Who Holds Power?

Follow decisions through three branches and levels of government

SS24.6.16 "Compare duties and functions of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches at various levels of government. 16a Illustrate and explain the relationship among the three branches..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle each government position or group, underline its job, and put a star beside each example of one branch limiting another.

A Law Takes Shape

1. Imagine that drivers are speeding near a state park. State lawmakers, called legislators, propose a speed-limit law for state highways. They debate and vote on the bill. If it passes, the governor may sign it or veto it. A veto sends the bill back, but lawmakers can sometimes override the veto with enough votes. After a law takes effect, the governor directs state agencies to carry it out. The legislature makes the law, while the governor's branch puts it into action. These separate jobs keep one group from holding all the power.

2. At the federal level, Congress, made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate, makes laws for the country. The president leads the executive branch and can sign or veto bills. Federal agencies carry out laws after they take effect. Federal judges hear cases and decide whether laws follow the U.S. Constitution. A court can stop a law that violates it. The president also chooses federal judges, but the Senate must approve them. That approval is another check: the president cannot fill those judgeships alone.

3. In a town, the council may pass an ordinance, or local rule, about sidewalk repairs. The mayor may then direct town workers to carry it out. Local rules must follow state and federal law. A town usually does not have its own separate judicial branch: judges who hear local cases are typically part of the state court system. At every level, making rules differs from carrying them out or deciding legal disputes. Checks and balances add another layer: one branch can limit another without taking over its main job.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In the state park example, how do the legislators' and governor's jobs differ?

2. How do the president and Senate share power when federal judges are chosen?

3. How can a federal court limit a law made by Congress? How is that different from the president's role when a bill passes?

4. Compare the council's and mayor's jobs in the town example. Why are judges who hear local cases usually not part of a separate town branch?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine Congress considers a law requiring clearer labels on packaged snacks. In four sentences, describe a job for each federal branch and explain one way a branch could check another branch's power.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 6 · SS24.6.16

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle each government position or group, underline its job, and put a star beside each example of one branch limiting another. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In the state park example, how do the legislators' and governor's jobs differ?	**Legislators debate and vote on the bill. The governor may sign or veto it and directs state agencies to carry out a law after it takes effect.**
2	How do the president and Senate share power when federal judges are chosen?	**The president chooses federal judges, but the Senate must approve them.**
3	How can a federal court limit a law made by Congress? How is that different from the president's role when a bill passes?	**A court can stop a law that violates the U.S. Constitution. The president can sign or veto a bill after Congress passes it.**
4	Compare the council's and mayor's jobs in the town example. Why are judges who hear local cases usually not part of a separate town branch?	**The council may pass the sidewalk ordinance, and the mayor may direct workers to carry it out. Judges who hear local cases are typically part of the state court system.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress debates and votes on a law requiring clearer labels on packaged snacks. The president signs the bill and directs federal agencies to carry out the law. If someone challenges the law in a case, federal judges decide whether it follows the Constitution. Instead of signing the bill, the president could veto it, checking Congress's power.

Accept other accurate descriptions of each branch's duty and a specific check, such as Senate approval of federal judges or a court stopping a law that violates the Constitution.