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System of Checks and Balances

1. Write each term beside the correct meaning.

override checks and balances reprieve veto pardon executive branch impeach legislative branch resign constitutional judicial branch democracy

- a) To forgive the actions or crimes of another
- b) A plan in which one branch of a government can make sure that other branches do not have too much power
- c) The president, vice president, and cabinet members
- d) A system of government in which the people choose who runs it
- e) To prevent from happening
- f) The House of Representatives and the Senate
- g) To stop or end a law
- h) To quit or leave office
- i) To bring a public official who is accused of wrongdoing before a group for judgment
- j) To end or take away a court sentence
- k) The federal court system and the U.S. Supreme Court
- l) Agreeing with the Constitution

2. Use a straight line to match each branch of U.S. government with the Article of the Constitution which established it.

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---------------|---|
| 1 | Executive Branch | Article One | A |
| 2 | Judicial Branch | Article Two | B |
| 3 | Legislative Branch | Article Three | C |



System of Checks and Balances

The government of the United States is built on a foundation of freedom. The writers of the Constitution knew that no single person or branch of government should ever have enough power to take away the freedom of the others. This is why they included a **system of checks and balances** in the Constitution. Each branch **checks**, or holds back, the other two. This helps to keep the balance of power even in all three branches.

The Checking Power of the Executive Branch

As the head of the executive branch, the President can check the power of the legislative branch by using his right to **veto**, or prevent, a bill from becoming a law. Each law approved by Congress is sent to the President for his approval. If he chooses not to approve the law, we say that it has been vetoed.

In fact, the President can approve or veto any law except one that amends, or changes, the Constitution. Having this ability gives the President strong checking power over the legislative branch. A two-thirds majority vote of the Congress is the only way to **override**, or stop, a presidential veto.

STOP **Food for Thought:** How does a system of checks and balances protect freedom? Why is this important?

The President can also check the power of the judicial branch of government in the following ways:

- The president approves all federal judges and Supreme Court justices.
- The president can **pardon**, or forgive, a person convicted of a federal crime.
- The president can **reprieve**, or take away the punishment, of people who have been convicted of federal crimes.

System of Checks and Balances

1. Use the words in the list to answer each question.

checks veto override pardon reprieve impeach constitutional

- a) What is the term for, "refusing to approve a bill or law"?
- b) Which term means, "to place on trial"?
- c) Which term means, "agrees with the Constitution"?
- d) This term means, "to hold back or keep equal".
- e) Which term means, "to stop a veto"?
- f) This term means, "to forgive".
- g) Which term means, "to take away the punishment"?

2. Circle the word True if the statement is true. Circle the word False if it's false.

- a) Each branch of the U.S. government checks the other two.
True False
- b) Presidents cannot be impeached.
True False
- c) The President must approve all federal judges and justices of the Supreme Court.
True False
- d) The judicial branch can decide whether or not a president's actions are constitutional.
True False
- e) There are seven justices on the Supreme Court.
True False



Here are six writing tasks about the government of the United States. Be sure to think about all that you have learned about the United States government as you write. Write your answers in complete sentences in your notebook.

- Task #1 Every country on earth has some kind of government even though all governments are not alike. Organize your thoughts and knowledge about government and discuss the purpose(s) of government. In the United States' system of government, who or what are most important?
- Task #2 The Constitution of the United States has a very important purpose for its government. What is that purpose? What is the Constitution sometimes called?
- Task #3 The Declaration of Independence states that all citizens have certain rights. What are three of these rights? What document gives the citizens these and other rights?
- Task #4 Rights always come along with responsibilities. Think about the rights you discussed in Writing Task 3, as well as others. Discuss at least one of the responsibilities that comes along with them.
- Task #5 All countries have problems which must be solved. Some of these problems are so serious that they are present in most countries (for example, poverty). If you were president of the United States, which three problems would you try to solve? What would you do to solve them?
- Task #6 The powers of all three branches of the U.S. government are equal. What document limits the powers of each branch? What is this limiting of powers called? Do you think that these limitations are good or bad? Tell why.



Crossword Puzzle!

