

Power Has Limits

Read how the branches share power in the federal government.

SS.7.CG.3 "Demonstrate an understanding of the principles, functions, and organization of government."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that states the job of each branch, label it L, E, or J in the margin, and circle two details that show one branch limiting another.

A Bill and the Branches

- ① On a Monday morning, members of Congress introduce a bill to require clearer warning labels on some products. Congress is the legislative branch of the federal government. Its main job is to make laws, so House and Senate committees study the bill, hear testimony, and suggest changes. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate must pass the same version. This two-house structure makes lawmakers review an idea carefully before it can move to the president.
- ② After Congress passes a bill, the president, who leads the executive branch, may sign it into law or veto it. A veto sends the bill back to Congress. If two-thirds of both houses vote to override the veto, the bill becomes law without the president's signature. The executive branch also carries out laws through departments and agencies. For example, an agency may write detailed rules to carry out a law, but those rules must stay within the authority Congress gave it.
- ③ Courts in the judicial branch decide cases about laws and government actions. If a person argues that a law violates the Constitution, a court examines the case. The Supreme Court can rule that a law is unconstitutional, so the government cannot enforce it. This power helps protect individual rights and limits the other branches. Dividing power among branches, along with written laws and elections, supports the principle that no official is above the law in the United States.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Why must both the House of Representatives and the Senate pass the same version of a bill?

2 What can Congress do if the president vetoes a bill? Include the vote needed.

3 What can the Supreme Court do when it rules that a law is unconstitutional?

4 Use two details from the passage to explain how the branches limit one another's power.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Invent a federal law about trains traveling between states. In 4 or 5 sentences, explain what the legislative, executive, and judicial branches could each do with the law. Include one check on power and explain how the Constitution or individual rights would limit government action.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that states the job of each branch, label it L, E, or J in the margin, and circle two details that show one branch limiting another. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why must both the House of Representatives and the Senate pass the same version of a bill?	Both houses must agree before the bill moves to the president. This makes lawmakers review the idea carefully.
2	What can Congress do if the president vetoes a bill? Include the vote needed.	Congress can override the veto if two-thirds of both the House and Senate vote to do so.
3	What can the Supreme Court do when it rules that a law is unconstitutional?	It can rule that the government cannot enforce the law.
4	Use two details from the passage to explain how the branches limit one another's power.	Answers may include that the president can veto a bill, Congress can override a veto with a two-thirds vote, and the Supreme Court can stop enforcement of an unconstitutional law.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress considers a law that sets safety rules for trains traveling between states. The legislative branch debates and passes the bill, while the president may sign it or veto it. If a court finds that the law violates a constitutional right, the judicial branch can stop its enforcement. These checks help ensure that officials follow the Constitution and do not hold unlimited power.

Accept accurate paraphrases of the passage and any two valid examples of checks among the branches. For the open task, accept a different federal law if all three branches have accurate roles and the response includes a valid check and constitutional or rights limit.