Power in Practice

Find constitutional principles in everyday decisions

5.SS.4.4 "Identify the basic principles of the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights, including popular sovereignty, limited government, separation of powers, checks and balances, judicial review, and federalism."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline actions that show how government power works or is limited. Number each underlined action, then write the principle it shows in the margin.

A Voice for the Skate Park

1. A town plans to close its skate park. Neighbors gather in the park to speak against the plan. The First Amendment, part of the Bill of Rights, protects peaceful assembly and free speech. Town leaders cannot simply silence people for disagreeing with them. This is limited government: even leaders must obey the Constitution. At election time, voters choose leaders who make decisions for them. That is popular sovereignty, or power from the people.

2. What if people want a new national law about parks? The Constitution gives Congress the job of making national laws, the president the job of carrying them out, and federal courts the job of interpreting them. This is separation of powers. The president can veto a bill from Congress, and Congress can override a veto with enough votes. These checks and balances keep one branch from gaining too much power.

3. Federal courts also use judicial review. If a law conflicts with the Constitution, a court can rule that law unconstitutional. The national government and state governments share power in a system called federalism. States make many decisions about public schools, while the national government manages the armed forces. So the neighbors may speak to town leaders about the skate park, but the Constitution also shapes what all levels of government may do.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which principle explains why voters choose leaders? Which principle stops town leaders from silencing peaceful critics?

2. Which principle gives Congress, the president, and federal courts different jobs? Name one job for each.

3. The president vetoes a bill, but Congress can override the veto with enough votes. Which principle does this show? Explain how.

4. Which principle lets a court rule that a law conflicts with the Constitution? Which principle divides power between national and state governments?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a community issue other than a skate park or public school. In four sentences, show three different principles from the passage at work. Name each principle and connect it to an action.

ANSWER KEY

Power in Practice

GRADE 5 · 5.SS.4.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline actions that show how government power works or is limited. Number each underlined action, then write the principle it shows in the margin. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which principle explains why voters choose leaders? Which principle stops town leaders from silencing peaceful critics?	**Popular sovereignty explains voters choosing leaders. Limited government stops leaders from silencing peaceful critics.**
2	Which principle gives Congress, the president, and federal courts different jobs? Name one job for each.	**Separation of powers. Congress makes national laws, the president carries them out, and federal courts interpret them.**
3	The president vetoes a bill, but Congress can override the veto with enough votes. Which principle does this show? Explain how.	**Checks and balances. Each branch can limit the other branch's power over a bill.**
4	Which principle lets a court rule that a law conflicts with the Constitution? Which principle divides power between national and state governments?	**Judicial review lets a court rule on a law's constitutionality. Federalism divides power between national and state governments.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A city wants cleaner water in a nearby river. Popular sovereignty appears when voters choose city leaders who support cleanup. Federalism means state and national governments can both have roles in protecting the water. Checks and balances appears when the president vetoes a national river bill and Congress considers overriding the veto.

Accept other accurate actions from the passage that demonstrate the named principles. For Part 3, look for a new issue and three distinct principles correctly connected to actions.