



TRADING FOR THE BRANCHES

Learning Objectives: The students will...

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

TEKS: Govt. 6D, 7A-C

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 (four of these) that are considered “wild cards” because they can go with all three branches of government. NOTE—if the teacher wants, he/she can give each group a set of the cards for them to sort into the four categories as preparation for the game.
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:
 - a. Ideas that represent the legislative branch
 - b. Ideas that represent the executive branch
 - c. Ideas that represent the judicial branch
 - d. Ideas that are representative of all three branches.
5. At this point the students should decide the branch for which they want to try to get all their cards to represent.
6. 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:
 - a. They will be making “blind trades” (face down trades).
 - b. They can only trade any three cards in a single trade.
 - c. When the teacher signals, **all** groups begin the trading game until one student thinks he/she has a complete set.
 - d. When a student thinks he/she has a complete set, he/she should call out, “Separation of Power.”
 - e. At this time, **all** groups stop trading while the student reads his or her cards to check the answers. This will allow students in the other groups to hear answers that might help them with cards of which they are unsure.
7. 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.
8. Debrief the activity with the following questions:
 - a. What is the most significant similarity between the three branches?
 - b. What is the most significant difference between the three branches?
 - c. How would you explain separation of powers and checks and balances to a person from another country who is unfamiliar with the two principles of our government?

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 30 years old
- Required to be a U.S. citizen for at least seven years
- Controls taxation
- Proposes 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
- Required by the Constitution to give a State of the Union from time to time



Judicial Card:

- Appointed for life of good behavior
- 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
- Highest court created by the Constitution; lower courts created by acts of Congress



Wild Cards: Eligible to be used with all three branches

- Take an oath to uphold the Constitution
- Can have a role in the development of laws of the United States
- Has formal or informal qualifications for office
- Can be removed from office (executive and legislative can be removed if convicted of impeachment charges; executive and legislative can be voted out of office)

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