

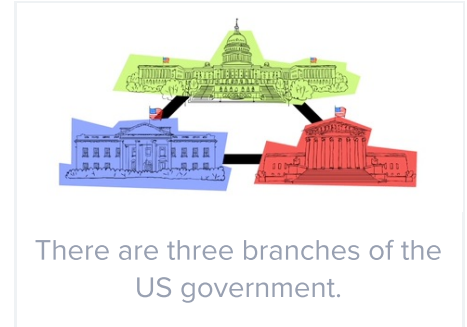
Name _____

Date _____

Three Branches of Government - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. When the founders were creating a new American government, the abuses of power from a single ruler were fresh in their minds. They didn't want another king! So the United States government was designed to prevent any single person or group from becoming too powerful. We call this idea "separation of powers."



The Constitution separates the government's power into three branches. Each branch has separate responsibilities, but they all must interact with each other in different ways. This separation of powers includes a system of checks and balances, which are ways that each branch can limit the others.

Based on the passage, the founders of the United States would most likely agree with which of the following statements?

A. Kings do not have enough power.



B.

Kings can take advantage of their power.

According to the passage, when the founders "were creating a new American government, the abuses of power from a single ruler were fresh in their minds. They didn't want another king!" Based on these details, the founders would most likely agree that kings can take advantage of their power.

C. A government should have few checks and balances.

D. The branches of government do not need to interact.

2. The legislative branch, or Congress, is responsible for writing legislation. Congress also has the power to collect taxes, borrow money for the United States, regulate commerce, coin money and declare war. Congress has two chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives. This two-chamber system is an example of checks and balances within a single branch of government.



To pass, a bill must receive at least majority approval in both the Senate and the House. In the House, that means 218 of the 435 votes. In the Senate, senators can debate a bill for as long as they like. This is often called a filibuster. To make sure that senators actually vote on a bill and don't become deadlocked with a filibuster, the senate can break up a debate and pass a bill with 60 of the 100 senators voting.

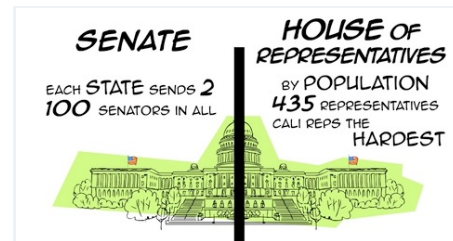
Based on the passage, which of the following bills might pass Congress?

- A. a bill that receives no votes in the House and 100 votes in the Senate
- B. a bill that receives 435 votes in the House and 2 votes in the Senate
- C. a bill that receives 220 votes in the House and 65 votes in the Senate
- D. a bill that receives 435 votes in the House and 49 votes in the Senate



According to the passage, "To pass, a bill must receive at least majority approval in both the Senate and the House. In the House, that means 218 of the 435 votes." Based on these details, a bill that receives 220 votes in the House and 65 votes in the Senate might pass Congress.

3. When the founders were trying to figure out how best to represent citizens in Congress, those from states with larger populations clashed with those from states with smaller populations. More populated states argued for representation based on population—meaning, they would have a louder voice in Congress. But states with smaller populations resisted this idea: Why should the more populated states get more power? They were in favor of an equal number of representatives per state so that they wouldn't get overshadowed. What to do? A two-chamber system, or "bicameral legislature," was the compromise. The Senate has two senators from each state, regardless of the population of the state. The number of representatives in the House, on the other hand, is based on population size. This system ensures that the smaller states still have their voices heard, but that the people and their interests are fairly represented.



What is the purpose of the underlined sentence in this passage?



- A. to show the point of view of states with smaller populations
- According to the passage, "States with smaller populations resisted" the idea of representation based on population. The underlined sentence shows less populated states' point of view on this matter: they didn't want "the more populated states" to "get more power" than them.*
- B. to pose a question that the next sentence will answer
- C. to provide a quote from one of the Founding Fathers
- D. to support the claim that the Founding Fathers did not compromise

4. Congress is responsible for legislation, but the president has to sign a bill before it becomes law and also has the option to reject, or veto, the bill. A presidential veto isn't necessarily the end of a bill though. If there is enough support for the bill, members of Congress can override the veto with a two-thirds majority vote. This is part of the checks and balances plan. The president can check Congress's power with a veto, but Congress can check the president back with an override.



Based on the passage, the checks and balances plan

- A. includes two ways for either Congress or the president to end a bill.



