

# Understanding the Constitution

Word Wall Terms, Readings, Graphic Organizers,  
Activities, and Card Sort





# Directions

## Prior to the lesson

- ☐ Print the **Word Wall** terms, **Vocabulary Pyramid**, **4-Corner Activity** placards, readings, center cover pages, extension activities, **Pipe Cleaner Preamble** and the card sort. Make copies according to the number of students you teach. You do not need to copy a set of the readings for each student unless you wish for them to mark the text with highlighting, etc.
- ☐ Prepare your materials.
  - Post the **Word Wall** images in the front of your room.
  - Cut the vocabulary pyramid and **Pipe Cleaner** preamble in  $\frac{1}{2}$ .
  - Post the **4-Corner Placards** in your room.
  - Assemble the stations for the **Articles of the Constitution** and Amendments with the cover page (glued on a large brown envelope or folder), readings, and extension activities. You will need several copies of these stations according to the number of students you teach.
  - Cut out the card sort and place them in envelopes for your students.
  - Buy pipe cleaners (and cut them in half if you want to save them for multiple activities).
- ☐ If you wish to use **Google Slides™**, the link is located on another page in the directions.

## Lesson Steps – Articles of the Constitution

1. Share with your students the purpose of this lesson. It is designed for your students to *understand the different parts of the Constitution and explain the basic functions of government.*
2. Introduce the vocabulary terms for the activity by using the **Word Wall** images – pronounce the terms and define them with your students on the board. The **Vocabulary Pyramid** is designed for extra vocabulary practice. I recommend breaking down the vocabulary instruction into different days – the day you teach the Preamble is the day you review those vocabulary terms, the day you teach the articles, you review those specific vocabulary terms.
3. Introduce the Preamble with a **Four-Corner Activity**. Point out the placards in each corner of the room. Ask your students this question – *"What should your government do for you?"* Your students will then choose which statement best reflects their point-of-view to the question and stand in that corner. Once all of your students have chosen a corner, they need to share with each other the reason they choose that particular answer.
4. Pass out the **Preamble reading**. Depending on the level of your students, you can have them read with a partner, whole group, or independently. As they read the handouts, your students will need to complete the **Preamble Graphic Organizer** by summarizing the information they have learned.
5. Once you have finished reading and taking notes on the Preamble, give each student a strip from the Preamble, pipe cleaners and the **Pipe Cleaner Preamble**  $\frac{1}{2}$  sheet. Ask your students to create a model out of the pipe cleaners that represents their topic. When they have finished their model, they can place it on the handout and write a short summary on how their model represents the Preamble.



# Directions

## Lesson Steps – Articles of the Constitution

1. Pass out and read the **Articles of the Constitution**. Give your students time to process the content by completing the graphic organizer discussing check and balances and separation of powers.
2. For the Articles of the Constitution and amendments, direct your students to the **stations** you have created. For each station, they will read the handout, complete a section of the Branches of Government chart, and complete the extension activity.
3. To wrap up the activity, conduct a **card sort** with your students. Place your students with a partner and give them a copy of the sorting cards. Challenge them to place the correct card in each category. Please note that the border for each card corresponds to the correct group – this is to provide you an easy way to check your students work. If the border matches, they have it correct! Once they have sorted all of the cards into the correct category, ask them to show you examples of checks and balances (the president can veto a bill).

This is a comprehensive resource on the Constitution. Please note that this lesson is designed to be taught over several days. If you have less time, consider removing the Preamble Pipe Cleaner activity and the extension activities from the stations.







# Directions

Be sure to follow these important directions if you want to allow your students to complete this activity using Google Slides™.

Click on this link below from your Google Drive™ –

[Understanding The Constitution](#)

You will be directed to a page in your Google™ account that will ask if you would like to copy the document. Once you make a copy, you will be able to manipulate parts of the activity before you assign it to your students. The individual pages are locked images, but you will be able to delete or add any slides you wish. Once you are ready to go, assign the activity to your students. When assigning in Google Classroom™, be sure to select "Make a Copy for Each Student" to ensure that each student has their own assignment to work on individually.

Enjoy!

Dawn



# Word Wall Terms and Activity

Print one copy of the Word Wall images and make copies of the Vocabulary Pyramid for your students.

# Vocabulary Pyramid

## What is it?

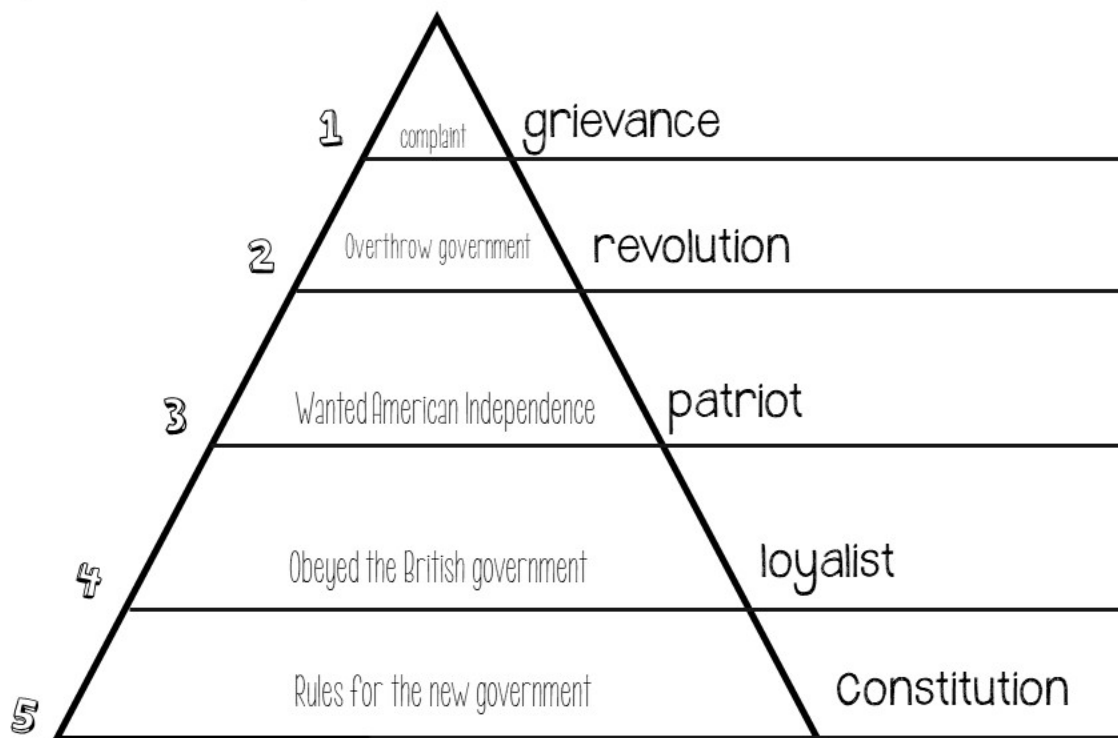
Vocabulary Pyramid is a strategy that encourages students to define words in a simplified way.

## How Does It Work?

1. Pick 5 or more words.
2. Give students the pyramid template or have them draw it in their notebooks.
3. Each line of the pyramid is the numbered, that number corresponds to the number of words the student can use to define the vocabulary term.
4. Extension: have students draw a visual for each term

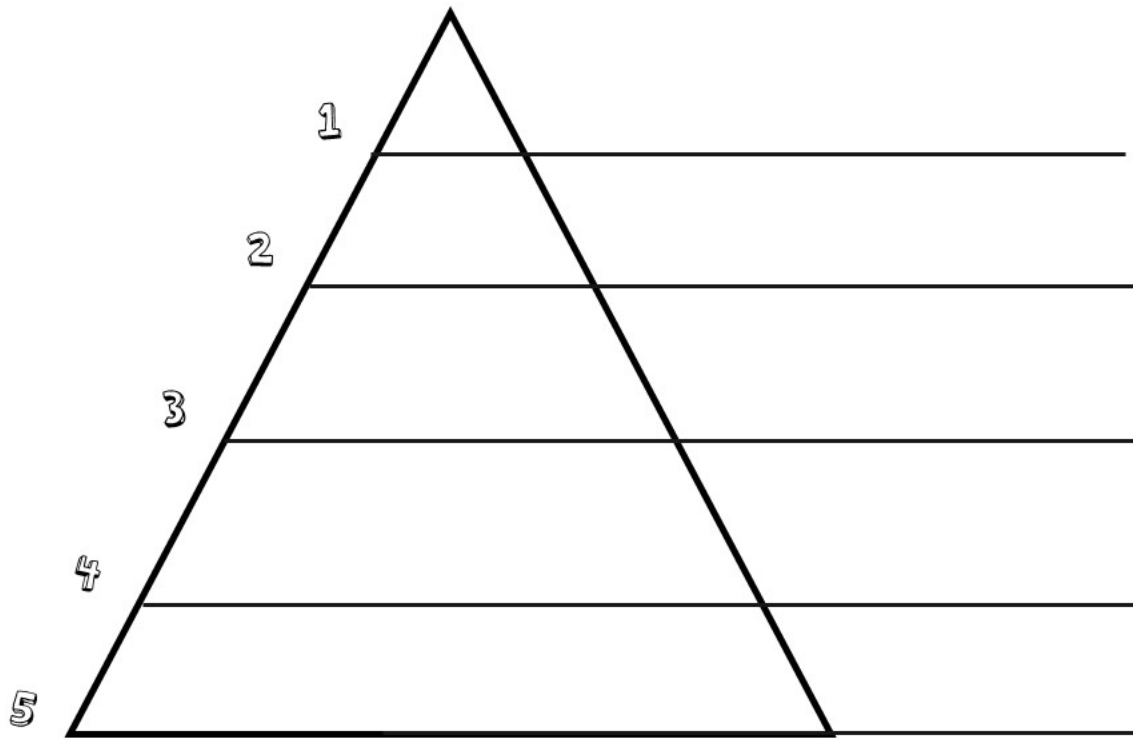
## Why use it?

This strategy encourages students to use higher levels of thinking and process the vocabulary in such a way that the teacher can tell if the student understood the vocabulary terms and concepts.



# Vocabulary Pyramid

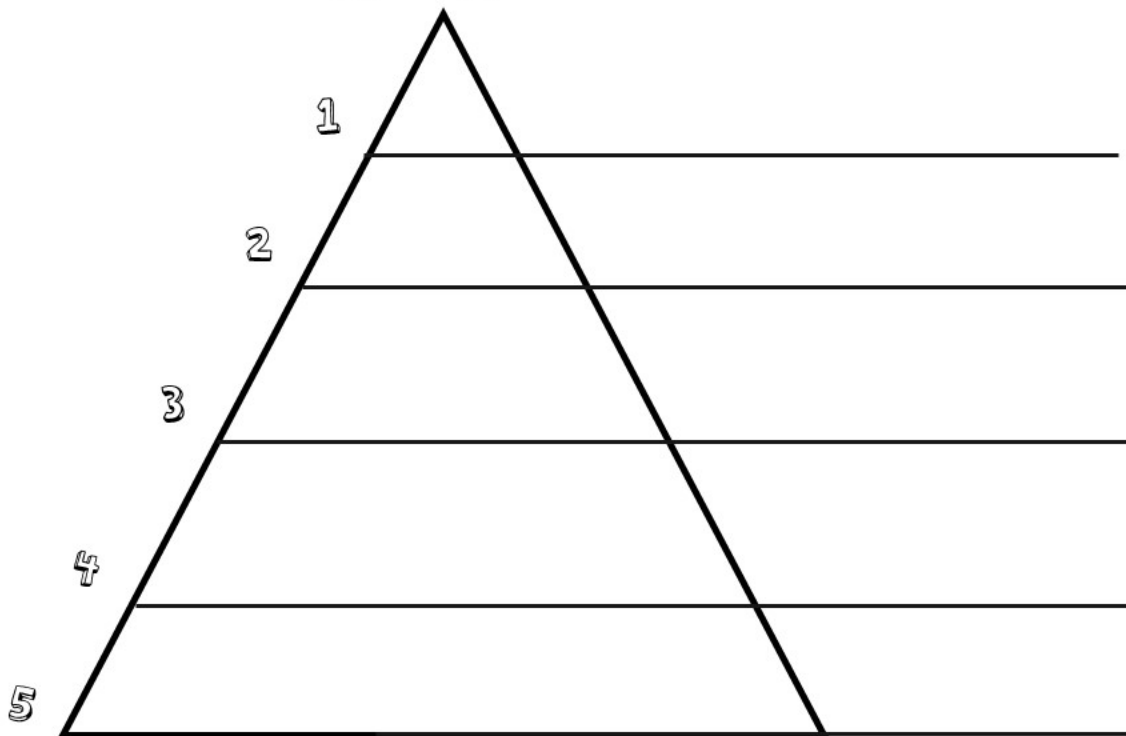
For each line on the pyramid, use that many words to describe the vocabulary term.



