Power in Practice

How three branches use constitutional powers

8.C.4.2.C "Identify the constitutional powers granted to Congress, the President, and the Supreme Court, using historical and contemporary examples."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words that name a constitutional power. Circle examples from before 2000, and put a star beside examples from 2000 or later to connect each power to a real event.

Three Branches at Work

1. In 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, which banned racial discrimination in many public places, including hotels and restaurants. One part of the law rested on Congress's constitutional power to regulate commerce among states. Congress used that power to address discrimination that affected travel and business across state lines. Decades later, when the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted jobs in 2020, Congress passed the CARES Act. It authorized emergency spending to help households and businesses. These actions show Congress making laws and deciding how federal money will be spent.

2. The president does not make laws alone. The Constitution lets the president sign a bill into law or veto it, and requires the president to carry out federal laws. In 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce a federal court order allowing Black students to attend a previously all-white high school. As commander in chief, he directed those troops. In 2020, President Donald Trump signed the CARES Act after Congress passed it. Congress approved the spending, but the president's signature made the bill a law.

3. The Supreme Court has a different job. Article III gives federal courts judicial power to decide cases; the Supreme Court is the nation's highest court. In 1954, its ruling in Brown v. Board of Education held that racial segregation in public schools violated the Constitution's guarantee of equal protection. In 2024, the Court ruled in United States v. Rahimi that a gun restriction for people under certain domestic violence restraining orders did not violate the Second Amendment. These rulings show the Court deciding whether government actions fit the Constitution, not passing laws.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which constitutional power did Congress use for part of the Civil Rights Act, and what problem did it address?

2. Which two presidential responsibilities did Eisenhower carry out when he sent troops to Little Rock?

3. How did Congress and the president use different powers to make the CARES Act a law?

4. What judicial power did the Supreme Court use in Brown and Rahimi, and what did it decide in each case?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine Congress considers a law setting safety rules for electric scooters sold across state lines. Write four sentences explaining one constitutional role for each branch and a possible constitutional dispute the Supreme Court could decide if a case reaches it.

ANSWER KEY

Power in Practice

GRADE 8 · 8.C.4.2.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline words that name a constitutional power. Circle examples from before 2000, and put a star beside examples from 2000 or later to connect each power to a real event. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which constitutional power did Congress use for part of the Civil Rights Act, and what problem did it address?	**Congress used its power to regulate commerce among states to address discrimination affecting travel and business across state lines.**
2	Which two presidential responsibilities did Eisenhower carry out when he sent troops to Little Rock?	**He carried out the duty to enforce federal law and acted as commander in chief of the troops.**
3	How did Congress and the president use different powers to make the CARES Act a law?	**Congress passed the bill and approved emergency spending. President Trump signed the bill into law.**
4	What judicial power did the Supreme Court use in Brown and Rahimi, and what did it decide in each case?	**The Court used its judicial power to decide whether government actions fit the Constitution. It ruled that school segregation violated equal protection in Brown and that the gun restriction in Rahimi did not violate the Second Amendment.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress could use its power to regulate interstate commerce to pass safety rules for scooters sold across state lines. The president could sign the bill and direct federal agencies to enforce the new law. A scooter company might argue in court that the law goes beyond Congress's power over interstate commerce. If the case reached the Supreme Court, it could decide whether Congress acted within its constitutional power.

Accept other accurate presidential actions, such as vetoing the proposed bill. The Court's role must involve deciding a case, not writing or enforcing the scooter rules.