

CHECKS & BALANCES Activities

CHECKS AND BALANCES

Background: The government created after the American Revolution was known as the Articles of Confederation. This government was too weak and gave the state governments too much power. One of the main concerns at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia was how to create a balanced government. The Founding Fathers wanted to make sure that the new government did not become too powerful. Therefore, they created a system of checks and balances. Checks and balances make sure that one branch has a way to control the other branches. For example, the legislative branch has the power to write bills but the executive branch has the power to veto these bills. However, the legislative branch can still make the law if they get a two-thirds vote in both houses. The judicial branch has the power to declare laws unconstitutional if they violate the Constitution. Therefore, all three branches can check and balance each other. Without the system of checks and balances, our Congress, President, or court system could become too powerful.

Check for Understanding

CHECKS & BALANCES

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Various governmental powers are listed below. Identify the branch doing the checking and the branch being checked. More than one answer is possible per section.

Power	Which branch has the power?	Which branch is being checked? (Could be more than one)
1. Propose legislation		
2. Veto bills		
3. Ratify treaties		
4. Appoint Federal Judges		

Checks & Balances Notes

Date: _____

Legislative Branch

- Can propose legislation
- Can impeach judges
- Can propose amendments to laws

Judicial Branch

- Can reject appointments
- Can impeach judges
- Can propose amendments to laws



Checks & Balances

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Using at least 15 of the words or phrases below, write a paragraph explaining 1. Why did the founders include checks and balances in the Constitution? 2. How does checks and balances work?

Executive **VETO** **Judicial**

Supreme Court **LEGISLATIVE** declare

APPOINT **EXECUTIVE** confirm

reject **JUDICIAL** **OVERRIDE**

unconstitutional treaties

PARDON

Executive actions Special Sessions

reject **bills** justices

Congress amendments prevent

Name: _____

The United States Constitution established government based on the basic concepts of separation of powers and checks and balances. The authors of the Constitution included these two concepts because the

- continue concepts from the Articles of Confederation
- ensure that government branches would operate without disagreement
- give most of the power to the executive branch
- prevent any one branch of government from becoming too powerful

Reading, Charts, Exit Ticket,
Writing activity
Common Core Aligned

Teacher Tips

Checks & Balances

Lesson

This lesson fits in perfect during American Government or Constitution units. It can be used as an introduction to the concept or as a review lesson.

Step 1: Background sheet, students can read this sheet as a class, individually or with a partner.

Step 2: Student note sheet, explain how these powers help check the other branches.

Step 3: Pass out chart, students can answer with a partner. Go over answers and explain as needed. This could also be given as a homework assignment.

Extra: 3 bonus practice multiple choice questions! I like to use them as exit tickets, checks for understanding, and warm-up questions the next day.

How can this be differentiated?

Assignment could be used in class, homework, or as an assessment.

- If you have varying ability levels in your class, I often partner students up to answer the questions. Another idea to differentiate is to reduce the number of documents that need to be completed. Focus on which ones you think are most essential for your standards.

Questions?

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions about this resource. I have taught this topic for the past 16 years and have used this resource for several years.

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Check for Understanding

1. Highlight the sentence that states why the system of checks and balances was included in the Constitution.
2. Underline the sentence that provides an example of how checks and balances works.

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1. Propose legislation	Executive	Legislative
2. Veto bills	Executive	Legislative
3. Ratify treaties	Legislative	Executive
4. Appoint Federal Judges	Executive	Judicial
5. Can declare executive actions unconstitutional	Judicial	Executive
6. Impeach and remove the President	Legislative	Executive
7. Confirm the appointments of presidential nominations	Legislative	Executive
8. Declare laws unconstitutional	Judicial	Legislative
9. Can impeach and remove judges	Legislative	Judicial
10. Override Presidential vetoes	Legislative	Executive
11. Reject Supreme Court nominations	Legislative	Executive and Judicial
12. Judges are appointed for life	Judicial	Executive and Legislative
13. Controls appropriations of money.	Legislative	Executive
14. Can call special sessions of Congress	Executive	Legislative
15. Can propose Constitutional amendments to overturn Supreme Court decisions.	Legislative	Judicial