*Social Studies Success*®

# Vocabulary Pyramid

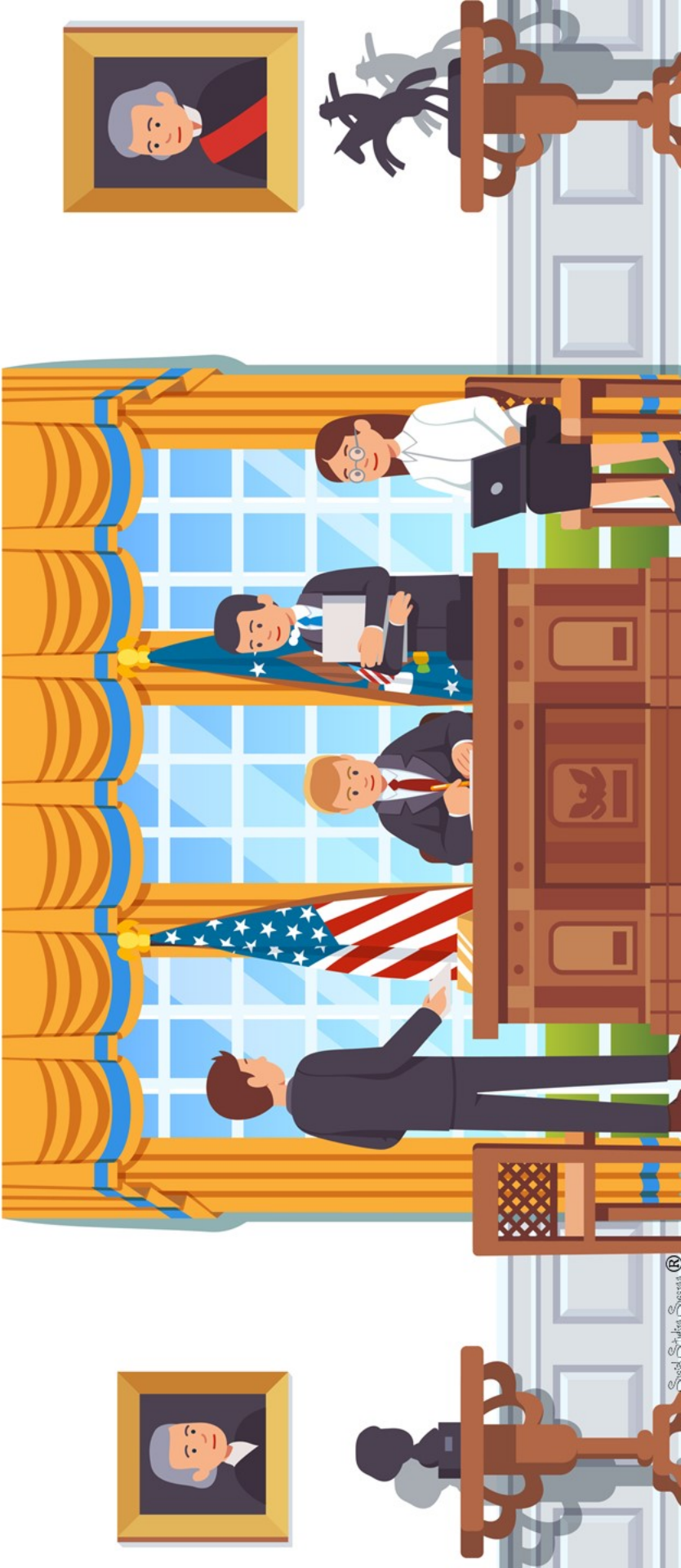
For each line on the pyramid, use that many words to describe the vocabulary term.



