

Rationalizing my Unit

The grade I will be focusing on is high school and my subject of focus is civics. Specifically, I will be focusing on the functions, powers and structure of the federal government as I believe this is vital for an active citizen to know and helps them be informed about the current state of affairs in our government. This objective is supported by C.3.1.1 ("Identify and describe the purposes, organization, powers, processes, and election of the legislative branch as enumerated in Article I of the Constitution."), C.3.1.2 ("Identify and describe the purposes, organization, powers, processes, and election of the executive branch as enumerated in Article II of the Constitution.") and C.3.1.3 "Identify and describe the purposes, organization, powers, processes, and appointment or election of the judicial branch as enumerated in Article III of the Constitution and as established in *Marbury v. Madison*"). These standards indicate that learning about the functions of each of these individual branches is vital to a student's civic education but also that their interactions with one another are an important aspect of our democracy and functioning of our government. Furthermore, these branches work in tandem with one another to create the structure of our government and this serves as my rationale for having an assessment with all three branches as opposed to a one-hundred-point assessment on just one of the branches. Each of these branches are important but understanding the full extent of their work is only possible when viewing them as a collective. Some of the essential questions we will be addressing in this unit includes "how does the structure of our government help promote a healthy democracy?" and "how does this form of government allow for the people to have a voice in government?". I choose these questions as they allow students to understand what seems to be the inherent flaws of our system, whether it be the needed consent of multiple branches to create policy or the seemingly undemocratic aspects of our system such as lifetime appointment for judges and the weaknesses of the chief executive. Furthermore, it allows students to see themselves within our government, how they play an active role in supporting it and how their choices (such as electing officials) matter within what can sometimes feel like an entity that is distant from their lives. By pursuing these questions, I also further meet standards C 3.1.4 (Examine and evaluate the effectiveness the role of separation of powers and checks and balances in regard to the distribution of power and authority between the three branches of government) as these questions directly analyze the relationship between these facets of the government and how their interplay enables the continued existence of democracy. This goal helps students be effective citizens in their democracy as they can understand how change comes about (or how a lack of change comes about) but also where these changes come from and how they can influence it.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the three branches of government including their basic responsibilities (**remember**)
- Describe the requirements for offices within all three branches (**remember**)
- Explain the functions of each of the branches such as (**understand**):
 - Legislative Branch: advice and consent, impeachment, power of purse, war powers and approval of treaties, overriding vetoes
 - Executive Branch: Commander-in-Chief, veto power, treaty negotiations
 - Judicial Branch: original and appellate jurisdiction, dispute negotiation
- Identify within a given situation, what branch would have the ability to act, and/or which power would be in use (**apply**)

- Analyze and explain the relationships the branches have with one another (**Analyze**)
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the separation of powers in ensuring that no part of the government has too much power (**evaluate**)
- Create and properly explain a scenario in which all three branches of government would be involved (**Create**)

★ **Boldened answers are the correct answer for the question**

Format: Multiple Choice

Content: (basic structure, powers and qualifications of the branches) (3 points each) (39 points)

Instructions: For the following prompts, please select the correct answer.

1. The ___ branch makes laws, declares wars and controls taxing
 - **Legislative**
 - Judicial
 - Executive
 - People
2. Who is the head of the executive branch?
 - The Governors of all the states
 - The Chief Justice
 - The Speaker of the House
 - **The President**
3. What is the highest court in the US?
 - **The Supreme Court**
 - The DC circuit court
 - Bankruptcy Court
 - Military Court
4. How are justices on the Supreme Court selected?
 - By lottery
 - They are nominated by the governor of their state and approved by the House of Representatives
 - **They are appointed by the President and approved by the Senate**
 - By doing the best on an exam
5. Who is responsible for executing the laws?
 - The judicial branch
 - The legislative branch
 - **The executive branch**
 - The state governments
6. Congress refusing to put money into healthcare is an example of which power?
 - War powers
 - **Power of purse**

- Advice and consent
- Impeachment
- 7. The legislative branch has two parts, what are they?
 - The President and Vice President
 - The King and Queen
 - **The Senate and The House of Representatives**
 - The Supreme Court and the circuit courts
- 8. Who does the president appoint to run the day-to-day operation of the executive branch?
 - **The executive departments**
 - The senate
 - The justices of the Supreme Court
 - The Vice President
- 9. Cabinet secretaries may be appointed by the President but are approved by Congress, this is an example of what power?
 - Veto
 - Power of purse
 - Impeachment
 - **Advise and consent**
- 10. Which one of these is **not** a qualification to be the president?
 - Be 35 years old or older
 - Be a resident of the US for 14 years
 - Be a natural-born citizen (someone born in the US or is the child of a US citizen)
 - **Have 4 or more years of military service**
- 11. How is the president elected?
 - By the vice president
 - **Through the electoral college**
 - Through having a majority in congress
 - Directly by the people
- 12. The responsibility of interpreting the law rests with which branch?
 - **The judicial branch**
 - The executive branch
 - The legislative branch
 - The presidency
- 13. Members of the legislative branch must be all of the following except:
 - **Born in the US**
 - A resident of their state
 - A US citizen for at least 7 years
 - At least 25 years old

Format: Fill in the Blank

Content: The relationship between branches and identifying who acts in a specific situation (3 points each) (33 points)

Instruction: Please read the following sentences and fill in the blank with the correct word/term.