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CHECKS & BALANCES



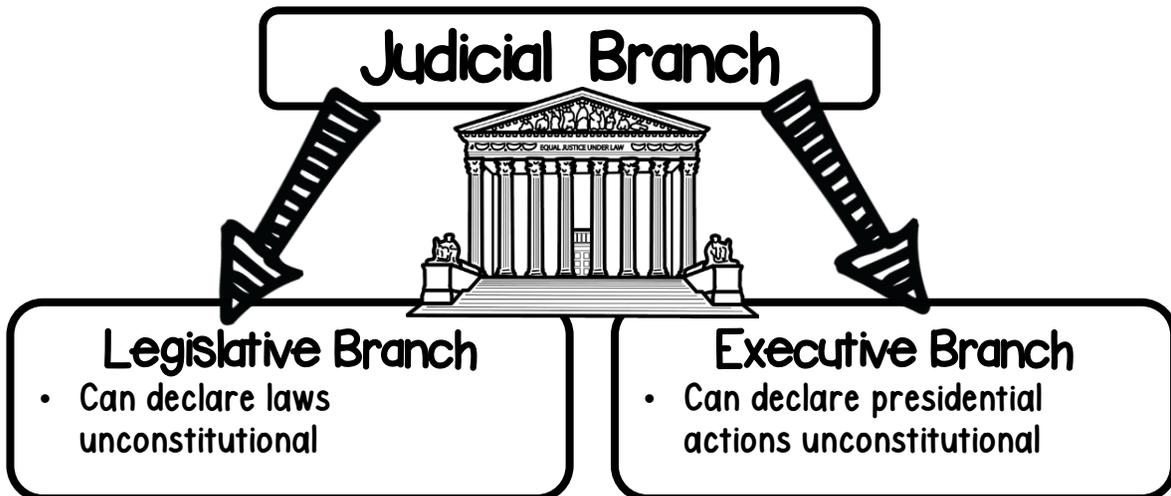