*Social Studies Success*®



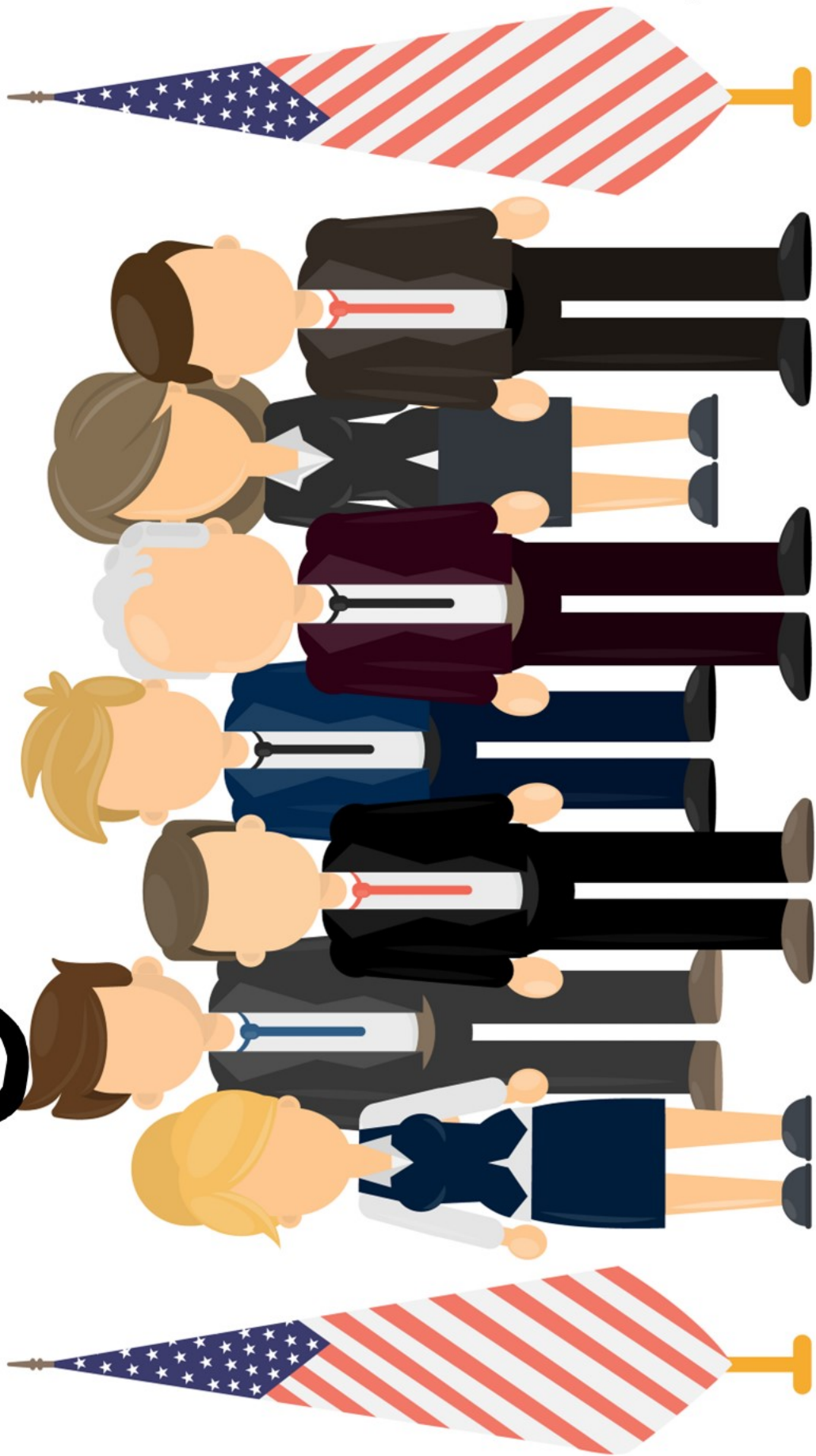
# executive



judicial

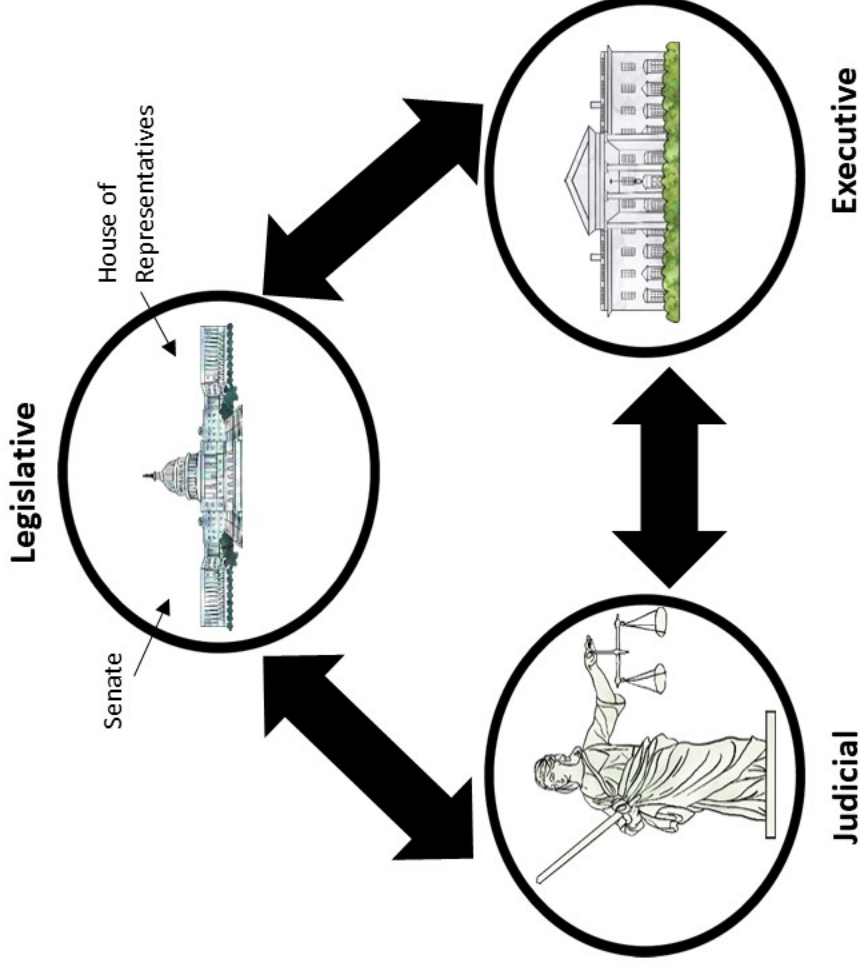


# legislative

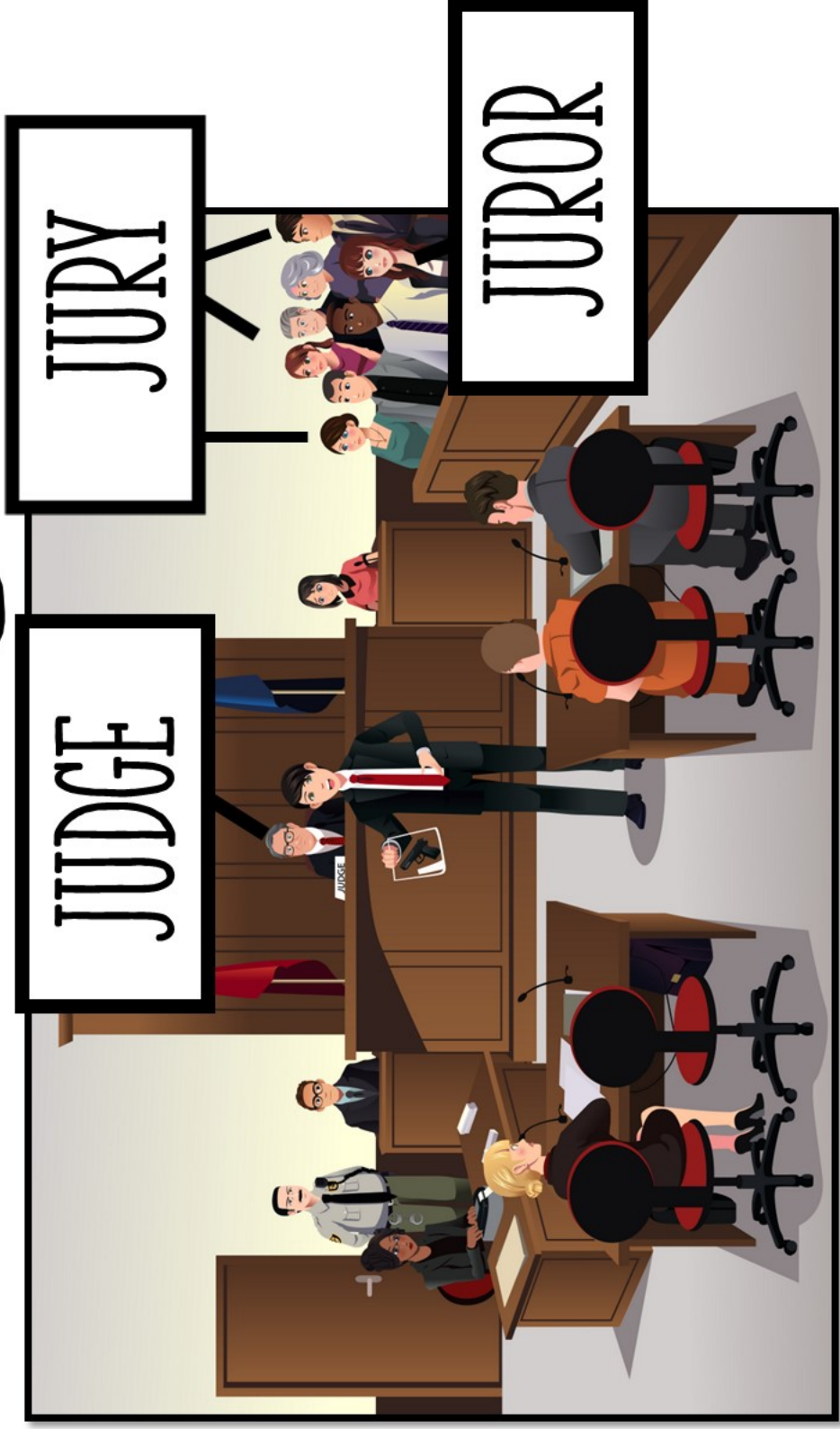




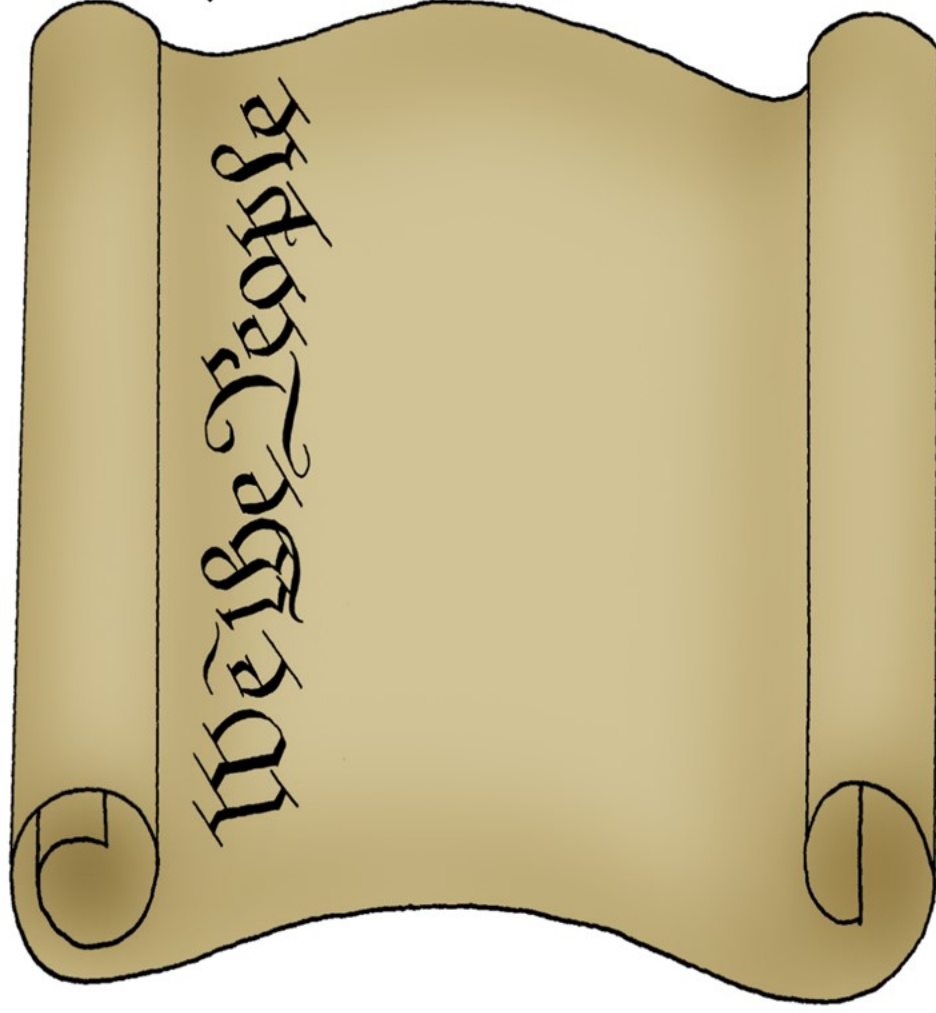
# checks and balances



# judicial system



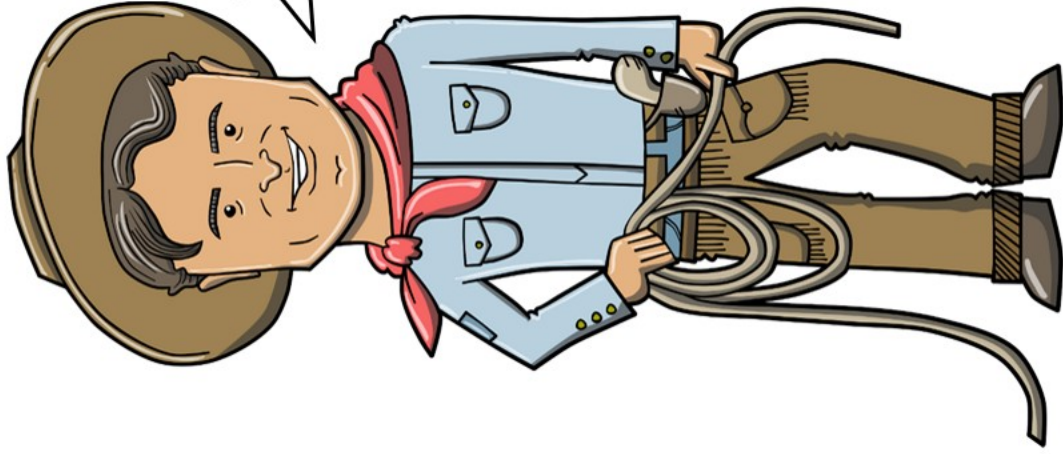
# Preamble



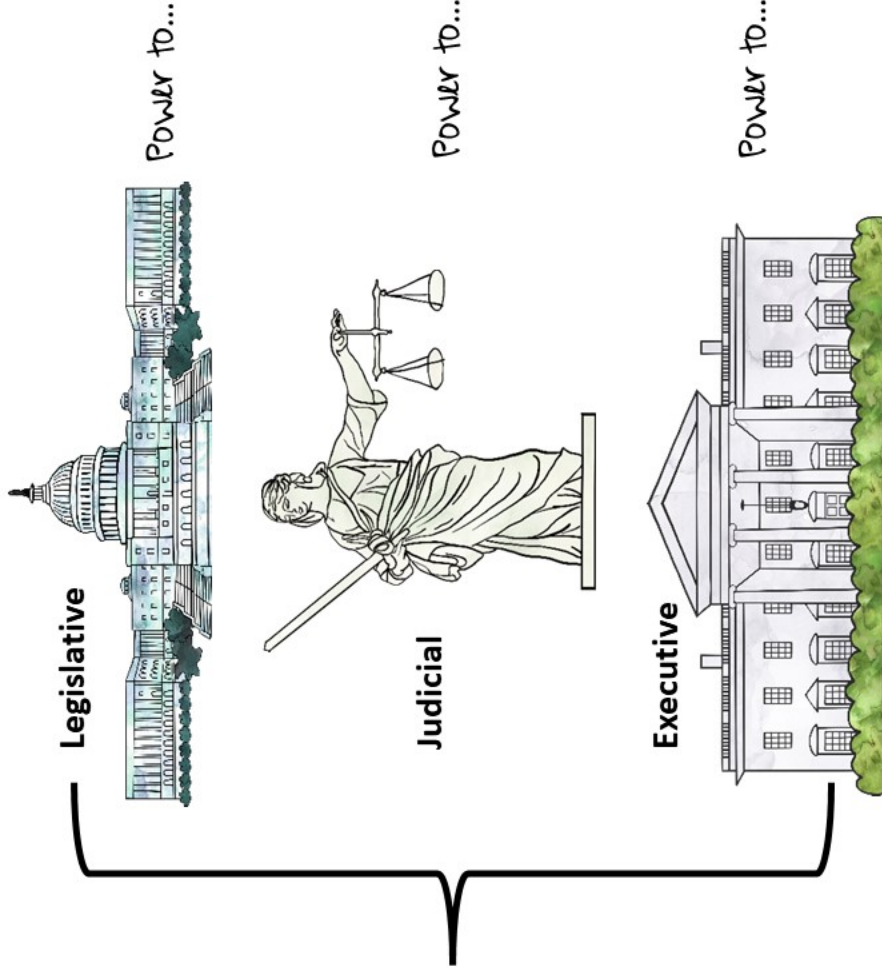
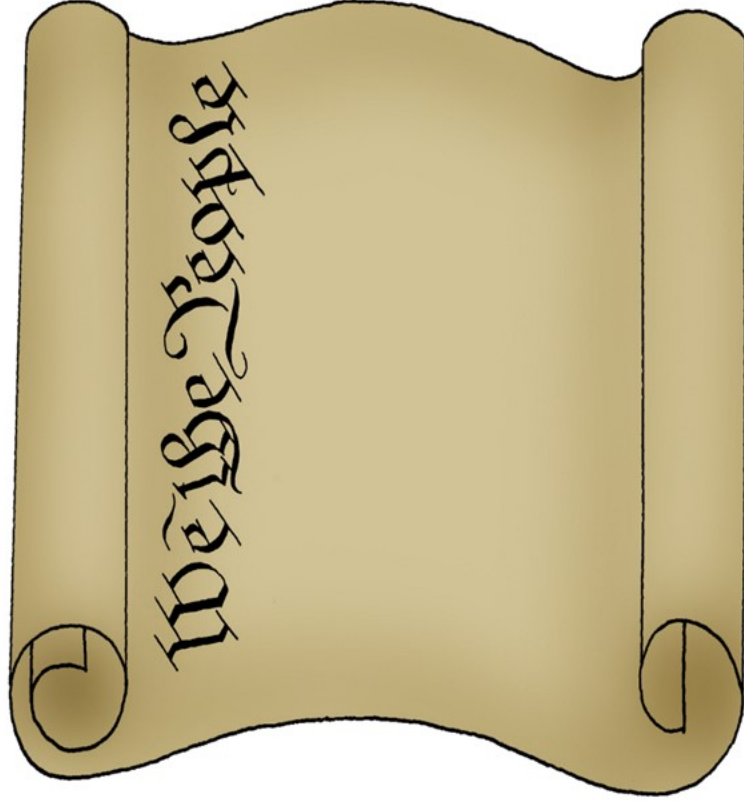
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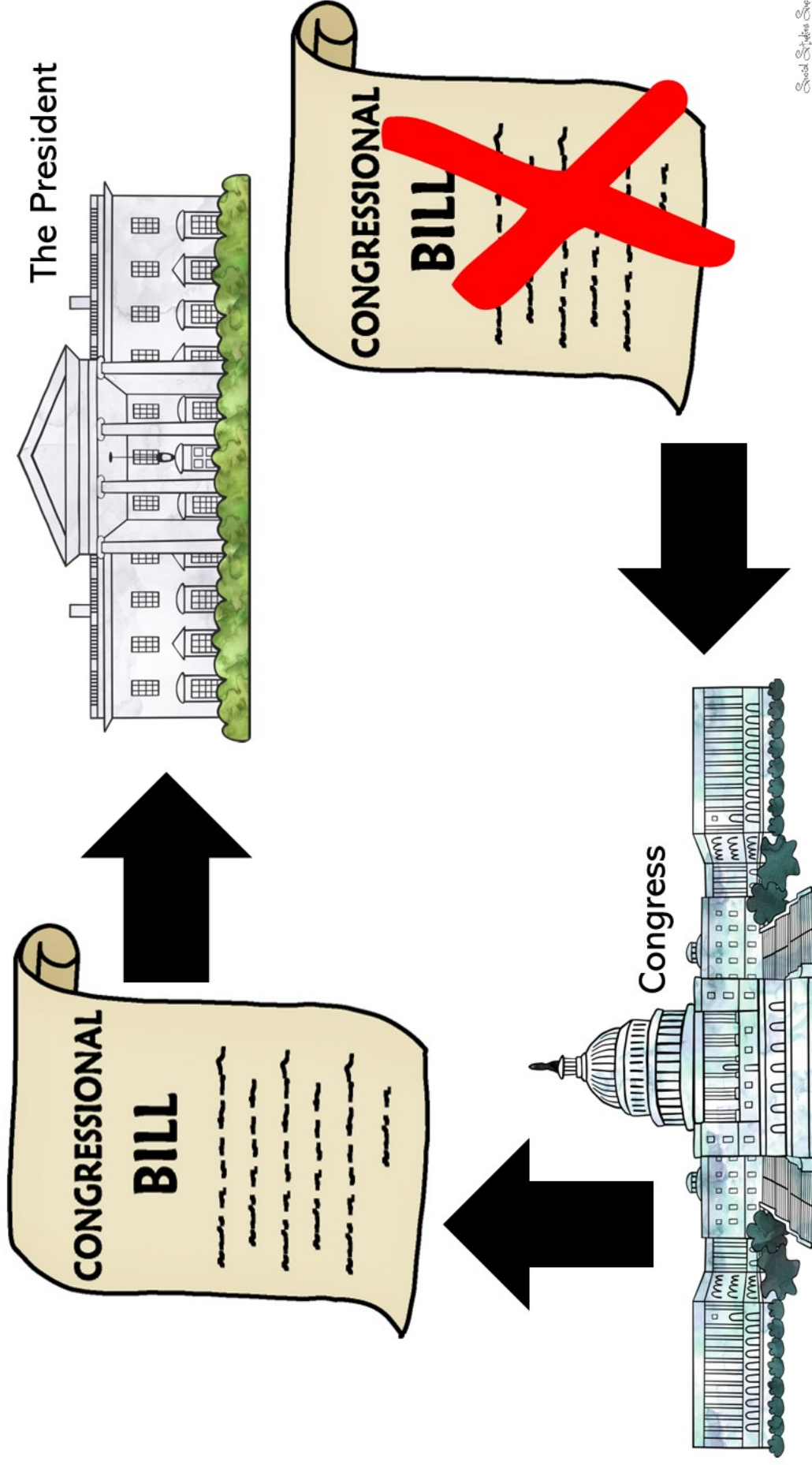
# consent



