

Power in Balance

Read how the three branches share and limit national power.

CE.2.a “describing the structure and powers of the government (the three branches of government);”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one phrase that tells what each branch can do. Circle words or phrases that show one branch limiting another branch's power.

How Federal Power Is Shared

- ① The Constitution divides the national government into three branches so that power is not held by one person or group. Article I creates the legislative branch, Congress. Congress includes the Senate and the House of Representatives. Its main job is to make laws. Members debate ideas, write bills, and vote. For example, Congress might consider a bill that provides money for safer bridges. A bill does not become a law just because Congress supports it. The two houses must agree on the same bill before it moves forward.
- ② Article II creates the executive branch, led by the president. This branch carries out federal laws. After Congress passes a bill, the president may sign it, and it becomes a law. The president may also veto, or reject, the bill and return it to Congress. Congress can override a veto with enough votes in both houses. Executive departments, such as the Department of Transportation, help put laws into action and manage daily work for the country.
- ③ Article III creates the judicial branch, which includes the Supreme Court and other federal courts. Courts explain what laws mean and decide cases involving those laws. In some cases, the Supreme Court can decide that a law conflicts with the Constitution. This power is called judicial review. The branches check one another: Congress makes laws, the president can veto bills, and courts can review laws. These limits help prevent any branch from becoming too powerful in government.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Which branch makes federal laws, and what are its two parts?

2 After Congress passes a bill, what are the president's two choices described in the passage?

3 What does the judicial branch do, and what is judicial review?

4 Describe two ways one branch can limit the power of another branch.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Invent a proposed federal law. Write exactly three sentences: tell what Congress does, what the president does, and how a federal court could become involved if a case challenges the law as conflicting with the Constitution.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline one phrase that tells what each branch can do. Circle words or phrases that show one branch limiting another branch's power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which branch makes federal laws, and what are its two parts?	The legislative branch makes federal laws. It is Congress, which includes the Senate and the House of Representatives.
2	After Congress passes a bill, what are the president's two choices described in the passage?	The president may sign the bill so it becomes a law, or veto it and return it to Congress.
3	What does the judicial branch do, and what is judicial review?	The judicial branch explains laws and decides cases involving laws. Judicial review is the power of the Supreme Court to decide that a law conflicts with the Constitution.
4	Describe two ways one branch can limit the power of another branch.	The president can veto a bill passed by Congress, and Congress can override a veto with enough votes in both houses. Courts can also review laws and decide whether they conflict with the Constitution.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress debates and passes the Clean River Act, which sets rules for factories that release waste into rivers. The president signs the bill, so executive departments enforce the new law. If a case claims the law conflicts with the Constitution, a federal court can interpret the law and decide the case.

Accept equivalent descriptions of each branch's stated powers and checks. For the open response, accept any realistic proposed law that accurately gives Congress, the president, and a federal court distinct roles.