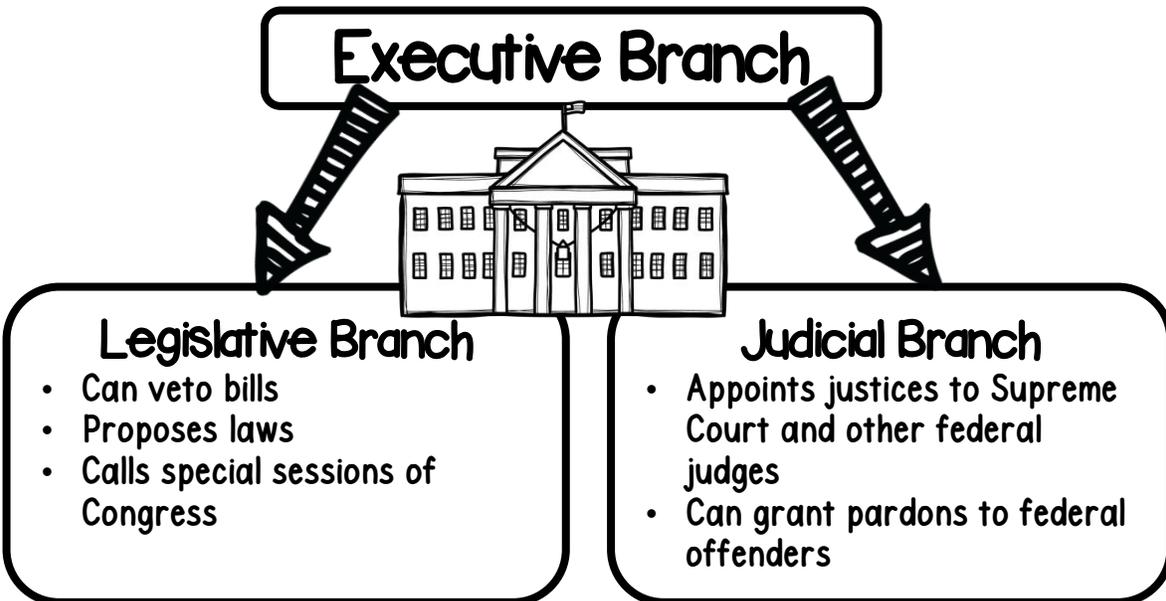
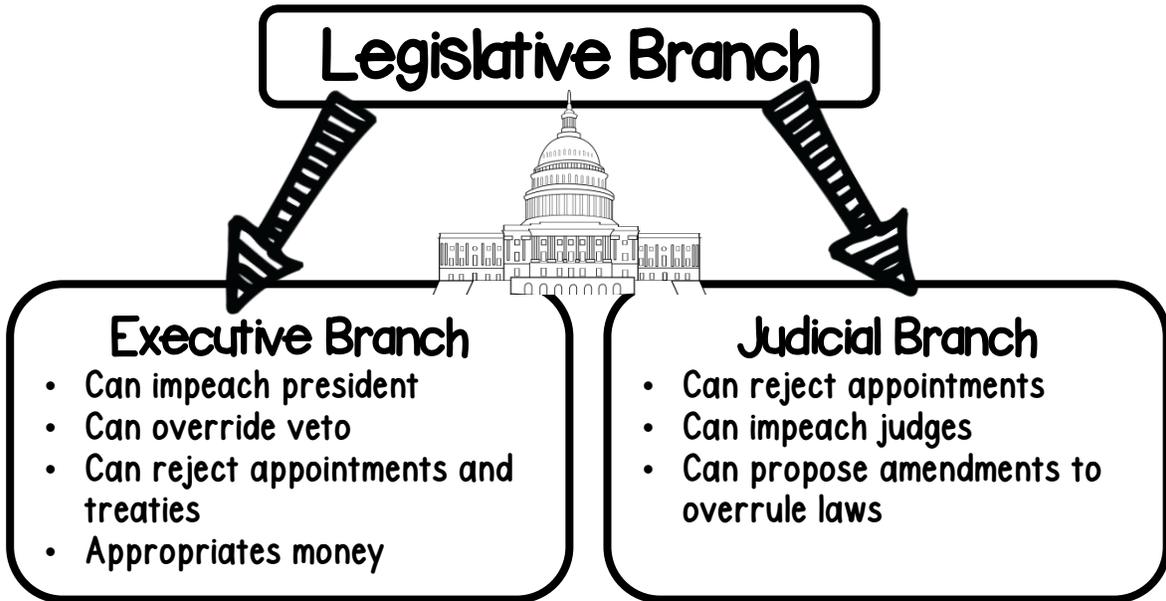
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