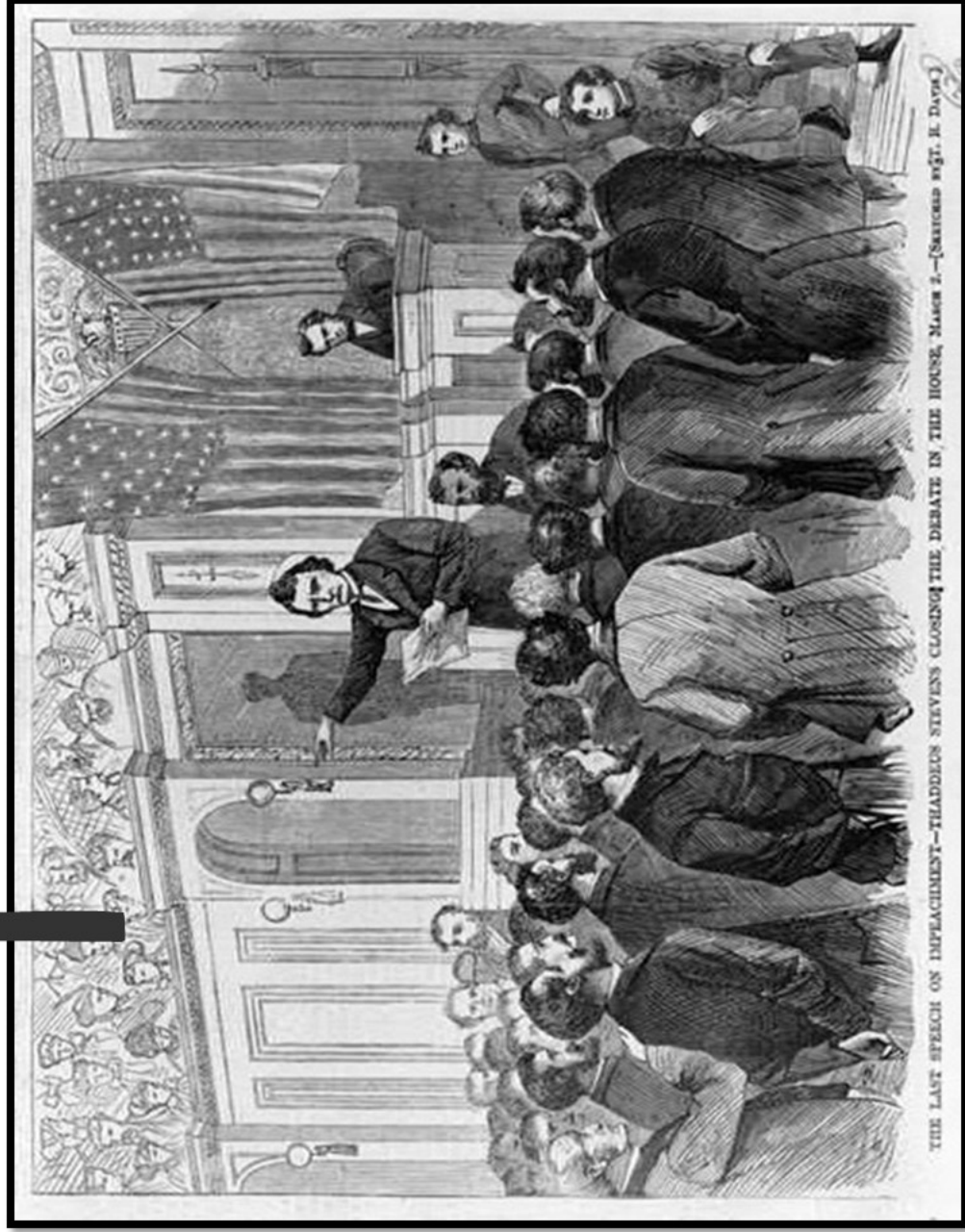
# separation of powers



# veto



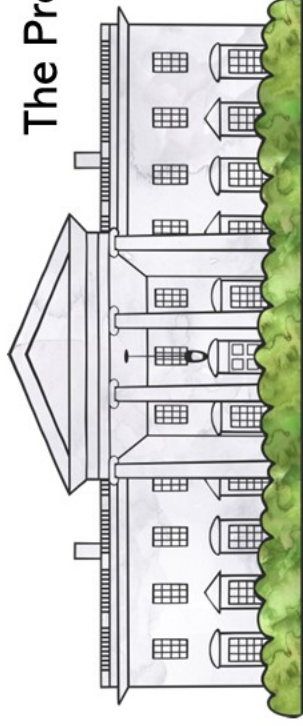
# impeach



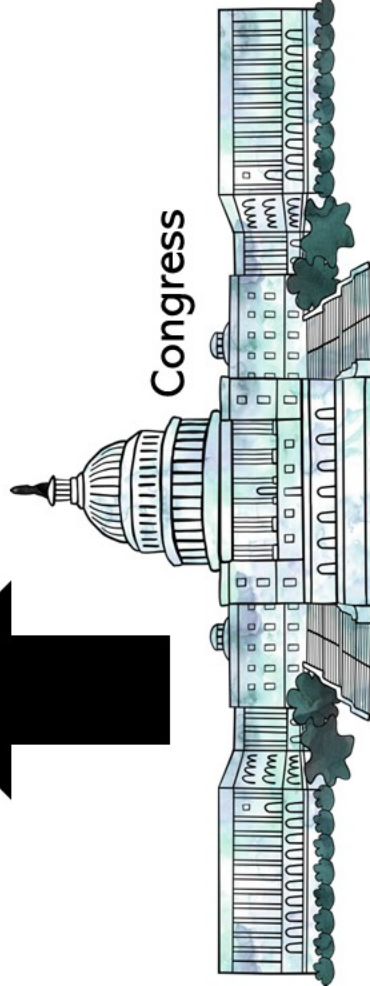
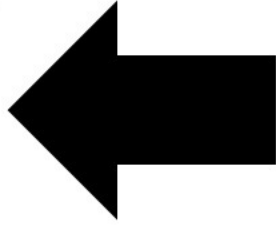
THE LAST SPEECH ON IMPEACHMENT—THADDEUS STEVENS CLOSING THE DEBATE IN THE HOUSE, MARCH 2.—[SARICAN DELT. H. DAVIS.]



# bill



The President

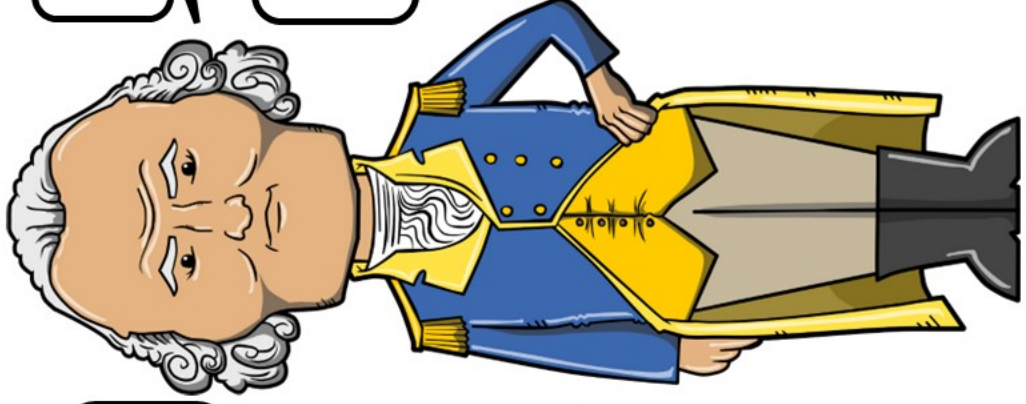


Congress

# amend



# Cabinet



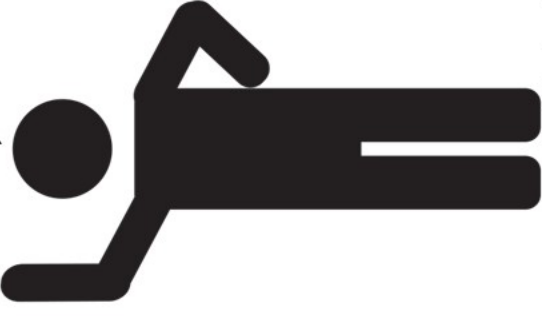
advice

advice

Hmm...

