

Name _____ Date _____

3 Branches of Government

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Think of a tribal government as a tree. What is the thickest part of a tree? The trunk. In some tribal governments, the people are the trunk. What are the branches?



Some tribal constitutions **establish** three branches of government. These branches are the legislative branch, the executive (chief) branch, and the judicial branch. Each branch has only the power given to it in the constitution or by the people. This **separation** is to make sure that no one part of government ever becomes too strong. Think of the tree again. What would happen if one branch of a tree were huge and the others were just little twigs? The whole tree could topple!

To make sure that some tribal governments do not fall apart, power is carefully balanced between the branches of government. Each branch of government has a way to curb, or "check," the power of the other two branches. For example, imagine if the chief does not agree with a law passed by the legislative branch. He/she can veto it so it never goes into effect. If the law passes, and takes away someone's rights, the judicial branch can rule it is illegal. The legislative, executive, and judicial branches all check up on each other in different ways.

These two important **principles** are called “**separation of power**” and “checks and balances.” Together, they help make sure the government works properly and that no one government group, or government official, becomes too powerful.

Check for Understanding

1. What can establish the three branches of a tribal government?
 - a) the chief
 - b) the tribal constitution
 - c) the legislative branch
 - d) the judicial branch
2. This passage uses a comparison of a tree
 - a) to show that government is a part of nature, too.
 - b) to help the reader understand the parts of government.
 - c) show the reader how cases reach the judicial branch.
 - d) explain how government has roots and grows.
3. Based on this passage, what can prevent the legislative branch from passing a law that nobody else likes?
 - a) The judicial branch has to give approval to all laws first.
 - b) The legislative branch cannot pass laws, only the Chief Executive can.
 - c) The Chief Executive could veto that law so it wouldn't take effect.
 - d) The judicial branch would elect a brand new legislative branch.
4. Read the following sentence: “If the law passes, and takes away someone's rights, the judicial branch can rule it is illegal.” *In this sentence the word rule means:*
 - a) to measure
 - b) to hate
 - c) to decide
 - d) to suggest
5. The passage “The Branches of Government” is mostly about
 - a) trees that are important to the United States
 - b) famous moments in the history of U.S. government
 - c) the role and history of the judicial branch
 - d) different parts of government and how they work together

6. What are some tribes three branches of a government?

7. Describe a specific situation where the principle of checks and balances could be used for the good of the people. _____

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

There are checks and balances in tribal governments, and _____ no one person can become too powerful.

- a) previously
- b) as a result
- c) after
- d) on the other hand

9. Read the following sentence, "*Some tribal constitutions **establish** three branches of government.*" In this sentence the word **establish** means:

- a) prove
- b) show
- c) set up
- d) achieve

10. Read the following sentence, "*This **separation** is to make sure that no one part of government ever becomes too strong.*" In this sentence the word separation means:

- a) boiling point
- b) moving apart
- c) a place
- d) a gap

11. Read the following sentence, "*These two important **principles** are called 'separation of power' and 'checks and balances.'*" In this sentence the word principles mean:

- a) basic idea or belief
- b) beginning
- c) headmaster of a school
- d) achieve