

# TRADING THE POWER

**Learning Objective:** The students will

1. Identify key ideas of the three branches of the federal government
2. Compare the key ideas of the three branches of the federal government

**TEKS:** 8.15D; Govt.7D

**Materials Needed:** Sets of trading cards for each group of four students

**Teaching Strategy:**

1. Review the key ideas of the three branches of the federal government- legislative, executive, and judicial.
2. Divide the class into groups of four and give each group a set of the trading cards. Explain to the class that they are to play a trading card game. The goal of this game is to get a hand that only has cards representing one branch of government. Explain that there are several cards (4 of these) that are considered “wild cards” because they can go with all three branches of government.
3. Have one person deal out all of the cards to the members in the group.
4. Instruct students to separate their cards into four groups: ideas that represent the legislative branch, ideas that represent the executive branch, ideas that represent the judicial branch and ideas that are representative of all three branches.
5. Explain to the students that they will begin a trading game with other students in the group in an attempt to create a set of cards that represent only one of the branches. Go over the following rules of the trading game:
  - They will be making “blind trades” (face down trades).
  - They can only trade one, or cards at a time.
  - When the teacher signals, they **all** begin trading at the same time until one student thinks they have a complete set.
  - When a student thinks they have a complete set, they should call out, “Separation of Power.”
  - At this time, **all** trading stops while the student reads his or her cards to check the answers.

6. Trading can continue until a set of cards for each branch has been completed and read aloud to verify that all cards are correctly matched to one of the three branches of government.
7. Debrief the activity with the following questions:
  - What is the most significant similarity between the three branches?
  - What is the most significant difference between the three?
  - How does this exercise help one understand the reason(s) the founding fathers use separation of powers with checks and balances?

Extension for GT/Pre AP: See if the students can create cards that could be shared by all three of the branches and cards for each branch that highlight their differences.

## KEY

### Legislative Card:

- Elected to a two or six year term
- Can be censured for misbehavior
- Must approve treaties
- Must approve appointments
- Elected directly by the people
- Required to be at least 25 years old
- Required to be a U.S. citizen for at least seven years
- Controls taxation
- Can propose amendments to the Constitution
- Controls the impeachment process
- Formally declares war
- Serves to elect the chief executive if there is a tie in the Electoral College



### Executive Card:

- Commands the armed forces
- Makes appointments
- Can veto legislation
- Elected to a four year term
- Can serve a maximum of two terms or ten years
- Serves as chief of state
- Makes a state of union address
- Must be at least 35 years old
- Required to be a natural born U.S. citizen
- Negotiates treaties with foreign countries
- Can pardon



### Judicial Card:

- Appointed for life
- Can declare a law unconstitutional
- Administers the oath of office to the President
- Interprets the Constitution
- Hears cases involving foreign ambassadors
- Resolves disputes between the states
- Hears cases of treason
- Currently has nine members
- Has to be approved by the Senate to take office
- Presides at impeachment trial of the president
- Has no Constitutional qualifications for office



### Wild Cards: eligible to be used with all three branches

- Takes an oath to uphold the Constitution
- Can have a role in the law-making process
- Power is limited by the Constitution
- Can be removed from office

Takes an oath to uphold  
the Constitution



Elected to a two or six  
year term



Commands the armed  
forces



Administers the oath of  
office to the President



Appointed for life



Can have a role in the law  
-making process



Can be censored for  
misbehavior



Makes appointments



Can declare a law  
unconstitutional



Interprets the  
Constitution



Power is limited by the  
Constitution



Required to be at least 25  
years old



Must approve treaties



Can veto legislation



Serves as chief of state



Hears cases involving  
foreign ambassadors



Can be removed  
from office



Must be at least 35 years  
old



Must approve appointments



Elected to a four year term



Makes a state of union address



Resolves disputes between the states



Currently has nine members



Required to be a U.S. citizen for at least seven years



Elected directly  
by the people



Can serve a maximum of  
two terms or ten years



Takes an oath to uphold  
the Constitution



Controls taxation



Hears cases of treason



Can propose  
amendments to the  
Constitution



Controls the impeachment process



Required to be a natural born U.S. citizen



Presides at impeachment trial of the president



Serves to elect the chief executive if there is a tie in the Electoral College



Has to be approved by the Senate to take office



Formally declares war



Negotiates treaties with  
foreign countries  
Can pardon



Has no Constitutional  
qualifications for office