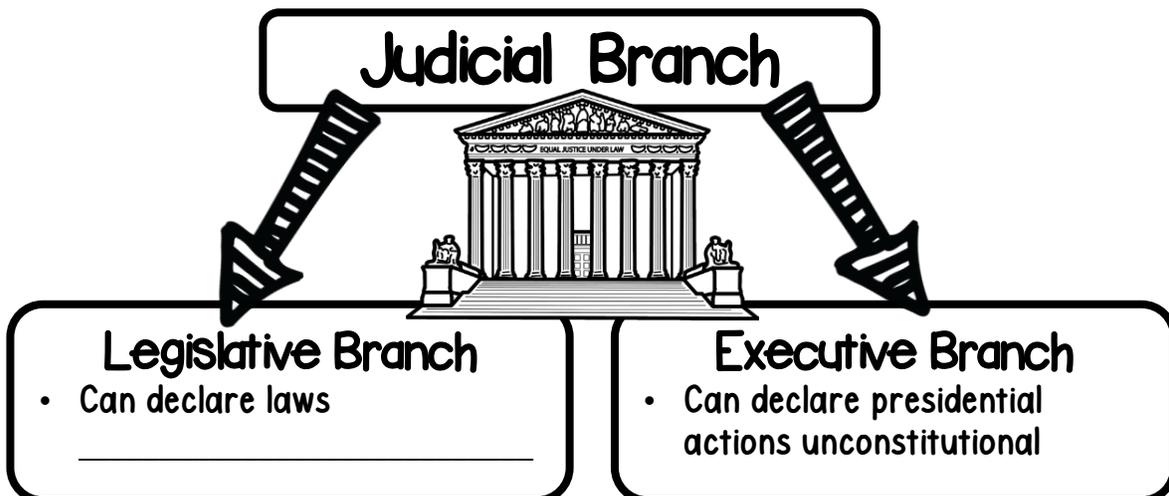
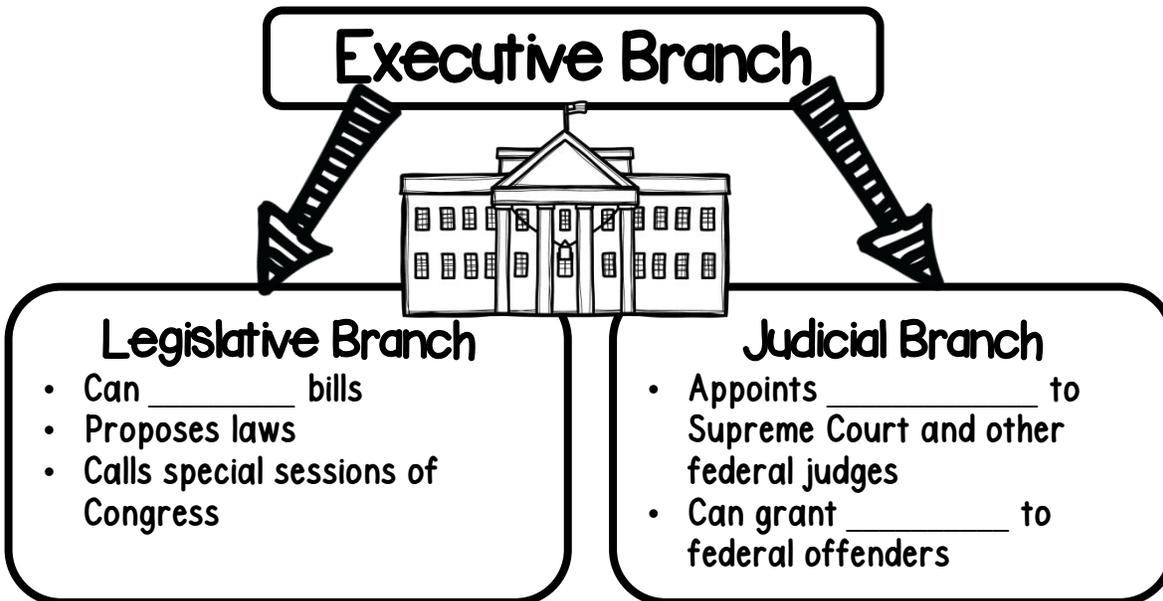
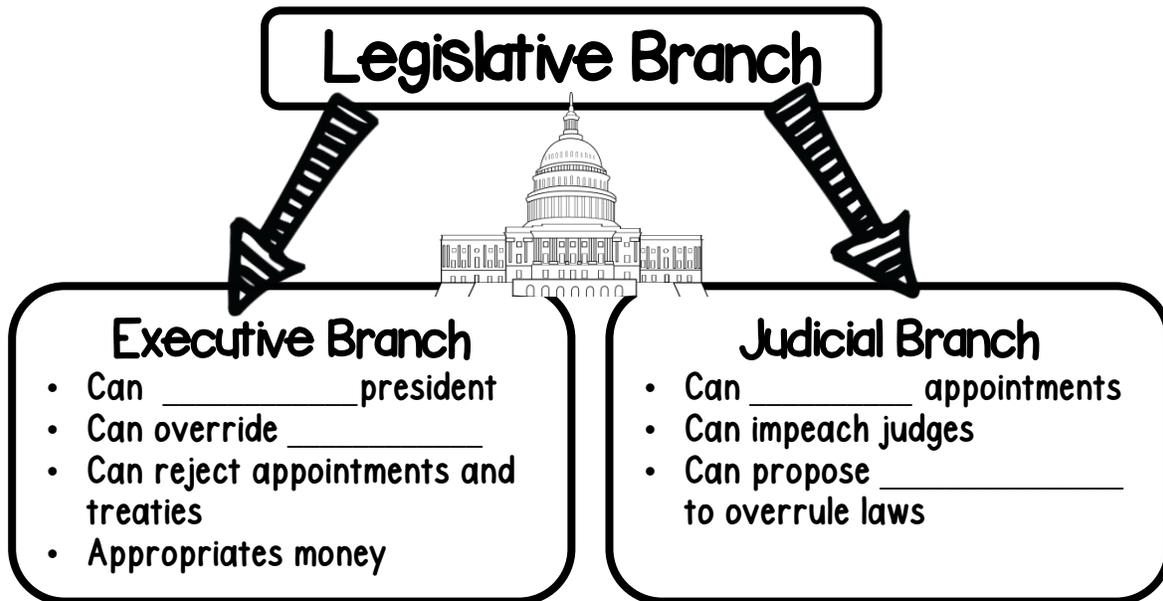
Checks & Balances Notes



