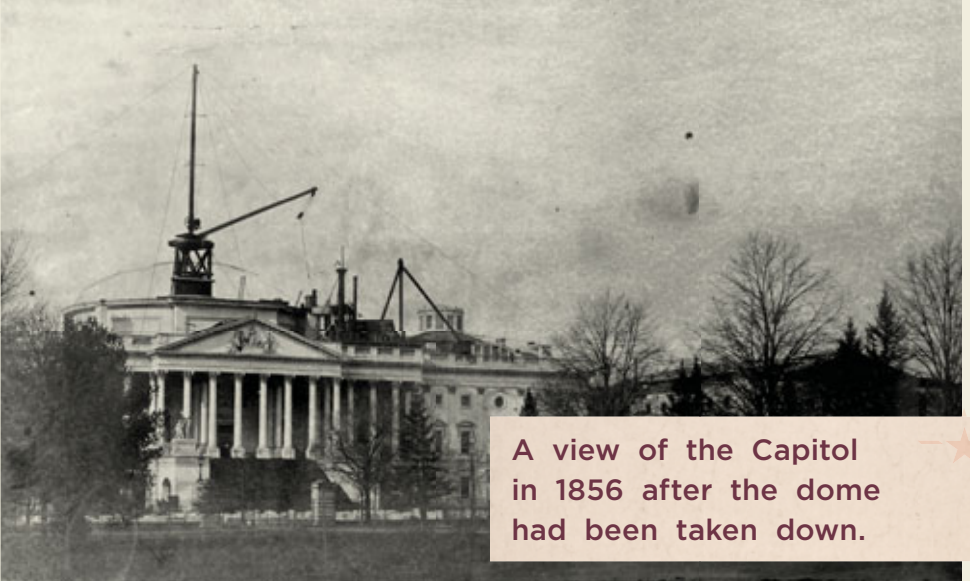


Having everything in the Capitol buildings saves people a lot of time. ★

STOP AND CHECK

What does a committee do?

The History of the Capitol



A view of the Capitol in 1856 after the dome had been taken down.

In 1793, the building of the Capitol began. The Senate wing was finished in 1800.

British soldiers set fire to the Capitol during the War of 1812. The building was repaired. It held the Senate, the House of Representatives, and the Supreme Court. By 1850, it was too small for the senators and representatives.

In the 1850s, the dome was taken down. A new dome was built.

Today the House of Representatives and the Senate meet in the Capitol building.

A SENATE VOTE

After lunch, the senators might meet in the Senate Chamber to talk about laws and vote on bills.

Senators have the privilege of speech and debate. This means that they can speak freely in the chamber.

Senate Pages

Senate pages deliver messages and documents around the Capitol. Pages are high school students who work in Congress. They must be at least 16 years old.

Pages go to a school at the Senate in the morning. They work at the Capitol in the afternoon.



When senators vote on a bill, a person writes down their vote.

After a bill is approved in one house, it must be voted on in the other house. The Senate and the House of Representatives can both suggest bills. Both houses must approve the final bill.

Sometimes the Senate and the House of Representatives can't agree on a bill. They form a committee together to solve any differences.

★ This page met
President Obama.



Bills are often changed. The final law might be a different version of the bill.

Bills are changed because people have different ideas. People might need to compromise, or change their views, so that the bill is approved.

A bill is sent to the president after the Senate and the House of Representatives have approved it. The bill becomes a law when the president signs it. The president can refuse to sign a bill.



★ Compromise is necessary for most bills to be passed.



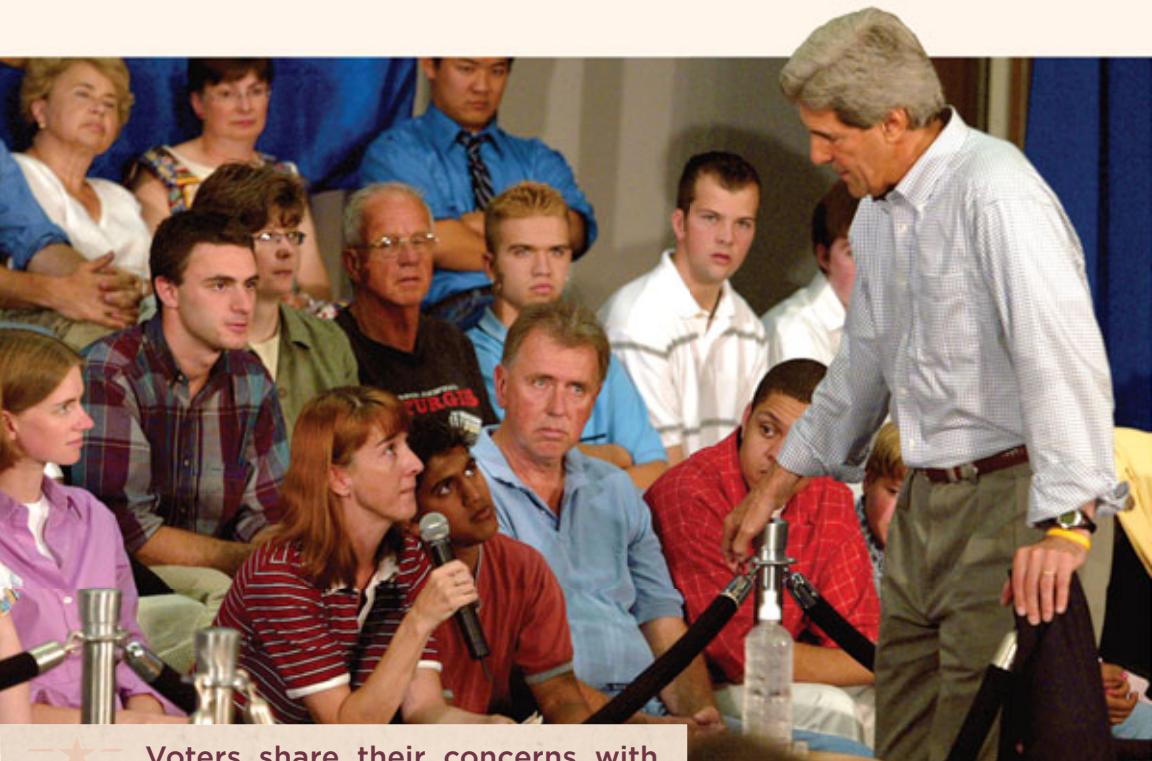
★ Visitors watch the senators at work from the Senate gallery.