advice

advice



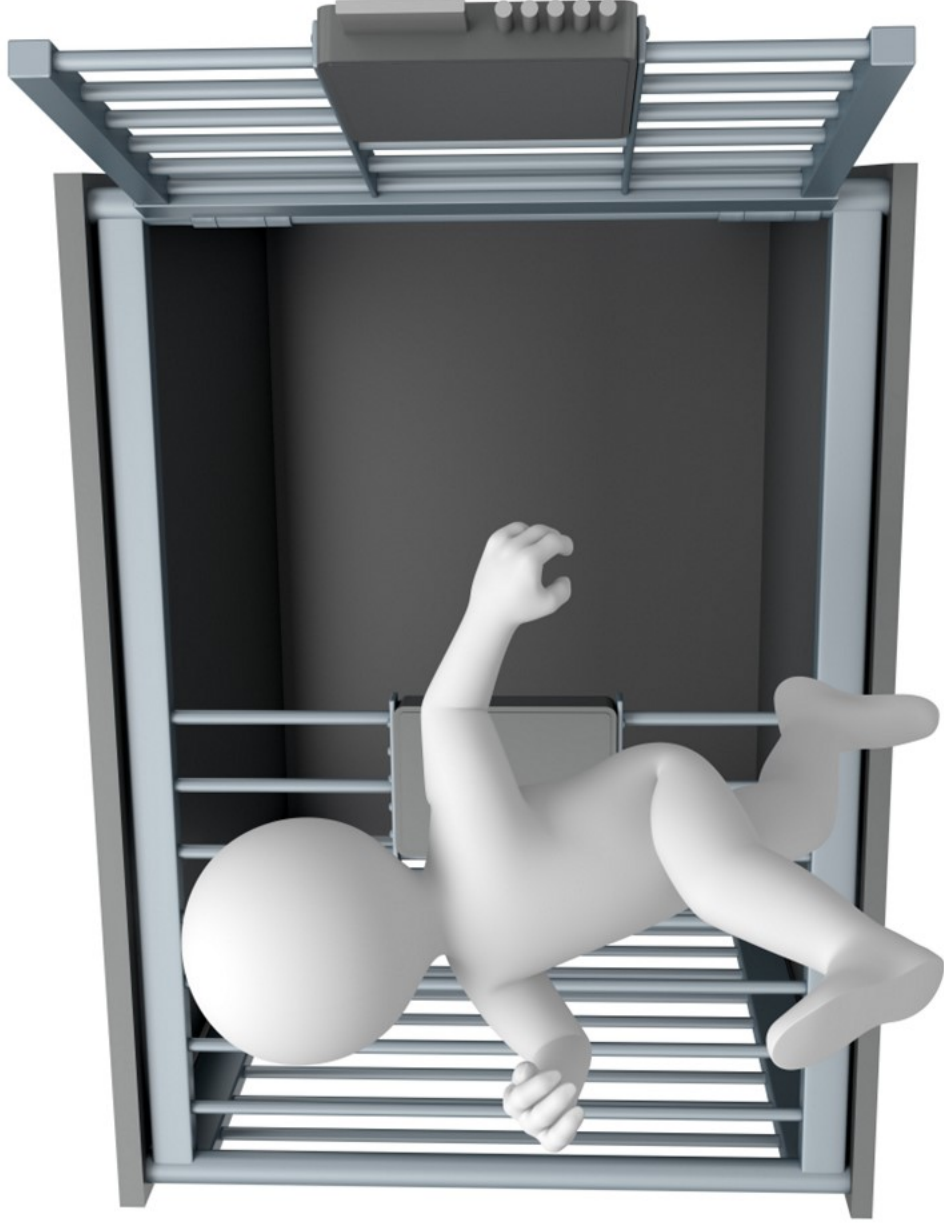


commander -  
in - chief

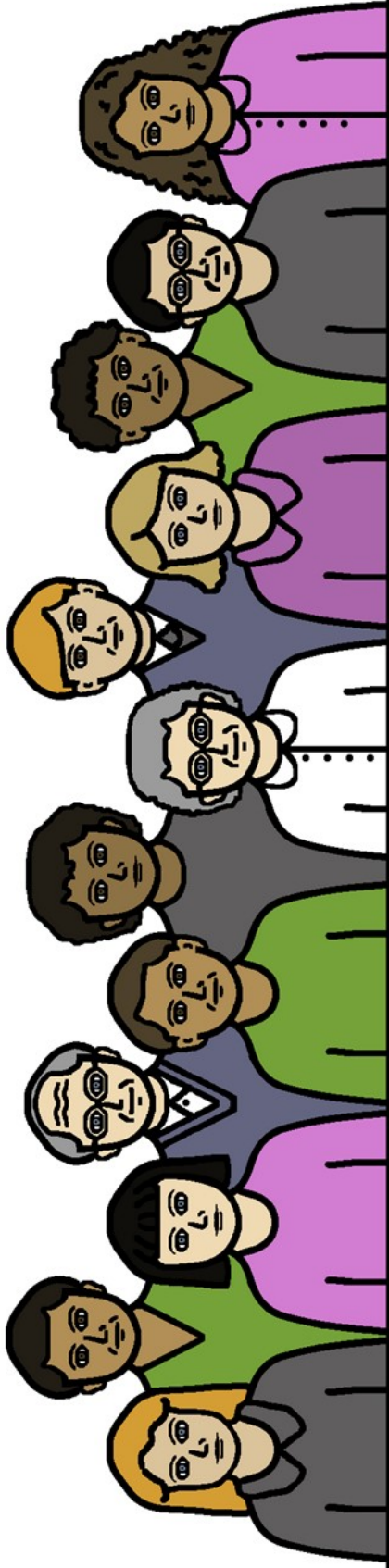




# pardon



# peers



# Four Corner Activity

Ask your students this question - "*What should your government do for you?*" Your students will then choose which statement best reflects their point-of-view to the question and stand in that corner. Once all of your students have chosen a corner, they need to share with each other the reason they choose that particular answer.

# PROVIDE A FAIR JUSTICE SYSTEM THAT FOLLOWS LAWS





PROVIDE A  
MILITARY TO  
PROTECT YOU



# PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE AND GROW A BUSINESS



# The Daily News

## FREE SPEECH!



Here is the important news you need to know about. You won't read about it anywhere else. The fact is, you need news on issues affecting you on you may make informed decisions on matters that have a major impact on your life.

We are committed to providing you with such vital information. The pages of this newspaper are filled with top news, profiles, features, commentaries, columns, reviews and much more. It's the detail-packed information you need to live your daily life.

And did we mention there is breaking news? We wanted to make sure we got your attention and it appears that we did. Of course, the headline must have helped a great deal. The bigger the headline, the more important the news, and today's story is no exception.

When the news is just too important to wait for it to impact your life, then it's time to look to us for the update.

This publication is the one to turn to for breaking news, weather updates, the traffic report and much more. All the news you need is all we print.

We also look at the stories behind the headlines: who did what and why, and what's behind the other thing. To get the full picture, you have to know what is going on behind the scenes, and this newspaper and our award-winning journalists got you there.

So the next time you are wondering where to turn to for the most up-to-date reporting of the news that is important to you in life, and the lives of your loved ones, check out all that is happening on the front page of this paper.

# The Preamble Activity

Make copies of the readings, graphic organizers, and Preamble Pipe Cleaner Activity for your students. Cut the Preamble into strips, the Preamble Pipe Cleaner Activity into 1/2 sheets, and provide pipe cleaners for your students.



# The Preamble

## Understanding the Constitution

The Constitution was written during the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and adopted into law in 1789. It includes the best ideas in government from around the world. The Constitution is a very important set of rules that our country follows to make sure things are fair and everyone is treated equally. It's like a big instruction book for how our government works and how we all live together. Just like in a game, rules help everyone play fairly and have a good time. The Constitution has special parts that talk about our rights, how leaders are chosen, and how laws are made.



## Part One: The Preamble of the Constitution

*"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."*

The start of the Constitution is called the **Preamble**. The Preamble is the shortest part of the Constitution, and it shares the purpose of government. Our government is designed to make the country better, be fair, keep peace at home, protect our people, and help everyone to do well.


The Preamble of the Constitution begins with three very special words... "*We the People*". These words represent a very important idea in the Constitution, that it is the people who **consent** to be governed. It is the people who give power to the government, and it is the people who should be protected by and from the government. Everyone's voice matters and people have a say in how things are done. The Preamble wants people to know that they're important and that the government is there to work for them.

The next part of the Preamble talks about the goals of the government. It says we want a "*more perfect Union*." That means we're trying to make the country better and bring all the states closer together. It acknowledges that the Articles of Confederation did not work. The Preamble also talks *about* "*establishing Justice*," which means making things fair and right for everyone. The Constitution ensures that people have access to a fair legal system that follows the rule of law.



# The Preamble

## The Preamble

An illustration of a soldier in a green uniform and cap, holding a large American flag. The scene is set within a circular frame.

The Preamble also mentions "*domestic Tranquility*" and "*common defense*." These words mean keeping peace inside the country and staying safe from things that might hurt us from outside. The Founding Fathers knew that when its citizens feel safe and secure, they would prosper. It's saying we want to live in a safe place where we don't have to worry too much about bad things happening.

Next, the Preamble mentions "*general Welfare*." This is about the government's obligation to promote the welfare and prosperity of its citizens by promoting economic growth, guaranteeing public health, and supporting social initiatives that enhance the overall quality of life. This includes things like good schools, clean water, and help for people who need it.

Lastly, the Preamble wants to "*secure the Blessings of Liberty*." This means making sure we all stay free and have rights that can't be taken away. It's about having the freedom to do things like speak our minds and choose our leaders. The Preamble reminds us that our country was built on these ideas and that we should always work to keep them strong. This phrase is the essence of American democracy, sharing the idea that the Constitution aims to provide a framework that safeguards personal liberties while also protecting the collective welfare of society.



**Directions:** Explain the purpose and meaning of the Constitution found in the Preamble.

*We the People -*

*in Order to form a more perfect Union -*

*establish Justice -*

### The Preamble

*" We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. "*

*insure domestic Tranquility -*

*provide for the common defense -*

*promote the general Welfare -*

*secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity -*

**Directions:** Make several copies of this page and the Pipe Cleaner Preamble handouts. Cut out the strips and give each student a topic strip and a blank template. Challenge your students to create a model out of the pipe cleaners that explains the topic. They will then need to write several sentences on their template explaining the purposes of the U.S. Constitution as identified in the Preamble.

*We the People of the United States*

*in Order to form a more perfect Union*

*establish Justice*

*insure domestic Tranquility*

*provide for the common defense*

*promote the general Welfare*

*secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity*



# PIPE CLEANER PREAMBLE

Directions: Use your pipe cleaners to create an object that represents your topic.  
Place your pipe cleaner project in the space below and write a short summary explaining what you have learned.



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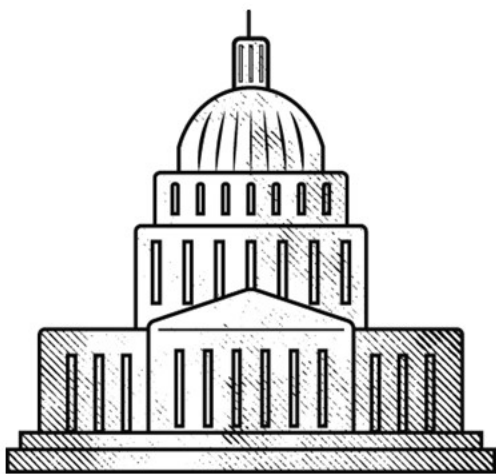
# Articles of the Constitution

Make copies of the readings and graphic organizers for your students. Create stations out of the readings and place an extension activity in each station. You will read the first two pages of the Articles of the Constitution together as a class, then each article will be in its own station. As your students visit each station, they will read the information, complete their Three Branches of Government Graphic Organizer and complete their extension activity.

# Articles of the Constitution

## The Articles of the Constitution

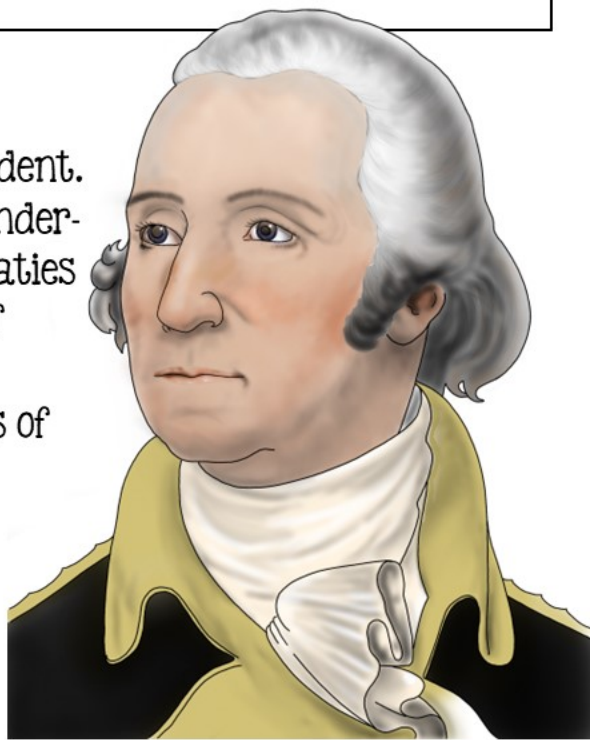
The Constitution has seven articles, each focusing on different aspects of government and how it should work. These articles outline the structure of the government, the powers of each branch, and the relationships between the federal government and the states. The Articles cover the following topics:



**Article I - The Legislative Branch:** This article establishes the powers, composition, and responsibilities of the legislative branch, which is known as Congress. Congress is made up of two parts: the Senate and the House of Representatives. Article I outlines how laws are made, the qualifications of members, and the specific powers granted to Congress, such as the power to tax, regulate trade, and declare war.

**Article II - The Executive Branch:** Article II outlines the powers and responsibilities of the executive branch, which is headed by the President. It describes the President's role as the commander-in-chief of the military, the ability to make treaties (with Senate approval), and the appointment of federal officers. This article also specifies the qualifications for the President and the process of election through the Electoral College.

**Article III - The Judicial Branch:** Article III establishes the judicial branch and the federal court system. It creates the Supreme Court and gives Congress the authority to establish lower federal courts.

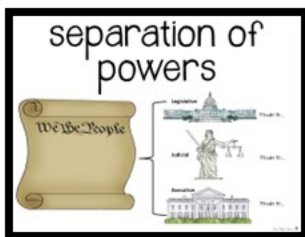




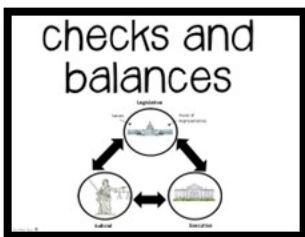
# Articles of the Constitution

## The Articles of the Constitution

The first three articles of the Constitution set up the different parts or branches of government. They include the **executive branch**, the **judicial branch**, and the **legislative branch**. Each of these branches have separate powers and separate roles in making our government work. It was important to the men who wrote the Constitution that they form a government that did not allow one person to have too much control. While under the rule of the British king they learned that this could be a bad system. Yet government under the Articles of Confederation taught them that there was a need for a strong centralized government. With this in mind, the Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution to provide for three separate, but equally powerful, branches of government: the **legislative branch** (which writes the laws); the **executive branch** (which carries out the laws); and the **judicial branch** (which reviews the way laws are applied). The **separation of powers** allows for a system of **checks and balances** within the government. Each branch is given certain control over the other two, which balances the power and keeps the potential for abuse of power in check.



The idea behind the **separation of powers** is to create a system where each branch of government has its own distinct roles and powers, ensuring that no single branch becomes too powerful.

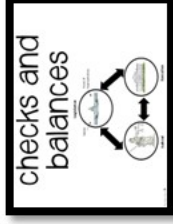
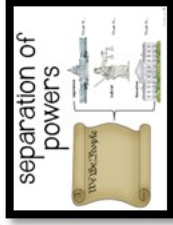


With **checks and balances**, each branch of government "checks" the others to make sure no one person or branch of government becomes too powerful.

- The legislative branch can make new laws, but the executive branch can **veto** or say no to those new laws if they think they're not good ideas. This is like a "check" to make sure the laws are reasonable.
- The judicial branch can review the laws made by the legislative branch and decide if they are fair according to the country's rules (the Constitution). If they find a law isn't fair or is against the rules, they can say it's not allowed. This is another "check" to make sure the laws are just.
- The executive branch can carry out the laws, but it can't make new laws on its own. It needs the approval of the legislative branch to do that.



