

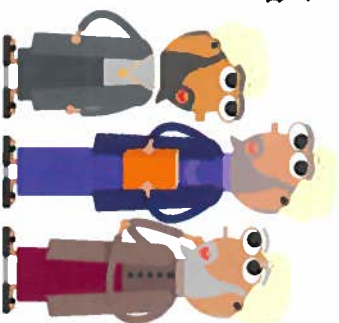
Setting up a Government

You may be saying to yourself, Why do I need a government? I can run the country myself! A government led by one person (queen, king, dictator) is called an autocracy. Having all the power may sound tempting, but history warns us that there are perils to being the sole ruler of a country, such as being deposed, overthrown, or even decapitated. Instead, we suggest giving these other forms of government a shot.

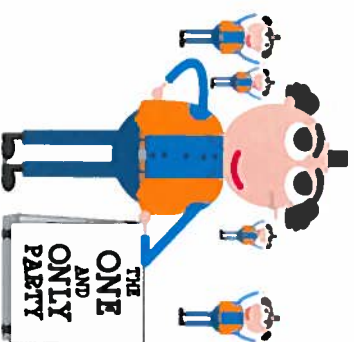
A An **oligarchy**, in which the country is controlled by a family or a small group of aristocrats (as in Saudi Arabia)



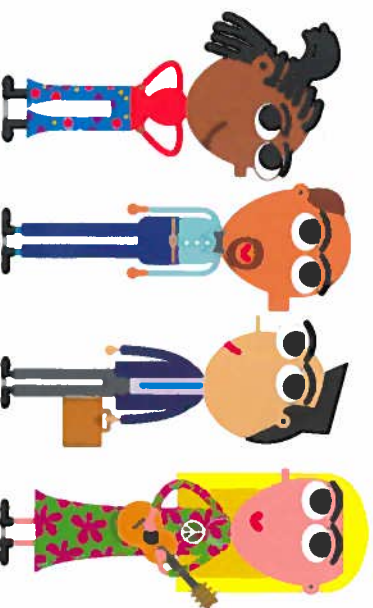
B A **theocracy**, in which the government is run by religious leaders according to religious beliefs (as in Iran)



C A **single-party** government, in which one large group rules (as in China)



D A **democracy**, in which the people elect representatives to make decisions and govern (as in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and India)



And the winner is ...
Most countries either choose or would like to choose option D. Democracies put power in the hands of citizens. In fact, the word democracy comes from the Greek *demos*, which means "common people," and *kratos*, which means "rule" or "strength."

Democracies aren't perfect, but they tend to be freer and fairer than other systems of government because citizens have more control over the things that affect them. But don't take our word for it. Try out some of the other forms of government and see how your citizens like them. Just don't come crying to us if they behead you.



A Bad Example

Whatever you do, please don't follow the lead of Saparmurat Niyazov, the sole ruler of Turkmenistan from 1991 until his death in 2006. He was called "one of the wealthiest and most powerful lunatics on Earth," which might have been okay, except that he exerted his lunatic power over the five million or so citizens of Turkmenistan.

While Niyazov didn't seem to have much time to educate his people or create jobs (more than 60 percent of the population was unemployed under his rule), he did have time to ban ballet, opera, beards, the Internet and listening to car radios. He also renamed the days of the week and months of the year (he named January after himself and April after his mother). But perhaps the most important work of this dictator was to erect hundreds of gold statues of himself. After all, if he didn't proclaim his magnificence, who would? Certainly not the people of Turkmenistan.

