Our state & its governor

READ • NOTICE EVIDENCE • EXPLAIN YOUR THINKING

Name: _____ Date: _____

Massachusetts is officially called a **commonwealth**, another name for a state. Its capital is Boston. From busy cities to island communities such as Martha's Vineyard, people have different needs. Government must consider these differences while protecting rights and providing public services.



Maura Healey

Maura Healey has served as governor since January 2023. She leads the executive branch, which carries out state laws. The governor proposes a **budget**, or spending plan. Because money is limited, funding one need can leave less money for another. A responsible plan must consider both benefits and costs.

The governor does not decide everything alone. Legislators pass laws and approve spending. The governor may sign a bill or reject it with a **veto**. Courts interpret laws. Sharing power limits what any one leader can do. Voters can ask: What evidence supports this idea, and who must cooperate to make it happen?

THINK Why can't a governor promise to solve every problem alone?

Underline two details. My evidence: _____

PAIR Compare your evidence. Name a need on Martha's Vineyard.

We think leaders would need to _____

SHARE Explain how shared power affects a governor's plan.

A governor needs others because _____

Reading sources: A-C. Photo: Massachusetts Governor's Office. Teacher sources on page 6.

Three branches, shared power

READ • CONNECT EACH BRANCH TO ITS JOB

Name: _____ Date: _____

Massachusetts has three branches of state government. A **branch** is one part of the government. Each part has a job. They share power so one person or group does not control everything.



Legislative

The House and Senate form the legislature. Lawmakers debate and vote on bills. A **bill** is a plan for a law. Lawmakers also approve state spending.



Executive

The governor leads this branch. State agencies carry out laws. The governor suggests a budget and signs or rejects bills. Rejecting a bill is called a **veto**.



Judicial

Courts make up this branch. Judges interpret laws and decide cases. They can check if a law follows the **constitution**, the basic rules for government.

Three branches. Different jobs. Shared power.

THINK Which branch carries out laws? Circle it above.

I know because _____

PAIR Explain why the three branches have different jobs.

One branch _____. Another branch _____.

SHARE Tell how sharing power can help people.

Sharing power helps because _____

Reading sources: B and D. This reading describes state government.

Massachusetts: our home

READ • CONNECT PLACES, PEOPLE, AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

Name: _____ Date: _____

LAND **PEOPLE** **COMMUNITY**

Massachusetts is one of six states in New England, in the northeastern United States. Its coast meets the Atlantic Ocean. The state has forests, hills, rivers, cities, and islands. Martha's Vineyard is one of those islands. Our school is in West Tisbury.

Boston is the capital, where many state leaders work. Massachusetts is also called the Bay State. Its communities have many stories. Wampanoag people have lived in this region for thousands of years and still live here today. People with roots around the world also make Massachusetts their home.

A city, a small town, and an island may have different needs. Yet people in all these places need safe roads, places to learn, and help during storms. People can help by caring for shared spaces, learning about local issues, and telling leaders what their community needs.

THINK How can where people live affect what they need?

Circle a place in the reading. It may need _____

PAIR Compare a city with Martha's Vineyard. What is alike?

Both places need _____

SHARE Name one way we can help our community.

We can help by _____

Reading sources: A, E, and F. Community examples connect geography and civics.

What does a governor do?

READ • POINT • TALK ABOUT AN IDEA

Name: _____ Date: _____

Maura Healey is our governor.
A **governor** is a state leader.
She helps lead Massachusetts.
She works with other people.
She must follow the law, too.



Maura Healey

The governor makes a plan for state money. The plan is called a **budget**. It can help pay for schools and other needs.

A **bill** is a plan for a law. The governor can sign it. She can say no to it, too. The governor does not make all the choices alone.

THINK What is one job of the governor?

Point to the words that tell you.

PAIR Tell your partner. Listen to your partner's idea.

The governor can _____

SHARE Tell the class one thing you learned.

I learned _____

Reading sources: B-C. Photo: Massachusetts Governor's Office.

Teacher guide

FOUR READINGS • ONE SHARED QUESTION

How can people and government help our Massachusetts community?

1	**Advanced** • Massachusetts and its governor; evaluate limits, budgets, and shared power.
2	**Fourth-grade target** • Massachusetts government and the three branches.
3	**Fourth-grade target** • Massachusetts geography, people, and community needs.
4	**Second-grade target** • The governor's main jobs; short sentences and oral responses.

New code key: This companion uses the requested 1-4 system. In the earlier packet, 3 was the simplest text; here, 3 is at grade level and 4 is the simplest text. These are instructional targets, not measured reading scores.

20-minute routine
2 min: Introduce the shared question and read the title.
5 min: Students read their assigned passage; offer a read-aloud.
3 min: THINK independently and mark evidence.
5 min: PAIR. Each child gets a turn; the listener restates one idea.
5 min: SHARE one idea or question from the pair.

For 11 students: Use four pairs and one trio. In the trio, give each child a turn before discussion. Partners may have different readings. Accept speaking, pointing, drawing on the back, or dictated notes.

Print pages 1-4 for students; pages 5-6 are teacher references.

Discussion key & sources

LOOK FOR EVIDENCE AND LISTENING

1. A governor works within a budget and shares power with lawmakers and courts. Look for two details, not a claim that one leader controls every decision.

2. Executive branch. Legislative: debates and passes laws; executive: carries them out; judicial: interprets them. Shared power limits control by one person or group.

3. Answers vary. Island communities may need water transportation or storm planning; cities and islands both need learning places and safety. Accept relevant local examples.

4. Accept planning state spending, signing or rejecting bills, working with others, or following the law. Ask the student to point to supporting words.

Partner language: “I noticed...” • “Where did you find that?” • “My partner explained...”
Quick check: Identifies an idea / uses text evidence / listens and responds.

Sources • Links are clickable. Checked October 20, 2026.

A. Secretary of the Commonwealth: A Profile of Massachusetts

B. Secretary of the Commonwealth: State Constitutional Officers

C. National Governors Association: Maura Healey

D. Secretary of the Commonwealth: Politics, Counties, and Municipalities

E. Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah): tribal homepage

F. MA DESE: History and Social Science Framework, 3.T1.3

Images: Official seal from the Massachusetts Design System; official Healey portrait from the Governor's Office (January 2023). Civic icons are original vector illustrations. The seal is used for education; this is not an official state publication.