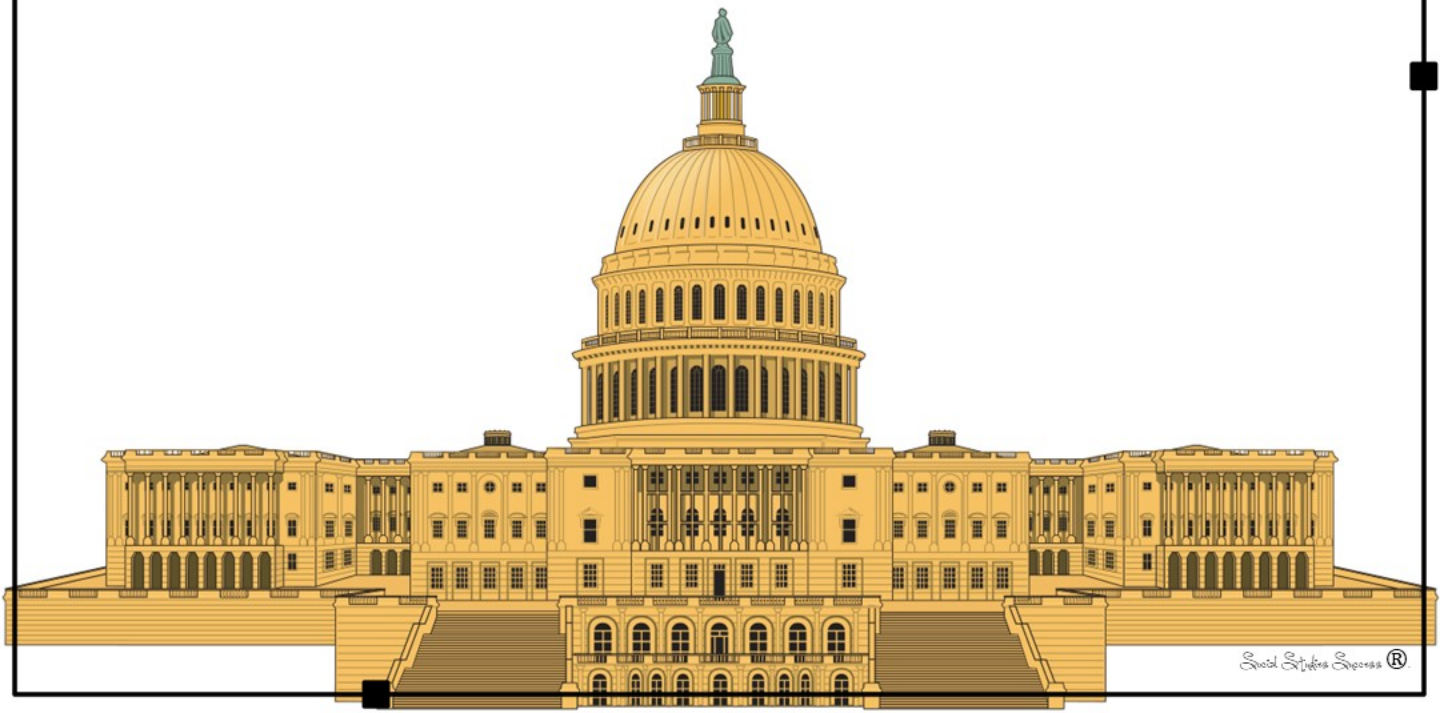
# UNDERSTANDING OUR CONSTITUTION



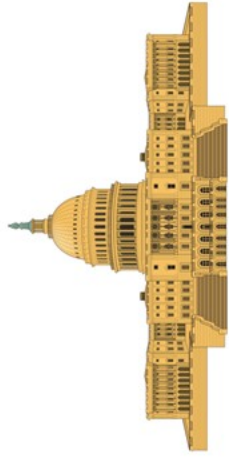
Help these students understand our Constitution by explaining *Separation of Powers* and *Checks and Balances* in your own words.

# Article One

## The Legislative Branch

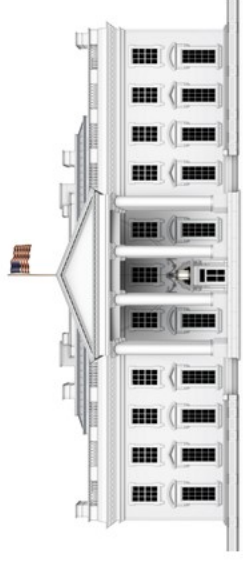


# THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT



## Legislative

- ☐ Congress works together to write, debate, and pass \_\_\_\_\_ (proposed new laws), which are then passed on to the President for approval.
- ☐ There are \_\_\_\_\_ senators and \_\_\_\_\_ representatives.
- ☐ The legislative branch has control over the government's spending by:
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ The legislative branch \_\_\_\_\_ people given different government jobs by the president.
- ☐ The legislative branch can \_\_\_\_\_ and remove the president from office.
- ☐ The legislative branch is the only branch of government that can declare \_\_\_\_\_.



## Executive

- ☐ The head of the executive branch is the \_\_\_\_\_ who is supported by their \_\_\_\_\_, and a group of advisers called their \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ The \_\_\_\_\_ role is to enforce national law as given in the \_\_\_\_\_ and written by Congress.
- ☐ A president is elected every \_\_\_\_\_ years, and a president can only serve \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ A president is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the armed forces.
- ☐ A president has the power to sign into law or \_\_\_\_\_ proposed by Congress.
- ☐ The President can make \_\_\_\_\_ and appoint federal officers, ambassadors, and federal \_\_\_\_\_, including Justices of the Supreme Court.
- ☐ The vice-president is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the U.S. Senate.



## Judicial

- ☐ The role of the judicial branch is to \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ There are two different levels of court: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ The highest court in the land is the \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ There are \_\_\_\_\_ justices (judges) on the supreme court.
- ☐ When a new justice is needed, they are nominated by the \_\_\_\_\_ and confirmed by the \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ The 6<sup>th</sup> Amendment guarantees a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ trial before a \_\_\_\_\_ of one's peers.
- ☐ In some cases, a \_\_\_\_\_ will decide if a person is guilty or innocent, and a \_\_\_\_\_ will decide any rules of law.



# The Legislative Branch

## Article I - The Legislative Branch

Article I of the Constitution states that there will be two separate groups making laws: a House of Representatives and a Senate. Together they are called the **Congress**. Congress works together to write, debate, and pass **bills** (proposed new laws), which are then passed on to the President for approval.

There are 100 senators and 435 representatives. Each of the 50 states elects 2 senators. The number of representatives is determined by each state's population. Each member represents an area of the state, known as a congressional district. The number of representatives is based on the number of districts in a state. States with larger populations have more representation than states with smaller populations. Because of the number of people who live in Texas, it has 38 representatives. Several smaller states only have one representative.



Although Congress has many responsibilities and powers under the Constitution, its main role is to make laws. The legislative process can be quite complicated. A proposed law, or **bill**, must pass through a series of steps before it is voted upon on the House and Senate floors. At any one of these steps, a bill can be delayed, defeated, or **amended** (changed). Most bills that are introduced do not survive this process and do not become law.

Some of the other roles and responsibilities of Congress include:

<b>Government Spending</b>	The legislative branch has control over the government's budget. It approves spending plans, gives money to different government programs, and funds government services like the military and the post office.
<b>Confirming Jobs</b>	The legislative branch has the responsibility of approving people given different government jobs by the president. This includes judges, cabinet members, and ambassadors to other countries.
<b>Impeachment</b>	The legislative branch has the authority to <b>impeach</b> and remove officials from office, including the president. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives have to impeach a president for him to be removed from office.
<b>Declare War</b>	Congress is the only branch of government that can declare war on another country. This is to prevent the president, who is the head of the executive branch, from having too much power..



# The Legislative Branch

**Directions:** Read the following scenario about the legislative branch. If the statement is true, color it green. If the statement is false (and the legislative branch can't do that action), color the statement red.

Imagine you live in a place called "Greenville," where people are worried about the environment. They want to make sure the air we breathe is clean and the planet stays healthy. Here's what the Legislative Branch can do to help:

- ☐ **Pass Laws:** The people we choose to represent us in the Legislative Branch can make important rules or laws. In Greenville, they made a law to protect the forest from logging companies.
- ☐ **Make Treaties:** The legislative branch in Greenville made a treaty with the country of Iceland to gain access to important minerals to make cell phones.
- ☐ **Work Together:** Sometimes, people in the Legislative Branch are from different groups, like the Green Party and the Clean Energy Party. But they can work together to solve big problems, like protecting the environment.
- ☐ **Clean Energy:** The Legislative Branch can make rules to encourage using clean energy, like wind and solar power. This way, we use less dirty energy that makes the air dirty too.
- ☐ **Stop Pollution:** They can also make rules to stop factories and cars from putting harmful things into the air and water. This helps keep our air and water clean and safe. To ensure people are following the rules, they can arrest people and put them in jail.
- ☐ **Help Nature:** The Legislative Branch can protect places where animals and plants live, like forests and rivers. They can send soldiers to prevent anyone from moving into the forest or next to a river.

# Article Two

## The Executive Branch





# The Executive Branch

## Article II - The Executive Branch

The Executive branch of government makes sure that the laws of the United States are obeyed. Article II, section 1, of the Constitution makes the President of the United States the head of the executive branch. The United States has had 46 presidents. How many can you name? How many presidents have we had in your lifetime?



## The President

The President of the United States of America is the head of state and head of government. This the highest political office in United States. The President is at the head of the executive branch of the federal government, whose role is to enforce national law as given in the Constitution and written by Congress. A new president is elected every 4 years, and a president can only serve twice. This is to ensure that no one person has too much power.

Article Two of the Constitution establishes the President as **commander-in-chief** of the armed forces and lists powers specifically granted to the President. The president is given the power to sign into law or **veto** bills passed by both houses of Congress. The President also has the power to create a **cabinet** of advisers and to grant **pardons** to people convicted of a crime. Finally, with the "*advice and consent*" of the Senate, the President can make treaties and appoint federal officers, ambassadors, and federal judges, including Justices of the Supreme Court. As with officials in the other branches of the United States government, the Constitution restrains the President with a set of checks and balances designed to prevent any individual or group from taking absolute power.

## The Vice-President

The Vice President of the United States is second in command. This person must be ready to become president or acting president at a moment's notice if the president dies, resigns, is removed from office, or becomes unable to perform the duties of office. Only nine of our nation's 45 vice presidents have had to do this. Several of our past presidents have been killed and a few died in office. The very first female Vice President was Kamala Harris, elected in 2020.

The Constitution of the United States defines only one official duty for the vice president. They are the president of the U.S. Senate. The president, however, can choose to delegate additional responsibilities to this person and since 1933, the vice presidents have attended meetings of the president's cabinet.



# The Executive Branch

Create a **Sensory Figure of the president**. Label it with descriptions of what they might be seeing, hearing, thinking, feeling, or doing.

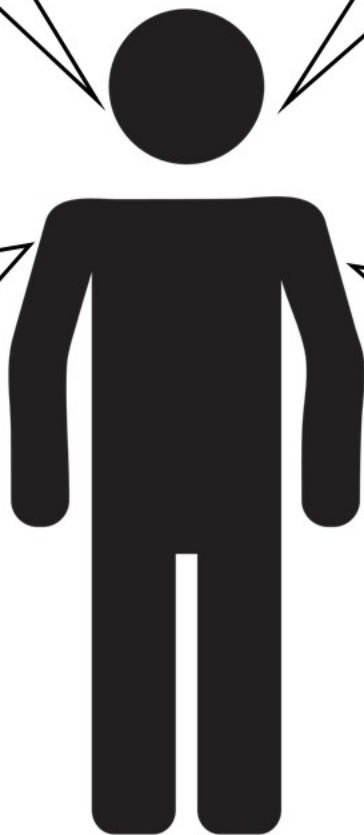
I feel...

I see...

I hear...

I think...

I am...





# Article Three

## The Judicial Branch



# The Judicial Branch

## Article III - The Judicial Branch

The role of the judicial branch is to interpret the nation's laws. It consists of two separate levels of courts: state courts and federal courts. The type of court that a case is tried in depends on the law that was broken. Most of the laws that govern our day-to-day living are state laws. Violations of federal law include laws involving federal government employees, crimes committed across state lines (for example, kidnapping or evading arrest), and crimes involving the national government (such as avoiding paying your income tax).

The federal courts, in contrast, have power to decide only those cases over which the Constitution gives them authority. These courts are in larger cities. If the federal court system is viewed as a pyramid, at the top is the Supreme Court of the United States, the highest court. On the next level are the 13 United States Courts of Appeals and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces.

