



Critical Thinking Skills

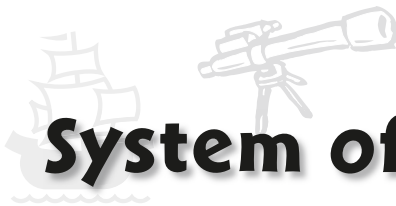


American Government



Skills For Critical Thinking		Reading Comprehension								
		Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4	Section 5	Section 6	Section 7	Section 8	Writing Tasks
LEVEL 1 Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List facts / details Recall information Match Sequence Recognize validity (T/F) 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LEVEL 2 Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare & contrast Summarize State main idea Describe 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LEVEL 3 Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply what is learned Infer outcomes 	✓			✓			✓	✓	
LEVEL 4 Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw conclusions Make inferences Identify cause & effect 	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LEVEL 5 Synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Predict Design Create Compile research 		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LEVEL 6 Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defend an opinion Make judgements 					✓		✓		✓

Based on Bloom's Taxonomy



System of Checks and Balances

1. Write each term beside the correct meaning.

override	reprieve	veto	pardon	impeach	resign	constitutional	democracy
checks and balances			executive branch	legislative branch	judicial branch		

a) To forgive the actions or crimes of another

b) A plan in which one branch of a government can make sure that other branches do not have too much power

c) The president, vice president, and cabinet members

d) A system of government in which the people choose who runs it

e) To prevent from happening

f) The House of Representatives and the Senate

g) To stop or end a law

h) To quit or leave office

i) To bring a public official who is accused of wrongdoing before a group for judgment

j) To end or take away a court sentence

k) The federal court system and the U.S. Supreme Court

l) Agreeing with the Constitution

2. Use a straight line to match each branch of U.S. government with the Article of the Constitution which established it.

1

Executive Branch

Article One

A

2

Judicial Branch

Article Two

B

3

Legislative Branch

Article Three

C



System of Checks and Balances

The government of the United States is built on a foundation of freedom. The writers of the Constitution knew that no single person or branch of government should ever have enough power to take away the freedom of the others. This is why they included a **system of checks and balances** in the Constitution. Each branch **checks**, or holds back, the other two. This helps to keep the balance of power even in all three branches.

The Checking Power of the Executive Branch

As the head of the executive branch, the President can check the power of the legislative branch by using his right to **veto**, or prevent, a bill from becoming a law. Each law approved by Congress is sent to the President for his approval. If he chooses not to approve the law, we say that it has been vetoed.

In fact, the President can approve or veto any law except one that amends, or changes, the Constitution. Having this ability gives the President strong checking power over the legislative branch. A two-thirds majority vote of the Congress is the only way to **override**, or stop, a presidential veto.



Food for Thought: How does a system of checks and balances protect freedom? Why is this important?

The President can also check the power of the judicial branch of government in the following ways:

1. The president approves all federal judges and Supreme Court justices.
2. The president can **pardon**, or forgive, a person convicted of a federal crime.
3. The president can **reprieve**, or take away the punishment, of people who have been convicted of federal crimes.

NAME: _____

After You Read 



System of Checks and Balances

The Checking Power of the Legislative Branch

Congress was also given strong checking abilities by the writers of the Constitution. Congress can check the executive branch by:

1. Overriding a president's veto
2. Approving treaties signed by the president
3. **Impeaching**, or placing on trial, any federal official including the president
4. Approving people appointed by the president for federal jobs
5. Cutting funding to federal departments

Congress can check the powers of the judicial branch by amending the Constitution.

The Checking Power of the Judicial Branch

The judicial branch can check the powers of both the executive and legislative branches. The writers of the Constitution made sure that these checks were in place in order to keep the balance of justice equal. The judicial branch checks the executive branch by deciding whether an action taken by the President or other member of the executive branch is **constitutional**, or agrees with the Constitution. Likewise, the judicial branch checks the legislative branch by judging whether a law passed by Congress is constitutional.

We can now see that a system of checks and balances is provided by the Constitution to make sure that every branch stays legal and constitutional. The insight shown by the writers of the Constitution in this area is one of the main reasons that the democratic government of the United States has prospered through the years.