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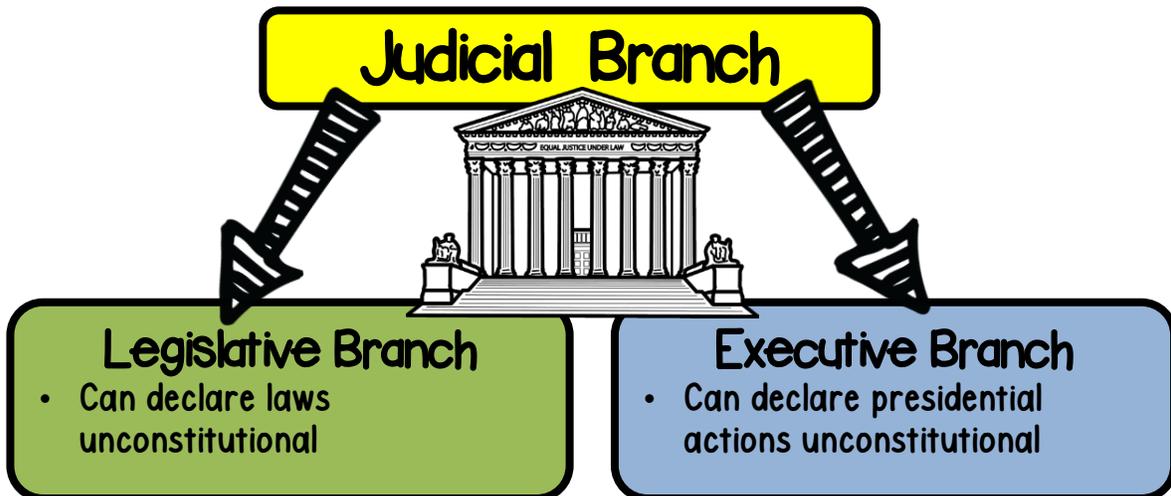
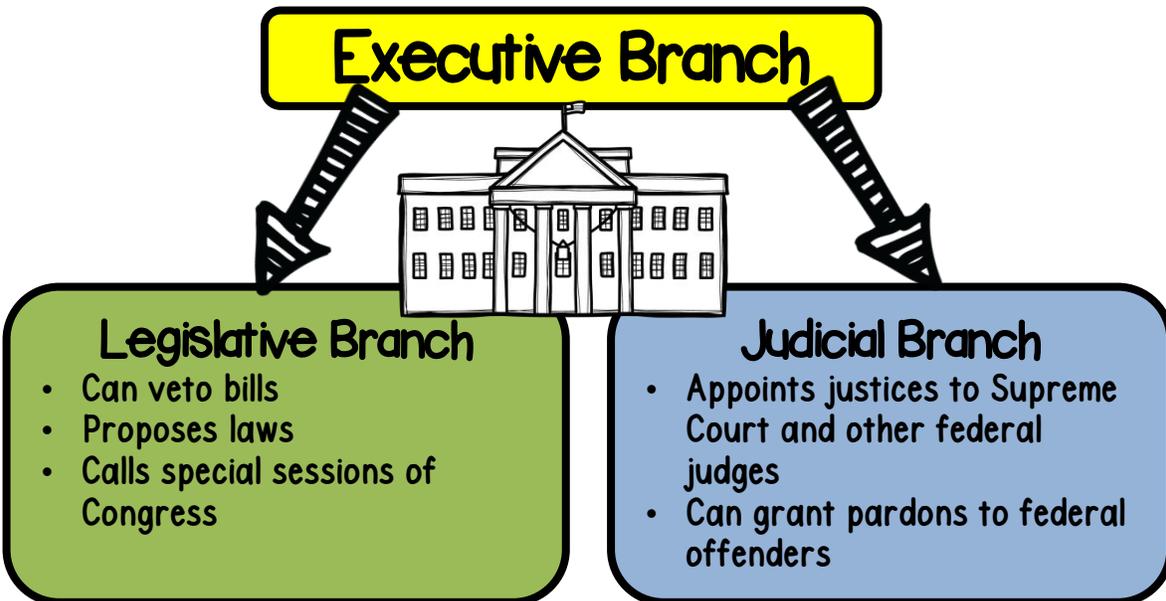
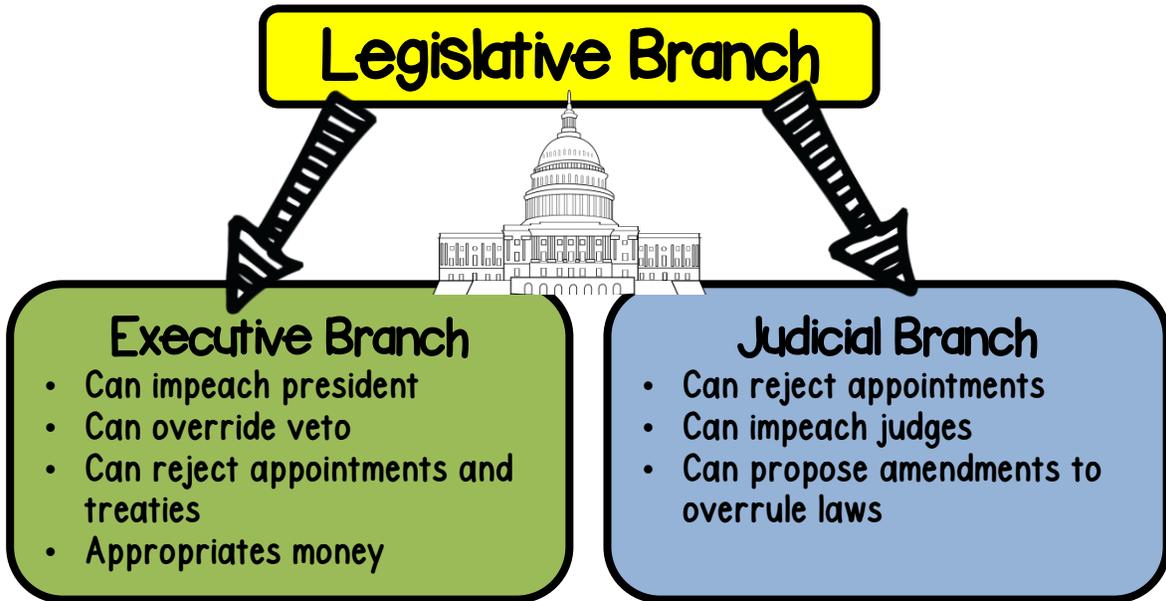
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Checks & Balances Notes