Federal cases are usually begun at the district court level. If someone is not satisfied with the decision, they may have the decision reviewed in one of the courts of appeals. If they are still not happy with the decision of a court of appeals, they may seek additional review in the Supreme Court of the United States. However, the Supreme Court reviews only cases that involve a matter of great national importance and only accepts a small number of cases each year. In the United States Supreme Court, the judicial officers are called justices. There are currently nine justices on the Court: a chief justice and eight associate justices. When a vacancy opens, the President nominates a new justice who is then confirmed or rejected by the Senate.

## Trial by Jury

The Sixth Amendment of the United States Constitution guarantees a speedy, fair trial before a **jury** of one's **peers**. A jury consists of 12 people who are selected to hear the evidence in a trial. After the **jurors** hear the evidence presented during the trial, they must try to decide if the defendant is guilty or not guilty.

Courts are run by judicial officers. In the courts of appeals, district courts, and other courts, most of the judicial officers are called **judges**. Where a jury is used, the jury decides questions of fact and the judge decides all questions of law. When all the evidence has been heard, and the lawyers for both sides have addressed the jury, the judge talks to the jury, telling it what rules of law apply to the case. A jury is not always used. In some cases, the law requires a judge to decide on the facts.



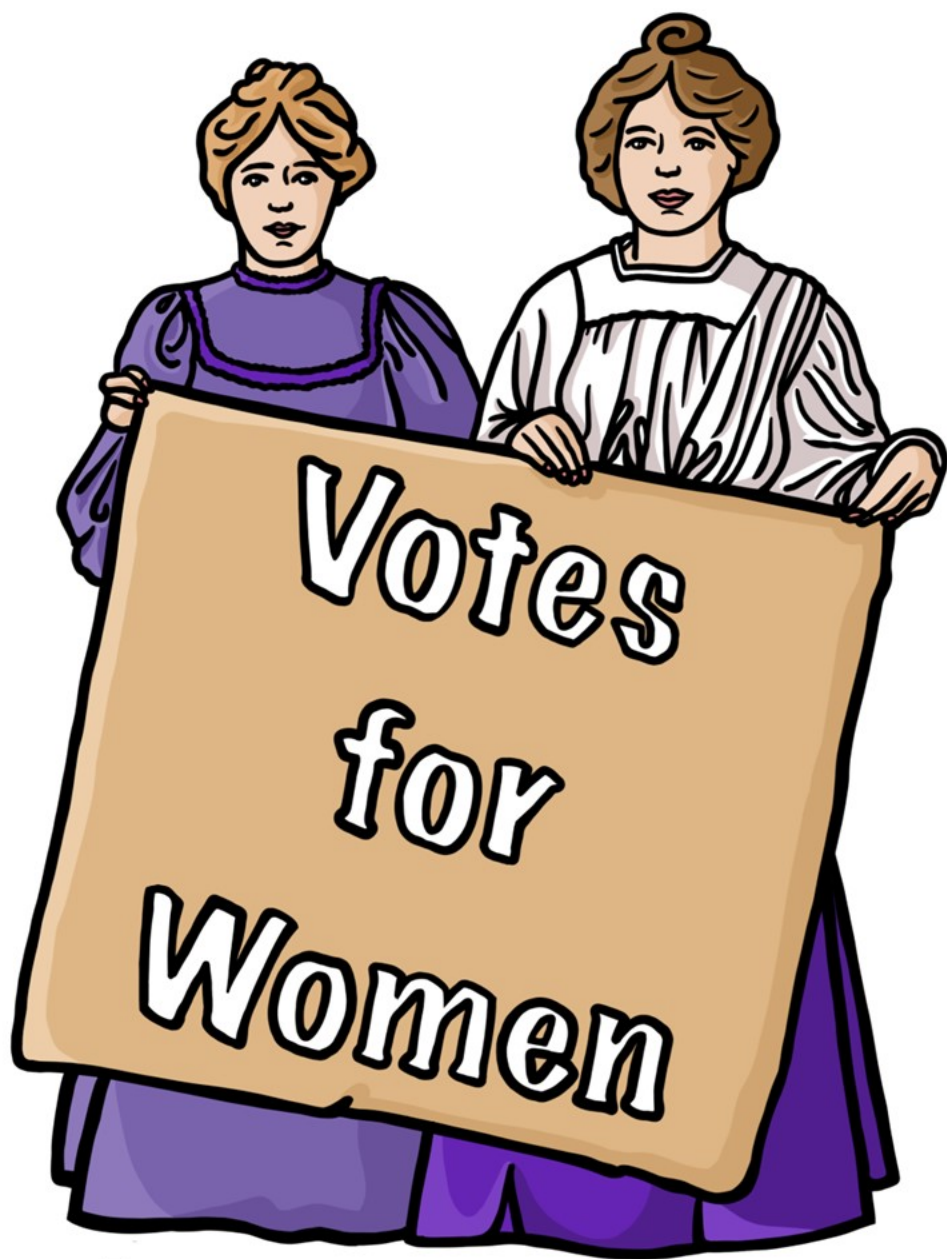
# The Judicial Branch

What do you think is happening just outside of the image? Respond by drawing the rest of the picture, or writing down sentences or phrases to describe what you would see.





# Amendments to the Constitution





# Amendments

## Amendments

The Constitution can be changed or **amended** when needed. The first ten amendments, known as the Bill of Rights, were added shortly after the Constitution was approved. The amendments provide a way to address new issues and ensure that citizens' rights are protected. There are currently 27 amendments to the Constitution. Some notable amendments include the First Amendment, which protects freedom of speech and religion, and the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote. Other important amendments include:



Amendment	Explanation
1st Amendment	Guarantees your right to choose and practice your own religion; share your opinions out loud (speech), or in the media (press); gather together (assembly); and ask the government to make changes to a law (petition).
13 <sup>th</sup> Amendment	The 13 <sup>th</sup> Amendment marked the end of legal slavery in the United States.
14 <sup>th</sup> Amendment	This amendment granted citizenship to enslaved people after the Civil War and ensures that all citizens have equal protection under the law.
15 <sup>th</sup> Amendment	The 15 <sup>th</sup> Amendment granted African American males the right to vote after the end of the Civil War.
19 <sup>th</sup> Amendment	The 19 <sup>th</sup> Amendment granted women the right to vote.
26 <sup>th</sup> Amendment	This amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18.

# Amendments

Illustrate the amendments. Draw a picture next to each amendment to represent what you have learned.

Amendment	Explanation	Illustration
1st Amendment	Guarantees your right to choose and practice your own religion; share your opinions out loud (speech), or in the media (press); gather together (assembly); and ask the government to make changes to a law (petition).	
13 <sup>th</sup> Amendment	The 13 <sup>th</sup> Amendment marked the end of legal slavery in the United States.	
14 <sup>th</sup> Amendment	This amendment granted citizenship to enslaved people after the Civil War and ensures that all citizens have equal protection under the law.	
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26 <sup>th</sup> Amendment	This amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18.	

# Government Card Sort

Place your students with a partner and give them a copy of the sorting cards. Challenge them to place the correct card in each category. Please note that the border for each card corresponds to the correct group - this is to provide you an easy way to check your students work. If the border matches the title card, they have it correct!

**EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

*Scind Studios Supress* ®

**President**

*Scind Studios Supress* ®

**Vice -  
President**

*Scind Studios Supress* ®

**Cabinet**

*Scind Studios Supress* ®



**President is  
elected every  
4 years**

Scind Studios Supress®

**Has a group  
of advisors to  
help lead**

Scind Studios Supress®

**Signs bills  
into law**

Scind Studios Supress®

**Enforces the  
laws of the  
Constitution**

Scind Studios Supress®

**Commander**

**-in-**

**Chief**

Scind Studios Supress®

**Can veto bills**

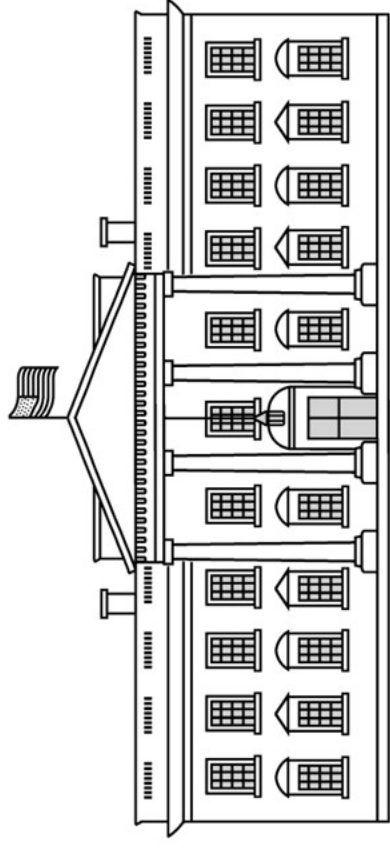
Scind Studios Supress®

**Make treaties  
with foreign  
countries**

Scind Studios Supress®

**Appoints  
judges to the  
Supreme  
Court**

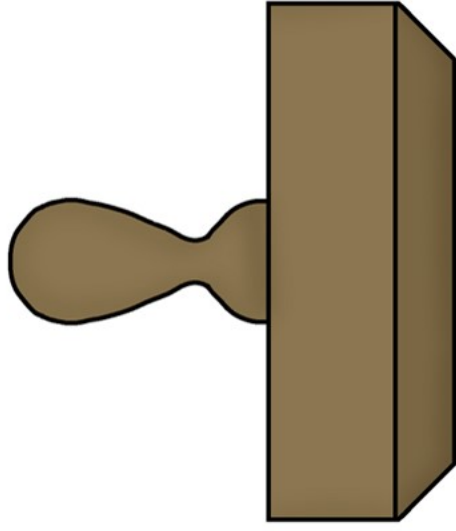
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Scandal Studios Supergross®

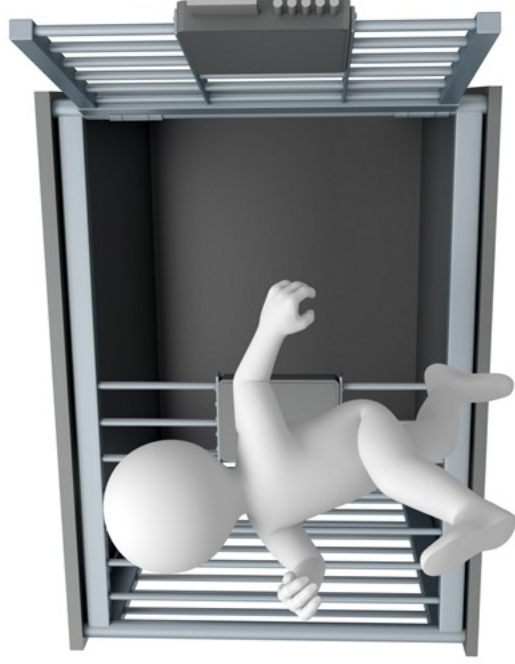


Scandal Studios Supergross®



**VETO**

Scandal Studios Supergross®



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# LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

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# Congress

*Scind Studios Supress* ®

# Senate

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# House of Representatives

*Scind Studios Supress* ®



**Writes bills  
and proposes  
laws**

*David Phillips Systems®*

**Approves  
Supreme  
Court Justices**

*David Phillips Systems®*

**Approves  
government  
spending**

*David Phillips Systems®*

**Can impeach  
the president**

*David Phillips Systems®*

Can declare  
war

David Spalding Supersass®

Funds  
government  
services

David Spalding Supersass®

Approves the  
president's  
cabinet  
members.

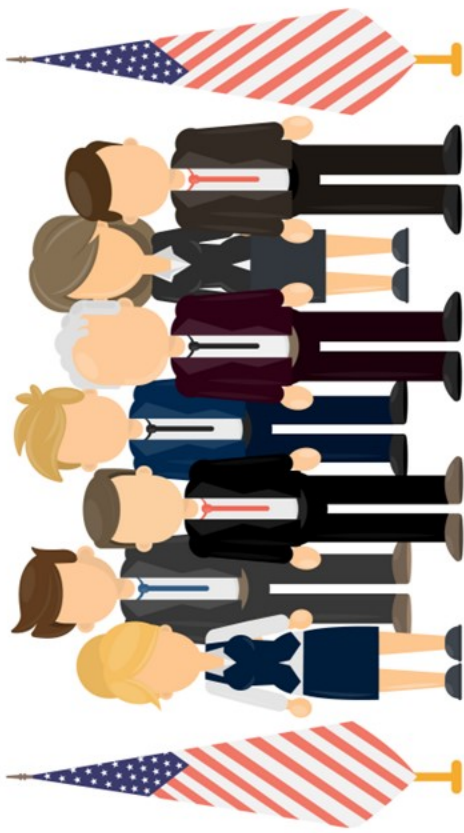
David Spalding Supersass®

Larger states  
have more  
representation.

