Who Holds Power?

Trace how the three branches share and limit federal power.

SS24.6.16a "Illustrate and explain the relationship among the three branches, including checks and balances and separation of powers."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one job of each branch, circle two ways one branch checks another, and number the steps from a bill to water tests in the park.

A Water Test at the Park

1. Imagine visiting a national park and seeing a sign that says its drinking water is tested each month. A rule like this could begin as a bill in Congress. Congress, the legislative branch, debates and votes on federal laws. Its members could pass a bill requiring monthly water tests at national parks. The president, who leads the executive branch, decides whether to sign the bill or veto it. If signed, it becomes law. Executive agencies then arrange the tests and report results to visitors.

2. The branches have separate jobs so no single group holds all federal power. Congress writes laws, but the president can check Congress by vetoing a bill. A veto does not always end the bill: two-thirds of each house of Congress can vote to pass it anyway. Congress also controls money for federal programs, so it could decide how much funding water tests receive. The president's agencies carry out the law, but they cannot replace Congress's testing rule with a different law of their own.

3. The judicial branch, made up of federal courts, settles cases about laws and government actions. Suppose visitors claim an agency skipped the water tests required by law. A federal court could hear the case and decide whether the agency followed the law. If a law conflicts with the Constitution, a court can rule that it cannot be enforced. Judges do not run the tests or write a new testing law. The president nominates federal judges, and the Senate must approve them, another way the branches share power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Trace the water-testing bill from Congress to park visitors. What does Congress do, and what does the executive branch do after the bill becomes law?

2. How can the president block Congress's bill, and how can Congress respond?

3. If visitors say an agency skipped tests required by law, how do the court's job and the agency's job differ?

4. How do the president and Senate share power over federal judges, and which branch do those judges serve?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a proposed federal law requiring safety labels on toys sold across state lines. In four or five sentences, explain what each branch could do and include two ways the branches could check one another.

ANSWER KEY

Who Holds Power?

GRADE 6 · SS24.6.16a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one job of each branch, circle two ways one branch checks another, and number the steps from a bill to water tests in the park. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Trace the water-testing bill from Congress to park visitors. What does Congress do, and what does the executive branch do after the bill becomes law?	**Congress passes the bill. After it becomes law, executive agencies arrange the water tests and report the results to visitors.**
2	How can the president block Congress's bill, and how can Congress respond?	**The president can veto the bill. Congress can pass it anyway with a two-thirds vote in each house.**
3	If visitors say an agency skipped tests required by law, how do the court's job and the agency's job differ?	**The agency's job is to carry out the testing law. A court can hear the case and decide whether the agency followed that law.**
4	How do the president and Senate share power over federal judges, and which branch do those judges serve?	**The president nominates federal judges, and the Senate must approve them. The judges serve in the judicial branch.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress could pass a bill requiring safety labels on toys sold across state lines. The president could veto it if the rules seemed too weak. Congress could check that veto by passing the bill again with a two-thirds vote in each house. If the bill became law, executive agencies would enforce it. If someone challenged the law, a federal court could review whether it follows the Constitution and rule that it cannot be enforced if it does not.

Accept other accurate checks, such as Congress controlling funding or the Senate approving federal judges. The response should give each branch a distinct role and explain two interactions that limit power.