



## Lesson Plan: *Balancing Act*

### Assessment:

Students will show an understanding of the United States government checks and balances through:

- Matching terms
- Sequencing order of the process of passing bills
- Listing powers each branch holds
- Fill in the blank
- True or false
- Interpreting the Preamble of the Constitution
- Writing a letter or persuasive essay

### INFORMAL CHECKS

- Students will be evaluated through:
- Checks for understanding
- Teacher observation
- Class participation in small groups and games
- Oral skills in reader's theater

### GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Note taking organizer provides input of information into lesson (tri-fold)

### Quality Criteria:

- Necessary components of persuasive writing: (rubric attached)
- Teacher created formal assessment: (summative) multiple choice, fill-in blank, matching, short answer, (formal scoring provided)



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## Graphic Organizer

### Tri-fold Graphic Organizer

The Constitution created a government as stable/sturdy/strong/durable as a stool with three legs.

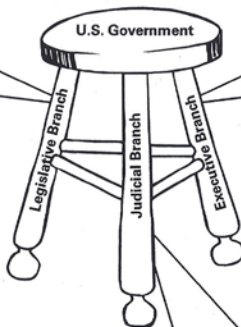
#### 14.4 Legislative Branch

Main Responsibility:  
making laws

Members:  
senators and members of the  
House of Representatives

Key Powers:

- write and pass bills
- overrule presidential veto with 2/3 majority
- approve or reject presidential appointments (Senate)
- approve treaties with 2/3 majority (Senate)
- declare war
- impeach government officials (House)
- collect taxes
- create national currency



#### 14.5 Executive Branch

Main Responsibility:  
carrying out laws

Members:  
president and many other  
government officials

Key Powers:

- sign or veto bills passed by Congress
- make proposals for new laws in State of the Union speeches
- call Congress together for special sessions
- sign treaties
- commander in chief of armed forces
- nominate judges, ambassadors, and Cabinet members
- grant pardons
- represent the United States in foreign affairs

#### 14.6 Judicial Branch

Main Responsibility:  
interpreting laws

Members:  
Supreme Court justices and federal courts

Key Powers:

- determine whether laws are unconstitutional
- determine if treaties are unconstitutional
- interpret the meaning of laws
- preside over impeachment trials (chief justice)



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## Writing Rubric

Writing Rubric for

<http://www.teach-nology.com/cgi-bin/writing.asp>

### Writing Essays



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

	Criteria				Points
	1	2	3	4	
<b>Organization</b>	Sequence of information is difficult to follow.	Reader has difficulty following work because student jumps around.	Student presents information in logical sequence which reader can follow.	Information in logical, interesting sequence which reader can follow.	—
<b>Content Knowledge</b>	Student does not have grasp of information; student cannot answer questions about subject.	Student is uncomfortable with content and is able to demonstrate basic concepts.	Student is at ease with content, but fails to elaborate.	Student demonstrates full knowledge (more than required).	—
<b>Grammar and Spelling</b>	Work has four or more spelling errors and/or grammatical errors.	Presentation has three misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Presentation has no more than two misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Presentation has no misspellings or grammatical errors.	—
<b>Neatness</b>	Work is Illegible.	Work has three or four areas that are sloppy.	Work has one or two areas that are sloppy.	Work is neatly done.	—
<b>References</b>	Work displays no references.	Work does not have the appropriate number of required references.	Reference section was completed incorrectly	Work displays the correct number of references, written correctly.	—
				<b>Total----&gt;</b>	—

Teacher Comments:

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NAME \_\_\_\_\_

## Our Government Balances Itself ASSESSMENT

### Just the Facts

Circle T or F to indicate whether each statement is true or false.

- T F 1. The key problem of the Articles of Confederation was that it made the national government too strong.
- T F 2. The Constitution created a national government that was divided into three branches: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial.
- T F 3. George Washington, Gouverneur Morris, and James Madison were three important people attending the Constitutional Convention.
- T F 4. During the Constitutional Convention, there were no disagreements. The delegates all kind of agreed on how the new Constitution should be written.

### New Words

Fill in the blanks using key words from the word bank to make the sentence make sense.

Articles of Confederation	branches	checks and balances
Constitution	Constitutional Convention	

5. Delegates from most of the United States met to work on a document that created a strong national government. This meeting was called the \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The US government is divided into three parts, or \_\_\_\_\_, each with its own powers and responsibilities.



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7. The document that described the first government of the United States of America was called the \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The system that keeps any one part of the national government from becoming too powerful is called \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The document that created a strong national government and still exists today is called the \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Checks and Balances**

Write the letter of the branch of government next to each statement that describes it.

A. executive branch

B. legislative branch

C. judicial branch

- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. This branch has the power to determine whether a law is unconstitutional.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The head of this branch can suggest ideas for new laws in the State of the Union speech.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. This branch has the power to impeach government officials accused of serious crimes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. The powers of this branch are appointed by the president and approved by the Senate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The head of this branch can veto any bill the legislative branch passes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Members of this branch can accept or reject appointments to important positions that the president makes.



# CALIFORNIA ON MY HONOR

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## Our Preamble

We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union,**1** establish justice,**2** insure domestic tranquility,**3** provide for the common defense,**4** promote the general welfare,**5** and secure the blessings of liberty**6** to ourselves**7** and our posterity**8**, do ordain**9** and establish**10** this Constitution for the United States of America.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. make official
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. make a better government
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. supply protection for all
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. make sure there is peace at home
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. encourage health, happiness, and comfort
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. gain and keep the gifts of freedom
- \_\_\_\_\_ g. set up
- \_\_\_\_\_ h. everyone who later becomes part of this country
- \_\_\_\_\_ i. everyone belonging to this country
- \_\_\_\_\_ j. set up a fair system



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Choose one of the writing prompts below and respond.

### **WRITING PROMPTS**

#### ***Writing Prompt – Friendly letter to inform***

Your class is pen pals with a class from England. They are discussing historical facts about government leadership in other countries and comparing them to their own country. They have asked us to write a summary explaining the role of the office of President, Congress, and Supreme Court in our country and how they work. They will take that information and compare it to their government. Make sure you are clear in your comparison of each branch, and how they interact together.

#### ***Writing prompt – Persuasive Essay***

A new student has arrived from a South American country. Your class has just finished studying the three branches of the government of the United States. They explained that their country also had a president, but no one else made decisions, and few citizens could or would vote. Their citizens seem to be happy with that. You are to write a persuasive essay to explain the importance of the checks and balances that a three-branch government gives our country and its people. Please include why that system could be beneficial to other countries if they ran their government in a similar manner.



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### New Words

Fill in the blanks using key words from the word bank to make the sentence make sense.

Articles of Confederation      branches      checks and balances

Constitution      Constitutional Convention

5. Delegates from most of the United States met to work on a document that created a strong national government. This meeting was called the Constitutional Convention.





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6. The US government is divided into three parts, or branches, each with its own powers and responsibilities.
7. The document that described the first government of the United States of America was called the Articles of Confederation.
8. The system that keeps any one part of the national government from becoming too powerful is called checks and balances.
9. The document that created a strong national government and still exists today is called the Constitution.

### **Checks and Balances**

Write the letter of the branch of government next to each statement that describes it.

A. executive branch

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C 10. This branch has the power to determine whether a law is unconstitutional.

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\_\_2\_\_ j. set up a fair system