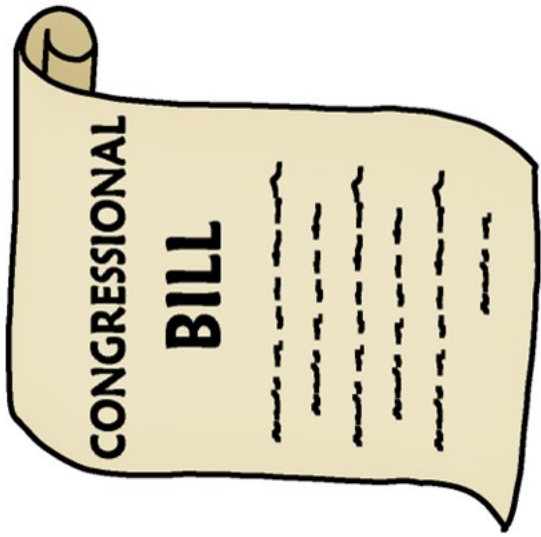
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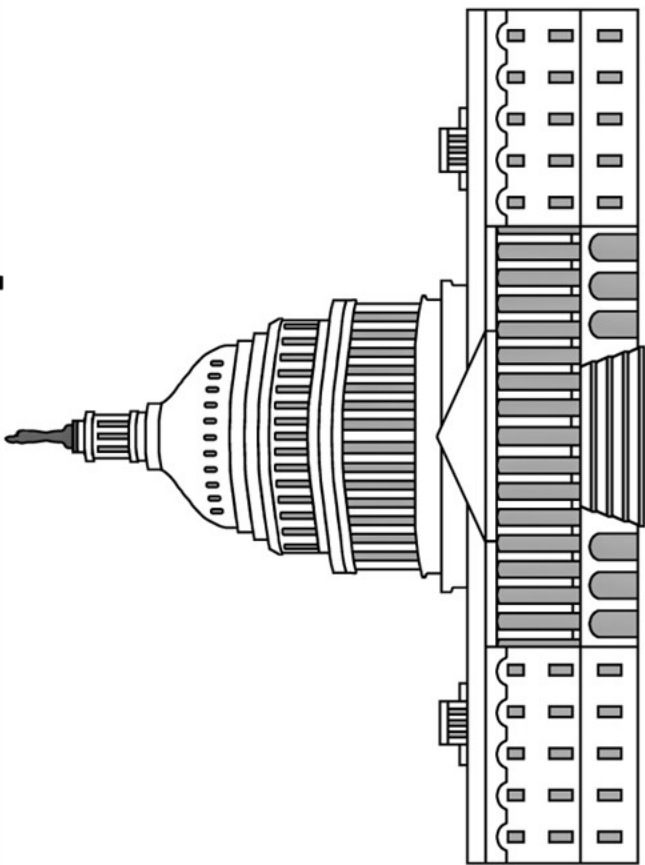
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# JUDICIAL BRANCH

*Good and Beautiful* ©

Supreme  
Court

*Good and Beautiful* ©

Judges and  
Justices

*Good and Beautiful* ©

Jury of your  
peers

*Good and Beautiful* ©



**Interprets the  
Constitution**

©2014 Social Studies Success®

**State  
Court**

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**Federal  
Court**

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**Nine Justices on  
the Supreme  
Court**

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Supreme Court  
Justices are  
appointed by  
the president

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Supreme Court  
Justices are  
approved by  
the Senate

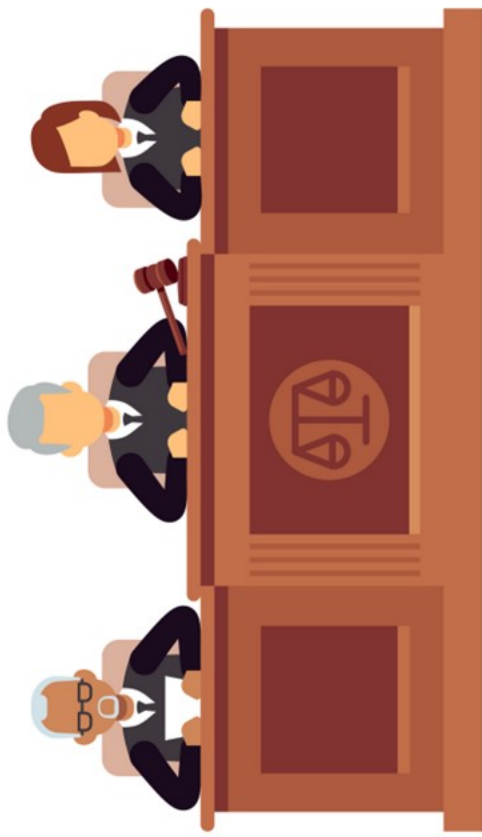
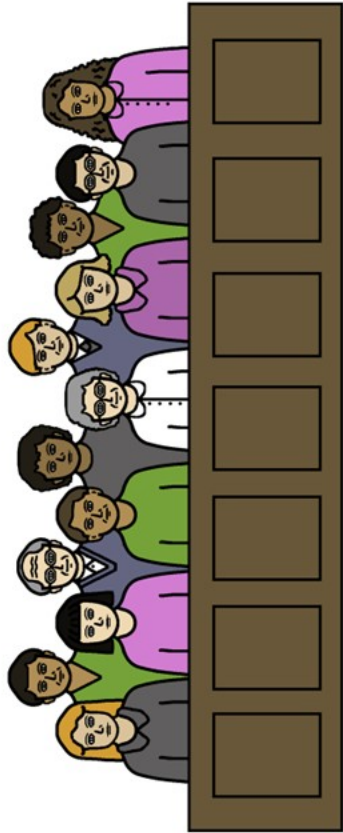
Good & Beautiful®

Provides fair  
and speedy  
trials

Good & Beautiful®

Supreme Court  
reviews cases  
of national  
importance

Good & Beautiful®



Key





*We the People -*

These words represent a very important idea in the Constitution, that it is the people who consent to be governed. It is the people who give power to the government, and it is the people who should be protected by and from the government. Everyone's voice matters and people have a say in how things are done. The Preamble wants people to know that they're important and that the government is there to work for them.

*in Order to form a more perfect Union -*

That means we're trying to make the country better and bring all the states closer together. It acknowledges that the Articles of Confederation did not work

*establish Justice -*

This means making things fair and right for everyone. The Constitution ensures that people have access to a fair legal system that follows the rule of law.

*"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."*

*insure domestic Tranquility -*

These words mean keeping peace inside the country. The Founding Fathers knew that when its citizens feel safe and secure, they would prosper.

*provide for the common defense -*

This statement means that it is the government's responsibility to protect our country from anyone who wants to do it harm.

*promote the general Welfare -*

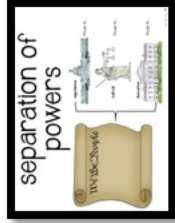
This is about the government's obligation to promote the welfare and prosperity of its citizens by promoting economic growth, guaranteeing public health, and supporting social initiatives that enhance the overall quality of life. This includes things like good schools, clean water, and help for people who need it.

*secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity -*

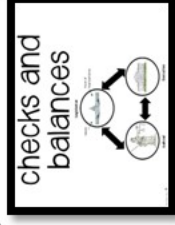
This means making sure we all stay free and have rights that can't be taken away. This phrase is the essence of American democracy, sharing the idea that the Constitution aims to provide a framework that safeguards personal liberties while also protecting the collective welfare of society.

# UNDERSTANDING OUR CONSTITUTION

Key



The idea behind the **separation of powers** is to create a system where each branch of government has its own distinct roles and powers, ensuring that no single branch becomes too powerful.



With checks and balances, each branch of government "checks" the others to make sure no one person or branch of government becomes too powerful.

- The legislative branch can make new laws, but the executive branch can veto or say no to those new laws if they think they're not good ideas. This is like a "check" to make sure the laws are reasonable.

- The judicial branch can review the laws made by the legislative branch and decide if they are fair according to the country's rules (the Constitution). If they find a law isn't fair or is against the rules, they can say it's not allowed. This is another "check" to make sure the laws are just.

The executive branch can carry out the laws, but it can't make new laws on its own. It needs the approval of the legislative branch to do that.



Help these students understand our Constitution by explaining *Separation of Powers* and *Checks and Balances* in your own words.



# THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT



## Legislative

- ☐ Congress works together to write, debate, and pass **bills** (proposed new laws), which are then passed on to the President for approval.
- ☐ There are **100** senators and **435** representatives.
- ☐ The legislative branch has control over the government's spending by:
  1. **approving spending plans**
  2. **gives money to govt. programs**
  3. **funds government services**
- ☐ The legislative branch **approves** people given different government jobs by the president.
- ☐ The legislative branch can **impeach** and remove the president from office.
- ☐ The legislative branch is the only branch of government that can declare **war**.



## Executive

- ☐ The head of the executive branch is the **president** who is supported by their **vice-president**, and a group of advisers called their **cabinet**.
- ☐ The **presidents** role is to enforce national law as given in the **Constitution** and written by Congress.
- ☐ A president is elected every **4** years, and a president can only serve **twice or two terms**.
- ☐ A president is the **commander-in-chief** of the armed forces.
- ☐ A president has the power to sign into law or **veto bills** proposed by Congress.
- ☐ The President can make **treaties** and appoint federal officers, ambassadors, and federal **judges**, including Justices of the Supreme Court.
- ☐ The vice-president is the **president** of the U.S. Senate.



## Judicial

- ☐ The role of the judicial branch is to **interpret the nation's laws**.
- ☐ There are two different levels of court: **state** and **federal**.
- ☐ The highest court in the land is the **Supreme Court**.
- ☐ There are **nine** justices (judges) on the supreme court.
- ☐ When a new justice is needed, they are nominated by the **president** and confirmed by the **senate**.
- ☐ The 6<sup>th</sup> Amendment guarantees a **fair** and **speedy** trial before a **jury** of one's peers.
- ☐ In some cases, a **jury** will decide if a person is guilty or innocent, and a **judge** will decide any rules of law.

# The Legislative Branch

**Directions:** Read the following scenario about the legislative branch. If the statement is true, color it green. If the statement is false (and the legislative branch can't do that action), color the statement red.

Imagine you live in a place called "Greenville," where people are worried about the environment. They want to make sure the air we breathe is clean and the planet stays healthy. Here's what the Legislative Branch can do to help:

- ☐ **Pass Laws:** The people we choose to represent us in the Legislative Branch can make important rules or laws. In Greenville, they made a law to protect the forest from logging companies.
- ☐ **Make Treaties:** The legislative branch in Greenville made a treaty with the country of Iceland to gain access to important minerals to make cell phones.
- ☐ **Work Together:** Sometimes, people in the Legislative Branch are from different groups, like the Green Party and the Clean Energy Party. But they can work together to solve big problems, like protecting the environment.
- ☐ **Clean Energy:** The Legislative Branch can make rules to encourage using clean energy, like wind and solar power. This way, we use less dirty energy that makes the air dirty too.
- ☐ **Stop Pollution:** They can also make rules to stop factories and cars from putting harmful things into the air and water. This helps keep our air and water clean and safe. To ensure people are following the rules, they can arrest people and put them in jail.
- ☐ **Help Nature:** The Legislative Branch can protect places where animals and plants live, like forests and rivers. They can send soldiers to prevent anyone from moving into the forest or next to a river.





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# About the Author

## What do I believe about Social Studies instruction?

- ✓ Students need to be engaged to learn.  
-Schlechty's *Design Qualities of engagement*
- ✓ History can be fun and rigorous at the same time.  
-Bower's *Bring Learning Alive!*
- ✓ All students can learn – we just need to support them in different ways.  
-Seidnitz's *Seven Steps*
- ✓ Kids need to continuously review content through games and engaging activities.  
-Himmele's *Total Participation Techniques*
- ✓ Writing is essential for learning, not just assessment.  
-Daniels' *Content Area Writing*
- ✓ Vocabulary instruction must be intentional and engaging.  
-Marzano *Academic Vocabulary*
- ✓ History should not be trivial pursuit – dig deeper and teach with essential questions and enduring understandings.  
-Wiggins & McTighe *Essential Questions*
- ✓ Students are social – purposeful talk is crucial to learning.  
-Walsh *Quality Questioning*
- ✓ Students need to read in Social Studies – reading informational text cannot be mastered without constant practice.  
-Kinsella's *Considerate Text*
- ✓ "Soft skills" of collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity are essential to future success in the job market.  
-Muir *Reasons Millennials Get Fired*
- ✓ The best way to improve reading comprehension and scores, is to focus on building knowledge through Social Studies instruction.  
-Wexler *The Knowledge Gap*



Dawn Viñas has served in education for over a quarter of a century.

Dawn earned her Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Texas A&M University. In her education journey, she was shaped by her various roles as a classroom teacher, instructional coach, curriculum coordinator, professional development trainer, university professor, and teacher-author. Dawn has provided Social Studies professional development for over 20 years to more than 10,000 teachers from Alaska to Florida. In 2015, Dawn started Social Studies Success<sup>®</sup> with the mission to revolutionize social studies instruction. With a goal of improving instruction, Dawn is currently providing consulting, classroom resources, and professional development services to several school districts across the state of Texas. Do you have a question, or would you like to purchase a license for your district? You can reach Dawn [here](#).

