

Power in Balance

Read how the branches limit one another under the Constitution.

5.15.B "identify the reasons for and describe the system of checks and balances outlined in the U.S. Constitution; and"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the four sentences that name a branch and a specific checking action.
Number the sentences 1 through 4 in the order you find them.

Sharing Government Power

- ① The Constitution divides the national government into three branches. Congress, the legislative branch, makes laws. The president leads the executive branch and carries out laws. Federal courts in the judicial branch interpret the Constitution. The framers wanted to prevent one person or group from holding too much power. They created checks and balances so each branch could limit the others at the national level.
- ② For example, Congress can pass a bill, but the president can veto it. Congress can check that veto only by overriding it with a two-thirds vote in both the House and Senate. The president nominates federal judges, and the Senate confirms or rejects those nominations. These actions require branches to share important decisions rather than letting one branch decide alone.
- ③ Federal courts can declare a law or executive action unconstitutional, which stops it from being used. No branch controls every decision. This system can slow government action, yet it protects rights and helps keep power balanced among the branches. Checks and balances support a government in which leaders must follow the Constitution, even when officials disagree.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Why did the framers create checks and balances?

2 How can Congress check a president's veto?

3 How does the Senate check the president's choice of federal judges?

4 What can federal courts do if a law or executive action does not follow the Constitution?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write three sentences about a fictional bill. Show Congress passing the bill, the president vetoing it, and Congress overriding the veto with a two-thirds vote in both houses. Explain how this process limits power.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the four sentences that name a branch and a specific checking action. Number the sentences 1 through 4 in the order you find them. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did the framers create checks and balances?	They wanted to prevent one person or group from holding too much power.
2	How can Congress check a president's veto?	Congress can override the veto with a two-thirds vote in both the House and Senate.
3	How does the Senate check the president's choice of federal judges?	The Senate can confirm or reject the president's nominations for federal judges.
4	What can federal courts do if a law or executive action does not follow the Constitution?	Courts can declare it unconstitutional, which stops it from being used.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress passed a bill requiring cleaner school buses. The president vetoed the bill, but Congress overrode the veto with a two-thirds vote in both the House and Senate. This process prevents the president from having the final say alone.

For the marking job, students should underline the sentences about the president's veto, Congress overriding a veto, Senate confirmation or rejection of nominees, and courts declaring actions unconstitutional. Accept equivalent explanations that correctly name the branch, its constitutional action, and how the action limits power.