Tennessee Secretary of State
Blue Book Lesson Plans

Tennessee County Government

Jonesborough Courthouse

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Grade Level: High School, U.S. Government and Civics

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For additional lesson plans, click here.

There are a limited number of hard copies of the Blue Book available. To order a set for your classroom, please contact the Secretary of State's office at (615) 741-2819 or one of your local legislators. The online version of the Blue Book is also available here.

Introduction:

Tennessee has 95 counties created by the Tennessee General Assembly. In this lesson, students will explore statistics and additional information regarding their individual counties utilizing the *Tennessee Blue Book* as a primary resource.

Guiding Questions:

- How local should government be?
- What are the similarities and differences between local governments?
- How do county governments serve the needs of residents and other Americans?
- What services do county governments provide?

Learning Objectives: In the course of the lesson, students will…

- Describe the typical Tennessee county, its governmental structure, and functions.
- Explain the process of how Tennessee counties were formed.
- Contrast the major forms of county government.
- Compare and contrast how county government is different from state and federal government.
- Explain how each individual county makes a difference in a citizen's everyday life.

Curriculum Standards:

GC.58 - Compare and contrast the legal, fiscal, and operational relationship between state and local governments in Tennessee. (E, P, TN)

GC.59 - Explain the differences among the types of local governments in Tennessee, including county government, city government, and metro government. (P, TN)

GC.60 - Describe how citizens can monitor and influence local and state government as individuals and members of interest groups. (P, TN)

GC.61 - Write an opinion piece with supporting details regarding the specific ways individuals can best serve their communities and participate responsibly in civil society and the political process at local, state, and national levels of government. (C, P, TN)

Materials Needed:

1) Copy of graphic organizer for each student (attached)
2) PowerPoint presentation (click here to download)
3) *Tennessee Blue Book* (PDFs provided)
    - pgs. 628 - 638, Origins of Tennessee County Names
    - pgs. 754 - 755, County Data
4) Access to county private acts: County Technical Assistance Service – CTAS; County Private Acts
   (Private acts can also be found on the Tennessee Secretary of State's website.)
5) Access to county official information: County Technical Assistance Service – CTAS; County Official Information

Background:

Tennessee Government & Politics: Democracy in the Volunteer State
1998, Vanderbilt University Press, John R. Vile and Mark E. Byrnes
"Local Government and Politics," David W. Kanervo, pgs. 76-84

County Technical Assistance Service (CTAS), University of Tennessee Institute for Public Service

Teacher's current textbook – most Tennessee U.S. Government and Civics textbooks will have a section on state government and state constitutions. (Example: Magruder's American Government & Civics, William A. McClenaghan; 2013; pgs. TN38; pgs. 742-748.)

Preparation Instructions:

1) Familiarize yourself with the sources available (CTAS, *Blue Book*, etc.).
2) This lesson assumes that students have already covered state government.
3) Determine if a print copy of the *Tennessee Blue Book* or internet access will be used.
4) Determine if a print copy of your county private acts or internet access will be used.
5) Copy graphic organizer (All Government is Local – 95 Tennessee Counties – Graphic Organizer) for each student.
6) Create or decide on a rubric for evaluating the writing activity.
7) **Complete the graphic organizer to make sure all of the information can be found.**

Tennessee (1822), Tennessee State Library and Archives

Lesson Activities:

Activity 1: Introduction

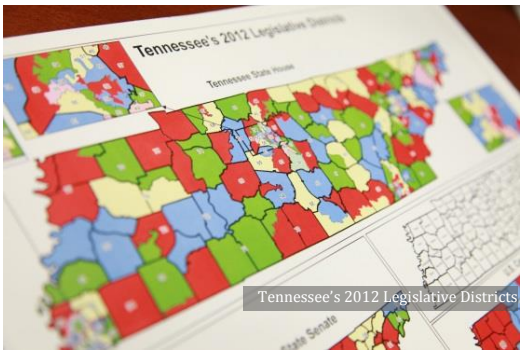
HOOK: Begin discussion by asking students:

- Does anyone know who (your county) is named after?
- What counties did (your county) originate from?
- What year was (your county) established?
- What kind of system of government is used here in (your county)?

