

Power Has Limits

Read how the three branches share and check national power.

USI.7.e "examining the three branches of government."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the main job of each government branch. Circle each phrase that tells how one branch can limit or check another branch.

Three Branches, Shared Power

- ① When the United States Constitution was written, leaders did not want one person or group to hold all government power. They divided the national government into three branches. This plan is called separation of powers. Each branch has a different main job. The branches also can limit one another's power. These limits, called checks and balances, help protect the rights of the people.
- ② The legislative branch is Congress, which includes the Senate and the House of Representatives. Its main job is to make laws. Before a bill can become a law, both parts of Congress must approve it. The executive branch includes the president. The president carries out laws and may veto a bill. A veto rejects the bill, but Congress can vote to override it.
- ③ The judicial branch includes the Supreme Court and other federal courts. Judges decide whether laws and government actions follow the Constitution. If a court finds that a law conflicts with the Constitution, it can rule that the law cannot be enforced. The president chooses federal judges, and the Senate must approve them. This is another way the branches share power and check each other.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 Which branch includes Congress, and what is its main job?

2 How can Congress respond after the president vetoes a bill?

3 What can the judicial branch do if it finds that a law conflicts with the Constitution?

4 How do the president and the Senate share power when federal judges are chosen?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Invent a new national law. Write three sentences that show how the legislative, executive, and judicial branches could each be involved with the law.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the main job of each government branch. Circle each phrase that tells how one branch can limit or check another branch. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which branch includes Congress, and what is its main job?	The legislative branch includes Congress. Its main job is to make laws.
2	How can Congress respond after the president vetoes a bill?	Congress can vote to override the veto.
3	What can the judicial branch do if it finds that a law conflicts with the Constitution?	A court can rule that the law cannot be enforced.
4	How do the president and the Senate share power when federal judges are chosen?	The president chooses federal judges, and the Senate must approve them.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress passes a law that sets safety rules for toys sold across the country. The president signs the law and directs executive agencies to carry it out. If the law is challenged, a federal court decides whether it follows the Constitution.

Accept accurate three-sentence examples that give Congress a lawmaking role, the president or executive branch a law-carrying-out role, and courts a Constitution-checking role. The student may use a different realistic national law.