Word List

impeach	rights
enforce	nine
ratify	elected
Congress	nominate
government	Senate
House	resign
Ben	George
democracy	good
	power
	term
	defend
	anarchy
	veto

Across

- The person or group of people who make the rules or laws for everyone else
- In the United States government, leaders are _____ or chosen by the people
- The ability to control someone or something
- To put the president on trial
- Congress is made up of the House of Representatives and the _____
- To keep safe from danger or attack
- Privileges that are due to people by law
- To approve a rule or a law
- To say no to a proposed law or bill
- _____ Franklin
- _____ Washington

Down

- A government should provide for the common _____ of its citizens
- To command obedience to
- The number of justices (judges) on the U.S. Supreme Court
- Length of time in elected office
- Makes federal laws
- Exists when there is no government in a country
- To choose or select
- A form of government in which the people choose who governs them
- The _____ of Representatives
- To quit or leave office



Word Search

Find all of the words in the Word Search. Words may be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal. A few may even be backwards! Look carefully!

- | | | | |
|------------|-----------|----------------|----------|
| government | powers | anarchy | resign |
| veto | branch | ratify | laws |
| Congress | legislate | run | leader |
| vote | election | party | debate |
| checks | democracy | justice | war |
| senator | president | constitutional | clerk |
| bill | poll | judges | campaign |

g	a	b	c	d	e	f	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	n	p	q	
r	o	s	t	u	s	m	s	e	t	w	j	u	d	g	e	s		
r	x	v	y	r	z	a	b	c	a	e	f	u	g	h	i	i	w	
j	a	k	e	l	l	m	c	h	e	c	k	s	n	o	s	p	a	
q	r	w	s	r	t	o	u	y	w	x	y	t	z	a	e	b	l	
c	o	d	e	f	n	g	h	l	o	j	k	i	l	m	r	n	o	
p	p	q	r	g	s	m	t	t	u	v	w	c	x	y	z	a	b	
c	d	e	r	f	g	h	e	i	j	k	l	e	t	a	b	e	d	
m	n	e	o	p	q	v	r	s	e	t	c	u	v	w	e	x		
y	s	z	a	b	c	d	e	f	t	g	l	h	i	j	m	k	l	
s	m	n	o	p	e	q	r	o	s	e	t	e	u	o	v	w	x	
y	z	a	b	c	m	o	v	e	r	f	g	h	c	i	j	k	n	
l	m	l	n	o	e	p	q	k	r	s	t	r	u	t	v	o	w	
x	s	e	n	a	t	o	r	y	z	a	a	b	c	d	i	e	f	
g	h	a	i	j	a	k	l	m	n	c	o	n	p	t	q	o	r	
s	t	d	u	v	l	w	x	y	y	z	a	b	a	c	d	e	n	
h	f	e	a	n	s	i	j	k	l	m	n	n	o	r	p	q	r	
c	s	r	a	i	f	y	n	g	i	a	p	m	a	c	t	u		
n	v	w	x	y	g	z	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	h	j	
a	k	l	p	r	e	s	i	d	e	n	t	m	n	o	p	q	y	
r	r	s	o	t	l	u	v	w	x	y	z	p	a	r	t	y	a	
b	i	l	l	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	u	l	m	n	
o	p	q	l	a	n	o	i	t	u	t	i	t	s	n	o	c	r	