14. When the President negotiates a treaty, it can only be approved by the ____ branch (**legislative**)
15. The Supreme Court saying a law Congress passed is unconstitutional is an example of judicial ____ (**review**)
16. The system in place that ensures that no part of the government is more powerful than another, and that each part can limit the power of another is called ____ (**checks and balances**)
17. The legislative branch can pass bills but only the ____ can sign them and turn them into laws (**president**)
18. The legislative branch can remove the president through ____ (**Impeachment**)
19. The President can declare executive orders, but the judicial branch can declare them ____ (**Unconstitutional**)
20. Members of the legislative branch are ____ by the people (**elected**)
21. If the President vetoes a bill, the legislative branch can ____ it (**override**)
22. The division of powers between multiple branches of government is called ____ (**separation of powers**)
23. In order to check the Judicial branch, the executive branch has the right to ____ judges (**nominate/appoint**)
24. (**CONTINUING FROM QUESTION 22**). However, the legislative branch must approve them, this power is called ____ (**advise and consent**)

Format: True or False

Content: the judicial branch and its relationship with other branches (2 points each) (8 points)

if the prompt is wrong, please fill in the blank with the correct answer

Instructions: Please read the following sentences. If it is correct, select true. If it is incorrect, select false and write the correct answer.

25. The judicial branch can check the legislative branch by declaring a law unconstitutional
 - **True**
 - False – Correction _____
26. The executive branch checks the judicial branch through appointing judges and being able to pardon people (who have been convicted of a federal crime)
 - **True**
 - False – Correction _____
27. The Supreme Court does not have original jurisdiction in cases involving two or more states.
 - True
 - **False – Correction _____ (It does have original jurisdiction)**
28. *Marbury v Madison* established the concept of presidential review
 - True
 - **False – Correction _____ (judicial review)**

Format: Short Answer (10 points each) (20 points)

Content: relationship between branches, analyzing the relationship between branches, evaluating the effectiveness of the separation of powers in regards to protecting democracy

29. In 3 to 4 sentences, create a scenario where all three branches of government would be involved. **Be creative and consider all the powers of each of the branches.** Some example scenarios may be Congress passing an unconstitutional law that is brought through the court system.
- I envision this question as a “wrap-up” question, where a student is tasked with putting together everything they have learned in a unique challenge as they have never been asked to just come up with a situation. My main qualifiers for a “correct” answer would be:
 - Include all three branches
 - Order the scenario properly (such as the judicial branch not being a respondent when a president vetoes a law)
 - Connecting the actions and responses of each branch (in a correct way)
 - Correctly identifying a specific power (or powers) the branches would use

While there are only a few qualifiers, I believe that meeting all three can be quite difficult as it extends knowledge of not just the basic structures of the branches but also how they interact and in what given circumstance. In terms of partial credit, just the inclusion of all three branches to me is worth one point and I believe each branch is worth a third of the nine points this question is worth with each point hinging on one of the qualifiers I listed above. An example of this would be a student properly placing and but they improperly said the judicial branch would veto a law so the student would receive 8/10 points as they knew how to place the judicial branch, but they failed to identify the proper power and how the judicial branch would respond.

30. When creating our government, the founders did not want one person or group to have too much power. In four to five sentences argue whether you believe the structure of our government is effective in protecting democracy? **Consider concepts like the separation of power, checks and balances, term limits, or officials being elected by the people.**
- Depending on how they argue this question, essential information when answering this question must include: An explanation of why the branches and their powers are effective or ineffective, an inclusion of all the branches (so a student cannot argue that the legislative and executive branches are effective and entirely ignore the judicial branch), and connecting these functions to the broader purpose and goal of democracy (such as explaining how judicial review helps in ensuring democracy flourish or how preventing a branch from having supreme power prevents tyranny). Partial credit would be awarded on a 3 points per branch basis (with the final point being given if all three branches are included) with each point being awarded based on: correctly describing a branch’s power and analyzing its effectiveness, and adequately connecting it to maintaining democracy and the other branches.