Who Can Stop Whom?

Trace how the three branches limit one another.

5.C.6.3.B "Describe the system of checks and balances, explaining how each branch of government can limit the power of other branches."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each action that limits another branch's power. Circle the name of the branch taking that action.

A Bill About Rivers

1. Imagine Congress wants to keep plastic waste out of rivers. Congress, the lawmaking branch, passes a bill that would limit plastic dumping. The president leads the executive branch, which carries out laws. If the president objects, the president can veto the bill. A veto stops the bill from becoming law unless Congress takes another step. This is one way the executive branch checks the legislative branch.

2. Congress can vote to override a veto. To do so, two thirds of both the House of Representatives and the Senate must vote for the bill. Then it becomes law without the president's approval. Congress also checks the president in another way: the president picks federal judges, but the Senate must approve these choices before they can serve. Neither branch gets to make every decision alone.

3. Federal courts form the judicial branch. If someone challenges a law, a court can decide whether that law breaks the Constitution. A court can also rule that an action by the president's executive branch breaks the Constitution or a federal law. In either case, the court can block the law or action. These checks and balances help prevent any one branch from having too much power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does a presidential veto limit Congress's power?

2. How can Congress limit the president's veto power?

3. The president picks federal judges. How does the Senate limit this power?

4. How can federal courts limit the power of both Congress and the executive branch?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a bill about something the federal government might do. In four sentences, explain how the president could check Congress, how Congress could respond, and how a federal court could check the law if someone challenged it under the Constitution.

ANSWER KEY

Who Can Stop Whom?

GRADE 5 · 5.C.6.3.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each action that limits another branch's power. Circle the name of the branch taking that action. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does a presidential veto limit Congress's power?	**A veto stops a bill Congress passed from becoming law unless Congress overrides it.**
2	How can Congress limit the president's veto power?	**Congress can override a veto if two thirds of both the House and the Senate vote for the bill.**
3	The president picks federal judges. How does the Senate limit this power?	**The Senate must approve the president's choices before they can serve as federal judges.**
4	How can federal courts limit the power of both Congress and the executive branch?	**Courts can block a law that breaks the Constitution. They can also block an executive action that breaks the Constitution or a federal law.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress passes a bill to protect sea turtles on federal beaches. The president vetoes it, stopping the bill for now. Congress overrides the veto with a two-thirds vote in both houses, making the bill law without the president's approval. If someone challenges the law, a federal court could block it if the court finds that it breaks the Constitution.

For the open task, accept any plausible federal bill. The response should correctly describe a veto, the vote needed to override it, and a court's power to block an unconstitutional law.