

Power in Balance

See how branches and levels of government share power.

SS4CG3.a "Describe how the three branches of government interact with each other (checks and balances and separation of powers), and how they relate to local, state, and federal government."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words that tell the job of each branch. Circle each sentence that describes a check between branches, and write F, S, or L beside facts about federal, state, or local government.

Sharing Government Power

- ① At the federal level, the three branches have separate jobs. Congress, the legislative branch, writes bills, or ideas for laws. The President leads the executive branch and carries out laws. Federal courts, the judicial branch, decide whether laws follow the Constitution. Giving each branch a different job is called separation of powers. It helps keep one branch from doing everything.
- ② The branches also check one another. If Congress passes a bill, the President may sign it or veto it. A veto sends the bill back to Congress. Congress can override a veto with a two-thirds vote in both houses. Courts can decide whether a law follows the Constitution. These checks and balances prevent one branch from having too much power.
- ③ Government also works at local, state, and federal levels. The federal government handles national concerns, such as declaring war. State governments make many laws for their whole states. Cities and counties handle nearby needs, such as libraries or local roads. States create local governments, and local rules must follow state and federal laws. State government has legislative, executive, and judicial branches too.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Which federal branch writes bills? What does separation of powers mean?

2 What can Congress do after the President vetoes a bill?

3 How do courts check the work of the other branches?

4 How are local governments connected to state and federal government?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Invent a rule for your city or town. In 3 or 4 sentences, explain what the local lawmaking group, executive leader, and court would do, then state one way the rule must fit state or federal law.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline words that tell the job of each branch. Circle each sentence that describes a check between branches, and write F, S, or L beside facts about federal, state, or local government. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which federal branch writes bills? What does separation of powers mean?	Congress, the legislative branch, writes bills. Separation of powers means each branch has a different job.
2	What can Congress do after the President vetoes a bill?	Congress can override the veto with a two-thirds vote in both houses.
3	How do courts check the work of the other branches?	Courts can decide whether a law follows the Constitution.
4	How are local governments connected to state and federal government?	States create local governments. Local rules must follow state and federal laws.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our city council passes a rule requiring helmets on city-owned scooter rentals. The mayor signs the rule and city workers enforce it. A court can decide whether the rule follows the Constitution and state law. The city rule must not conflict with a state or federal law.

Accept equivalent descriptions of the branches, checks and balances, and relationships among levels of government. For the open response, accept any realistic local rule that includes all three local roles and correctly states that local rules must follow state or federal law.