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The United States Constitution established a government based on the basic concepts of separation of powers and checks and balances. The authors of the Constitution included these two concepts because the

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The legislative branch checks the executive branch by:

- A. power to over-ride the president's veto
- B. power to approve presidential appointments
- C. power of the House to impeach the president or vice president
- D. all of the above

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The judicial branch checks the legislative branch by:

- A. the power to impeach a congressional representative
- B. the power to veto laws
- C. the power to find laws unconstitutional
- D. the power to set congressional salaries

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Checks & Balances

Directions: Using at least **5** of the words or phrases below, write a paragraph explaining 1. Why did the founders included checks and balances in the Constitution? 2. How does checks and balances work?

Executive

VETO **Judicial**

Supreme Court

declare

LEGISLATIVE

confirm

APPOINT

EXECUTIVE

OVERRIDE

reject

JUDICIAL

treaties

unconstitutional

PARDON

Executive actions



Special Sessions

reject

bills

justices

Congress

amendments

prevent

Directions:

- 1 When you are finished your writing, share your paragraph with at least one individual. This person should write an appropriate comment and sign your rough draft.
- 2 Make changes and write a final copy.
- 3 On the final copy: highlight or underline the words you selected to use from the Word Splash.

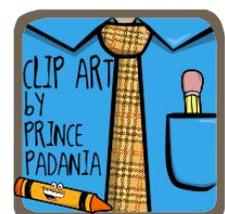
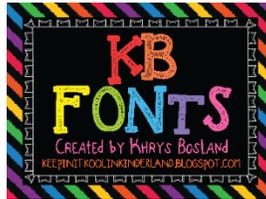
Grading Rubric

Score: _____ / 22 points

Use of word splash words	<u>8 Points</u> Correctly used at least 15 words, words used to help answer the question	<u>5 points</u> Correctly used at least 10 words, may have incorrectly used some terms	<u>3 points</u> Used at least 7 words correctly, may have incorrectly used some terms
Addressing the Task	<u>8 points</u> Explanation of the main ideas were correct and in depth.	<u>5 points</u> Most of the main ideas were correct and discussed.	<u>2 points</u> Some of the main ideas were include, may have contained some inaccuracies.
Reviewed by peer or adult	<u>3 points</u> Reviewed by someone else, marks on rough draft made, signature provided	<u>1 point</u> Reviewed by someone else but changes not made	<u>0 points</u> Not reviewed by someone else.
Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation	<u>3 points</u> Fewer than 2 mistakes	<u>1 point</u> 3-5 mistakes	<u>0 points</u> More than 5 mistakes. Take the time to proof read and make changes!

Credits

A special thank you to the amazing font creators, clipart illustrators, and border creators!



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