Comprehension Quiz

Part A

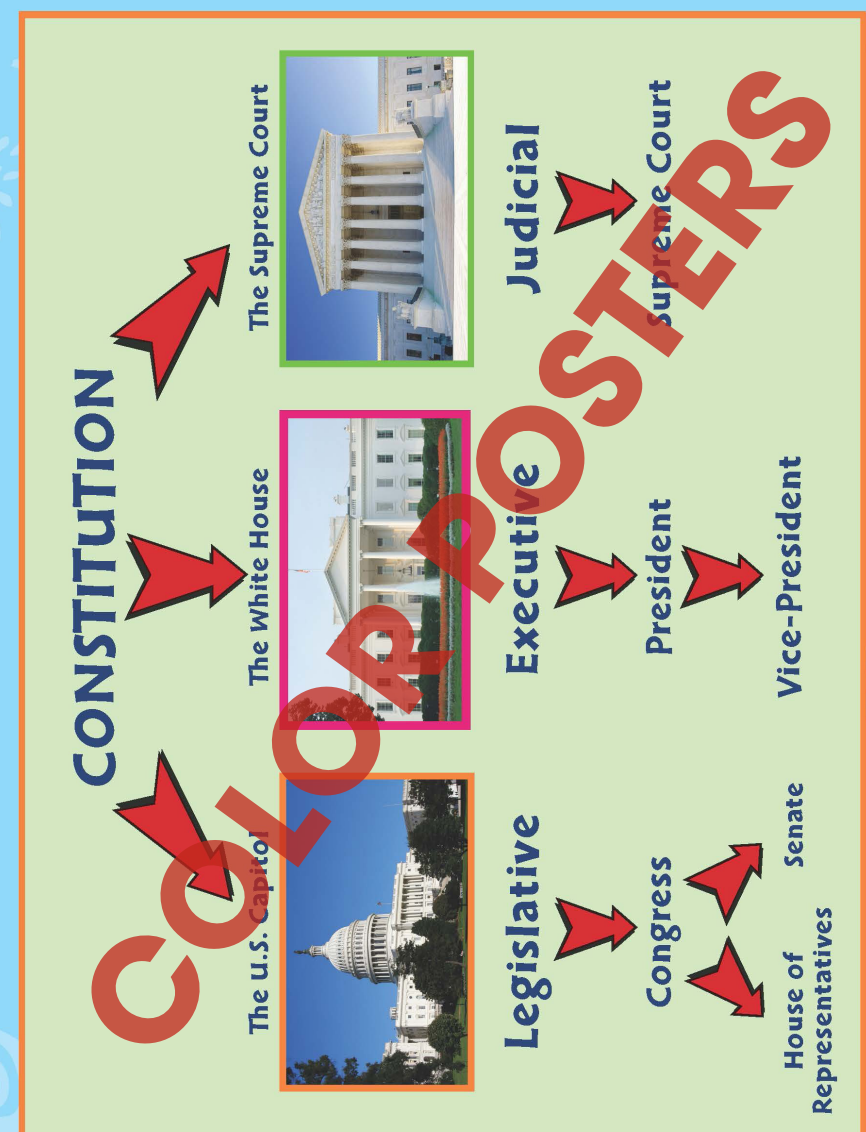
25

Circle the word True if the statement is true. Circle the word False if it's false. If it is false, rewrite the statement to make it correct.

- A government is the person or group who makes the rules for all the other citizens in a country.
True False _____
- Governments are not necessary in all countries.
True False _____
- Most governments in the Western Hemisphere are monarchies.
True False _____
- The Declaration of Independence was written after the Revolutionary War in order to set up a government for the new country.
True False _____
- Many men helped write the Constitution of the United States.
True False _____
- The Supreme Law of the United States is the Declaration of Independence.
True False _____
- In a country with popular sovereignty the citizens hold the highest power in the government.
True False _____
- The only way to change the Constitution of the United States is by the vote of the Supreme Court.
True False _____
- The Supreme Court is the only branch of government in which the people cannot directly vote for its members.
True False _____
- The executive branch of government includes the vice-president and his staff.
True False _____

SUBTOTAL: /10

The Federal Government



NAME: _____

After You Read 



System of Checks and Balances

Answer each question with a complete sentence.

3. What is the **purpose** of a system of checks and balances in the U.S. government?

4. When might a president **pardon** someone who has been convicted of a federal crime?

5. Explain this statement: "**Freedom is the foundation of democracy**".

6. Why do you think the writers of the Constitution were so firm about making sure no branch had more power than the other two? (Hint - remember the situation with England.)

7. What is the only means of **overriding** a presidential veto?

8. How can the judicial branch check the legislative branch?

4.

To keep the balance of power equal

5.

Accept any reasonable answer

6.

Accept any reasonable answer

7.

Accept any reasonable answer

8.

A two-thirds vote of Congress

9.

Accept any reasonable answer

11

Answers will vary

Across:

- 1. government
- 5. elected
- 6. power
- 7. impeach
- 11. Senate
- 12. defend
- 13. rights
- 14. ratify
- 17. veto
- 18. Ben
- 19. George

Down:

- 1. good
- 2. enforce
- 3. nine
- 4. term
- 8. Congress
- 9. anarchy
- 10. nominate
- 12. democracy
- 15. House
- 16. resign

EASY MARKING ANSWER KEY