1) Display on the board or have students look up in the *Tennessee Blue Book* (pgs. 628 - 638) the origin of your county's name.
2) Have students turn to pages 754 - 755 in the *Tennessee Blue Book* and briefly review the information with a partner.
3) Bring the class back together for discussion.
4) Ask the students: **How are counties different in Tennessee?**
5) Ask the students to compare and contrast Tennessee counties.
    - What county is the largest (in area)? Smallest?
    - Which county in Tennessee has the highest population?
    - Which county in Tennessee has the lowest population?
6) Transition class to types of government in Tennessee counties.
7) Display PowerPoint presentation and go through the information.
8) While moving through the PowerPoint and lesson, point out your own county's form of government and relate it to class discussion.
9) Have students locate and utilize your school's particular county information – private acts, county commission members, county officials etc.

Activity 2: Graphic Organizer

1) Distribute and explain the graphic organizer.
2) Assign each student a partner to complete the worksheet together.
3) Give students time to fill out the information (using classroom computers, individual laptops, or their smart phone/tablet if the school allows). Consider giving students links to help with their search such as:
    - CTAS, County Officials
    - CTAS, County Websites
    - Tennessee Judicial District Map
4) While students are completing the graphic organizer, make 3 columns on the board:
    - Important Issues
    - Things County Does Well
    - Things County Could Improve
5) Discuss the following questions with the students once they have completed their research:
    - What current issues/events are important in your county?
    - What are things that your county does well?
    - What are things that your county could improve?
6) Encourage discussion and debate on each of the questions.



Tennessee's 2012 Legislative Districts

Activity 3: Writing

Instruct students to research current local county issues. Students should offer a response or solution to the issues and outline a plan to go about solving the problem. Students should include ways they can interact with local government officials appropriately. The teacher can set the specifications for the assignment. There is also an attached Social Studies Writing Rubric.

Assessment:

- See the new Social Studies Writing Rubric attached to this lesson to potentially use for the writing assignment.
- Students can turn in the graphic organizer for additional assessment.
- Your social studies textbook should also include some assessment options in the local government chapter.

Extending the Lesson:

1) As a class, invite a local county official to come to class and interview them regarding their respective county office.
2) Prepare a field trip to the local county government complex and assign students to "intern" or "job shadow" local government officials for part of a school day. Assign an essay to be completed after the experience, describing the positive aspects and challenges of the county official's role in county government. This activity will require coordination and cooperation of local county government officials.

Option for extension: Invite state legislators or local elected officials to come speak to the classroom about their role in government.

All Government is Local! 95 Tennessee Counties

Go to your county's official website. Surf around to find the following information and fill in the chart.

Part I	2 Things I Learned:	My Reaction:
County Commission: Number of Commissioners: _____	List the commissioners that represent your location in your county: 1. _____ 2. _____	
County Officials:	List the names of the following: County Mayor/County Executive: _____ Sheriff: _____ County Clerk: _____ Trustee: _____ Assessor of Property: _____ _____ Register of Deeds: _____ _____ Administrator of Elections: _____ _____ Circuit Court Clerk : _____ _____ Highway/Road Administrator: _____ _____ Clerk & Master: _____ _____ Director of Schools: _____ _____	
Court Officials:	General Sessions Judge: _____ _____ Juvenile Court Judge: _____ _____ District Attorney: _____ _____ Circuit Court Judges: _____ _____ _____ _____	

Current events and issues in my county:	List 2 things that my county does well:	List 2 things I think my county could do better:

