Separation of Powers & Checks and Balances

## Goals & Objectives

Students will learn about the idea of separation of powers as well as checks and balance and how they were applied in the United States Constitution. Students will examine, evaluate primary sources to better understand the theory behind separation of powers & checks and balance as well as how they were defined/applied in the Constitution.

## California State Content Standard

8.2 Students analyze the political principles underlying the U.S. Constitution and compare the enumerated and implied powers of the federal government.

8.2.7 Describe the principles of federalism, dual sovereignty, separation of powers, checks and balances, the nature and purpose of majority rule, and the ways in which the American idea of constitutionalism preserves individual rights.

### Lesson Introduction (Hook/Access Prior Knowledge)

The teacher will show a picture on the board of the three buildings (the picture is noted above) that represent the three United States branches of government; the legislative, executive, and the judicial. The teacher will then hold three headings, each one labeled with a respective branch. The teacher will ask the students for help in properly matching the heading with the building that represents the appropriate branch.

### Vocabulary (Content Language Development)

The students will be introduced to the key terms during the lesson introduction. After the introduction students will also be given a copy of the picture with the buildings that represent (the one that was used on the board for the whole class) each branch so they can take notes on each term in their own appropriate manner.

Key terms:

-Separation of powers

-Checks and balances

-Legislative branch (Congress)

-Executive branch (Presidency)

-Legislative branch (Supreme Court)

### Content Delivery (Method of Instruction)

The content will be primarily delivered through the analysis of thee primary sources. The teacher will give students background information on each document so as to give the students some context of the documents they will be analyzing. The two documents they will be analyzing will be the *Federalist Paper#47, #51* and the Constitution of the United States.

The teacher, before providing the primary sources, will teach the students about the SCCC (Source, Close Reading, Contextualize, and Corroborate) system of analyzing primary sources. The focus of the analysis will be how well the ideas of the James Madison were implemented in the Constitution and how those ideas guard against tyranny.

### Student Engagement & Critical Thinking (Student Activities)

The students will be given three documents to analyze:

-*Federalist Paper#47*

-*Federalist Paper#51*

-The Constitution (section on the three branches & separation of powers)

The students will be given the three primary sources. Students should note that as they read the sources, they should keep this essential question/idea in mind: What is the reasoning for the separation of powers/checks and balances and how was it implemented in the Constitution.

As students read they will organize their thoughts using a bucketing graphic organizer (they can create their own). Students will essentially create three buckets; One for the separation of powers, another for checks and balances and the last for the implementation of those ideas in the Constitution.

### Lesson Closure

The teacher, with the assistance of the whole class, will create a bucketing organizer on the white board. The teacher will call on different students to help fill in the buckets with ideas. The teacher will use a thumbs up/thumbs down approach with the class to help complete the buckets with the appropriate ideas.

The teacher, for homework, will assign a small essay in which the students write the reasonings behind the ideas of separation of powers and checks and balances (to stop tyranny) and how they were implemented in the Constitution.

### Demonstrated Learning (Formative & Summative Assessments)

The teacher will walk around to note the students’ graphic organizers and how well they are being completed. If the teacher notices some buckets are not being completed by several students the teacher may go over that section of the primary source with the class so as to help them better comprehend that portion. The thumbs up/thumbs down approach will also help the teacher make note of how well the class understands their readings.

The small essay will serve as a more formal, summative assessment of the subject matter.

Accommodations for English Learners, Struggling Readers and Students with Special Needs

The incorporation of pictures that represent each branch of the government will help better students understand the vocabulary. The teacher will also be walking around to help students understand the readings as some portions may be difficult to understand. Complementary pictures will be used to better explain ideas (such as a court hammer, aka a gavel to help explain the judicial branch). If students are having difficulty reading the sources that teach will provide a simpler, more comprehensible, version of the sources so as to not let the students get behind.

## Lesson Resources

[The Federalist Papers - THOMAS (Library of Congress)-#47](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_47.html)

[Our Documents - Federalist Papers, No. 10 & No. 51 (1787-1788)](http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=10)

[Transcript of the Constitution of the United States - Official Text](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html)

[Three Branches of Government (for kids) :: GenerationNation](http://generationnation.org/index.php/CLC/entry/three-branches-of-government-for-kids)