Another important part of a senator's day is meeting with people from his or her home state. These people can ask the senator questions and share their ideas. Sometimes senators also meet with some of the school groups that visit Congress.

A senator's day might end with a flight home. There they meet with voters. This is how senators stay in touch with the people they represent and their issues. Then those issues are taken to Washington, D.C., and eventually become law.

STOP AND CHECK

How does a bill become a law?



★ Voters share their concerns with senators at public meetings.

Respond to Reading

Summarize

Summarize the work a senator does in *A Day in the Senate*. Use your graphic organizer to help.

Cause → Effect
→
→
→
→

Text Evidence

1. How do you know *A Day in the Senate* is an informational text? **GENRE**
2. Reread page 7. What happens after a committee agrees to a bill? **CAUSE AND EFFECT**
3. Look at the word *elect* on page 3. It contains the Latin root *lect*, which means to choose. What does *election* mean? **LATIN ROOTS**
4. Write about how senators work with other people to make laws. How do they reach agreement? **WRITE ABOUT READING**

Compare Texts

Read about Inauguration Day when a new president's new term begins.

A New President Takes Office

The United States is a democracy. This means the country is governed by the people. The president leads the country.

A president is elected every four years. The president officially becomes the president on Inauguration Day.

The inauguration takes place in front of the Capitol. It is usually held outdoors.

President Barack Obama took the oath of office on January 20, 2009.





More than a million people may go to the presidential inauguration.

The new president takes the **oath** of office on Inauguration Day. The president promises to “preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.” Then the new president gives a speech.

Presidents talk about their goals for the country in their speeches. In 1861, Abraham Lincoln said, "... no State upon its own mere motion can lawfully get out of the Union ... You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect, and defend it."

At the time, some states in the south wanted to break away from the United States. President Lincoln was telling them that he would do anything to keep the country together.



This illustration shows Abraham Lincoln taking the oath of office.

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Make Connections

Why is Inauguration Day held? **ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

Compare the role of a senator in *A Day in the Senate* with the role of a president in *A New President Takes Office*. **TEXT TO TEXT**

Glossary

bills (*bils*) proposed laws that have not yet been passed by Congress (**page 6**)

committee (*kuh-MI-tee*) a small group of lawmakers who consider bills in a specific area (**page 5**)

House of Representatives (*HOWS uhv re-pri-ZEN-tuh-tivs*) one house of Congress; works with the Senate to write and pass the country's laws (**page 2**)

oath (*ohth*) a solemn promise (**page 17**)

Senate (*SE-nuht*) one house of Congress; works with the House of Representatives to write and pass the country's laws (**page 2**)

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Focus on Social Studies

Purpose To find out why people run for public office

Procedure

Step 1

In a small group, make a list of your local school board members. You can find this online or ask at the school office.

.....

Step 2

Write a short letter or e-mail to each board member. Ask him or her to say why he or she ran for office. Show your letter or e-mail to your teacher before you send it. Make sure that each person gets only one letter or e-mail.

.....

Step 3

With your group, look at the letters or e-mails you received. Make a chart or graph to show the results. Discuss the results with the class.

.....

Step 4

Write a letter or e-mail of thanks to the school board members who replied.

Literature Circles

Nonfiction

Thinkmark

Text Structure

How does the author organize information in *A Day in the Senate*?

Vocabulary

What new words did you learn in *A Day in the Senate*? What helped you understand their meaning?

What are the key words in this text that relate to the topic?

Conclusions

What conclusions can you draw about the kinds of people who run for public office?

Author's Purpose

Why do you think the author wrote *A Day in the Senate*?

Make Connections

What other elected jobs do you know about? How are they similar to, or different from, a senator's or a president's job?