TN SS Constructed Response Rubric Grade 8 - U.S. History

Score	Social Studies Content	Literacy in Social Studies
4	**The student response:** • Demonstrates historical awareness, such as an understanding of chronological placement, historical trends, and historical decision-making, through clear, focused explanations and thoughtful analysis. • Demonstrates a comprehensive, focused understanding of the content strand(s)—geography, culture, economics, politics, history, and Tennessee connection—referenced in the question. • Addresses all aspects of the question. • Cites evidence from the stimulus (or stimuli) to support all facets of the response. • Consistently exhibits proper use of historical data related to the question, such as comparing and contrasting information, explaining cause-and-effect relationships, and supporting inferences or conclusions. • May include minor content errors that do not reflect a misunderstanding of primary social studies concepts.	**The student response:** • Focuses on topics or makes claims directly related to the question. • Introduces the topic or claim with accuracy and clarity. • Provides an analysis of the topic or claim consistently using relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples. • Creates cohesion and clarity of relationships among ideas and concepts. • Utilizes appropriate social studies terminology to inform about or explain the topic. • Establishes and maintains an objective tone. • Provides a conclusion that follows from and is supported by the information or explanation presented. • May contain minor errors in grammar and mechanics that do not detract from overall comprehensibility.
3	**The student response:** • Demonstrates historical awareness, such as an understanding of chronological placement, historical trends, and historical decision-making, through adequate explanation and analysis. • Demonstrates a general understanding of the content strand(s)—geography, culture, economics, politics, history, and Tennessee connection—	**The student response:** • Focuses on topics or makes claims generally related to the question. • Introduces the topic or claim with adequate clarity. • Provides an analysis of the topic or claim frequently using relevant facts, definitions, details, or other information and examples. • Identifies relationships among ideas and concepts.

	referenced in the question. • Addresses many aspects of the question. • Cites evidence from the stimulus (or stimuli) to support some facets of the response. • Frequently exhibits proper use of historical data related to the question, such as comparing and contrasting information, explaining cause-and-effect relationships, and supporting inferences or predictions. • May include content errors that indicate a minor misunderstanding of primary social studies concepts.	• Misuses some social studies terminology, creating minor flaws in the information or explanation of the topic. • Establishes and maintains an objective tone. • Provides a conclusion that offers some support for the information or explanation presented. • Produces information generally appropriate for the task, purpose, and audience. • May contain a few errors in grammar and mechanics that detract little from overall comprehensibility.
2	**The student response:** • Demonstrates some historical awareness, such as an understanding of chronological placement, historical trends, and historical decision-making, but explanations often lack depth and detail, and analysis lacks focus and clarity. • Demonstrates a partial understanding of the content strand(s)—geography, culture, economics, politics, history, and Tennessee connection—referenced in the question. • Addresses few aspects of the question. • Cites little evidence from the stimulus (or stimuli) to support the response. • Occasionally exhibits proper use of historical data related to the question, such as comparing and contrasting information, explaining cause-and-effect relationships, and supporting inferences or conclusions. • May arrive at an acceptable conclusion, but the response might be incomplete, contain content errors, or misuse social studies terminology.	**The student response:** • Focuses on topics or makes claims partially related to the question. • Introduces the topic or claim, but with limited clarity. • Provides an analysis of the topic or claim occasionally using adequate support of facts, definitions, details, or other information and examples. • Describes some of the relationships among ideas and concepts. • Misuses social studies terminology. • Establishes an objective tone, but introduces some unsupported conjectures. • Provides a conclusion with little support for the information or explanation presented. • Produces some information inappropriate to the task, purpose, or audience. • May contain errors in grammar and mechanics that partially detract from overall comprehensibility.

1	**The student response:** • Demonstrates little to no historical awareness, such as an understanding of chronological placement, historical trends, and historical decision-making, with explanations that contain little depth and detail, and analysis that has little focus or clarity. • Demonstrates little to no understanding of the content strand(s)—geography, culture, economics, politics, history, and Tennessee connection—referenced in the question. • May address some of the elements of the question, but the conclusions are inadequate or inaccurate. • Rarely exhibits proper use of historical data related to the question, such as comparing and contrasting information, explaining cause-and-effect relationships, and supporting inferences or conclusions. • May contain many content errors, flaws in reasoning, or misuse of social studies terminology.	**The student response:** • Focuses on topics or makes claims unrelated to the question. • Fails to introduce the topic or claim or introduction lacks clarity. • Provides an analysis of the topic or claim using little or no support of facts, definitions, details, quotations, or other information and examples. • Fails to describe relationships among ideas and concepts. • Misuses social studies terminology. • Fails to establish and maintain an objective tone, introducing opinions and unsupported conjectures. • Fails to provide a conclusion that contains support for the information or explanation presented. • Produces information inappropriate to the task, purpose, or audience. • Contains errors in grammar and mechanics that detract from overall comprehensibility.