

Power Under Watch

Read how branches limit one another and protect individual rights.

7.5b “The Constitution established three branches of government as well as a system of checks and balances that guides the relationship between the branches. Individual rights of citizens are addressed in the Bill of Rights.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one power of each branch, circle each action that checks another branch, and put a star beside each amendment named in paragraph 3.

One Government, Shared Power

- ① The Constitution divides national power among three branches. Congress, the legislative branch, writes and votes on bills. The president leads the executive branch and can sign a bill into law or veto it. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the judicial branch. It decides cases and can rule that a law conflicts with the Constitution. Giving different jobs to different branches prevents one group from controlling every part of government. This arrangement is called separation of powers.
- ② After both houses of Congress pass a bill, it goes to the president. A signature makes it law. A veto returns it to Congress. Congress can consider a revised bill or try to override the veto. An override requires two thirds of those voting in each house, with a quorum present. Courts may later hear a legal challenge to the law. The Supreme Court can declare a law unconstitutional in a case it hears. These checks let branches limit one another.
- ③ The Bill of Rights is the first ten amendments to the Constitution. It protects important individual liberties from government interference. For example, the First Amendment protects freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, and petition. The Fourth Amendment protects people against unreasonable searches and seizures. The Sixth Amendment gives people accused of crimes rights such as a speedy, public trial and a lawyer. Rights have limits, but laws restricting them must also satisfy the Constitution. Courts often decide disputes about what constitutional rights mean in particular cases.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What is one power of Congress, one power of the president, and one power of the Supreme Court?

2 After the president vetoes a bill, what can Congress do? What is needed to override the veto?

3 How can the Supreme Court check a law that Congress passed and the president signed?

4 Name two amendments in the passage and tell one right protected by each.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Invent a proposed national law that could affect a Bill of Rights freedom. In four sentences, explain what Congress does, how the president checks the bill, how Congress responds, and how the Supreme Court could review the law.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline one power of each branch, circle each action that checks another branch, and put a star beside each amendment named in paragraph 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is one power of Congress, one power of the president, and one power of the Supreme Court?	Congress writes and votes on bills. The president signs bills or vetoes them. The Supreme Court decides cases and can rule that a law conflicts with the Constitution.
2	After the president vetoes a bill, what can Congress do? What is needed to override the veto?	Congress can consider a revised bill or try to override the veto. An override requires two thirds of those voting in each house, with a quorum present.
3	How can the Supreme Court check a law that Congress passed and the president signed?	The Supreme Court may hear a case about the law and declare it unconstitutional if it violates the Constitution.
4	Name two amendments in the passage and tell one right protected by each.	Answers may include: First Amendment, freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, or petition; Fourth Amendment, protection against unreasonable searches and seizures; Sixth Amendment, a speedy public trial or a lawyer for people accused of crimes.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress passes a bill requiring all public parks to close during every political rally. The president vetoes it because it may limit peaceful assembly. Congress overrides the veto with two thirds of those voting in each house, with a quorum present. The Supreme Court hears a challenge and could rule that the law violates the First Amendment right to assemble.

Accept accurate branch powers, checks, and rights stated in the passage. For the open response, accept a logical invented law and an accurate sequence showing Congress, the president, Congress's override power, Supreme Court review, and a relevant Bill of Rights freedom.