B.

lets Congress and the president challenge each other's actions.

According to the passage, overrides and vetoes are both a "part of the checks and balances plan. The president can check Congress's power with a veto, but Congress can check the president back with an override."

- C. gives the president the final power to end a bill.

- D. includes two ways for Congress to veto a presidential override.

5. The executive branch is responsible for ensuring that laws are carried out, or executed. The president has the most power in the executive branch. The president serves as commander in chief of the armed forces. That means that he or she has the final say in military plans. However, Congress has the power to declare war. The president also negotiates treaties. The president is the leader of his or her political party. The president and his or her party may collaborate to draft legislation that is then promoted by the party in Congress. The president also dictates US foreign policy. In addition to the president, the executive branch includes the vice president, the Cabinet and other federal agencies.



Based on the passage, which of the following requires both Congress and the president?

- A. negotiating treaties



B.

creating and passing legislation

The sentence "The president and his or her party may collaborate to draft legislation that is then promoted by the party in Congress" supports this answer.

- C. creating foreign policy

- D. declaring war

6. The president is responsible for appointing people to the Cabinet. The cabinet is made up of the heads of fifteen executive departments. These departments are the Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, the Interior, Justice, Labor, State, Transportation, Treasury and Veterans Affairs departments.



Additionally, the president appoints judges to the Supreme Court. The president doesn't have final say on all of these appointments. The Senate must approve many of them.

Some positions in the president's team don't have to be approved by anyone. These are positions like the Chief of Staff, whose duties vary depending on the presidential administration, and various advisors.

Based on this passage, how can the president's power to appoint people be checked?

- A. by the Supreme Court making a ruling
- B. by the Cabinet rejecting a presidential appointment
- C. by the Senate rejecting a presidential appointment
- D. by the Senate appointing their own Cabinet

"The president doesn't have final say on all of these appointments. The Senate must approve many of them" supports this answer.

7. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the land, and it has the final say when it comes to federal law. When laws in different places conflict, the Supreme Court settles the argument. The judicial branch also includes lower federal courts. While the legislative branch creates laws and the executive branch carries them out, the judicial branch interprets the laws and evaluates the fairness of the laws.



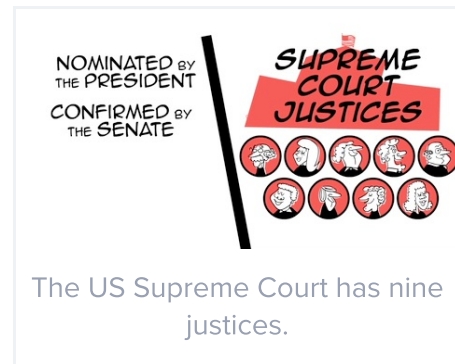
Major law decisions are made by the US Supreme Court.

Based on the passage, which of the following would the Supreme Court most likely decide?

- A. if a state immigration law could contradict a federal law
- B. if a robbery was committed at a local grocery store
- C. if a brother accidentally hit his sibling and caused an injury
- D. if a camper trespassed on a farmer's private property

The sentence "When laws in different places conflict, the Supreme Court settles the argument" supports this answer.

8. There are nine justices in the Supreme Court, including a chief justice. To try and keep the Supreme Court out of party politics, justices are nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate. In addition, justices do not serve limited terms of two, four, or six years like the members of the legislative and executive branches do. They get to serve until they retire or die. And if justices do something illegal, the Senate has the power to impeach them. It's all about the checks and balances. The federal judges that serve in district courts are also appointed instead of elected.



Based on this passage, Supreme Court Justices

- ✓ A. are not elected.
- The sentence "To try and keep the Supreme Court out of party politics, justices are nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate" supports this answer.*
- B. serve for 5 years.
- C. are allowed to seek reelection.
- D. must campaign every 7 years.

9. When federal officials are accused of breaking the law, they face impeachment. The legislative branch can impeach members of the executive and judicial branches. In cases of impeachment, the House of Representatives accuses the official, who is then tried by the Senate. Impeachment is very rare—only four presidents have faced it: Andrew Johnson, Richard Nixon, Bill Clinton, and Donald Trump.



Based on the passage, under which circumstance might a federal official be impeached?

- ✓ A. when the official is accused of lying under oath
- The sentence "When federal officials are accused of breaking the law, they face impeachment" supports this answer.*
- B. when someone in the House dislikes the official
- C. when the official falsely accuses a senator of breaking the law
- D. when the official has become unpopular with the American public