

TITLE OF LESSON

American Government Unit 1 Lesson 21 – Checks and Balances
What type of government is the United States?

TIME ESTIMATE FOR THIS LESSON

One class period

ALIGNMENT WITH STANDARDS

California – History 12.3, 12.4

MATERIALS

Checks and Balances – Student Page
Teacher Notes Lesson 21 – Teacher Page
Three Branches of Government – Student Page
Three Branches of Government Key – Teacher Page
Desk Olympics – Teacher Page

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To explore the various checks and balances written into the Constitution and be able to explain their purpose
 - To be exposed to differences at the state and local levels of government
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FOCUS AND MOTIVATE STUDENTS – WARM-UP ACTIVITY

- 1) Homework Check – Stamp/initial complete homework assignments. Pass back graded assignments and have students place them in the appropriate section of their binders.
 - 2) **Agenda** – Have students copy the goal, agenda and homework onto the next clean page in a notebook.
 - 3) **Journal 2** – Below the goal/agenda write down which philosopher (Rousseau, Hobbes, Locke or Marx) would most likely agree with the structure of the US government? Why? (one full page)
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ACTIVITIES – INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP

1. Review – Have students take out their **Three Branches of Government** handout that they were working on in the last lesson and quickly go over the warm-up activity question. If time permits, you might want to have students share their journal writes with each other in a group of four and come up with a consensus “guess” based on the philosopher readings and their three branches handout. Have each group present their answer and two reasons why to the class. The correct answer is Locke, but you may have to have students take out their Philosopher Readings to make the connection and see how the US government is NOT like those proposed by Rousseau, Hobbes or Marx.
2. Since students now have their **Three Branches of Government** sheet out, go through the remaining items that were not filled in yesterday so that the entire sheet is completed.
3. Assign Pairs – When it is done, take out the **Desk Olympics** overhead and have students get into side-by-side pairs. Time them with a stopwatch if you can. (I suggest periodically that you have students work in pairs without using the “Round the Clock form).
4. Finish Chart – When in pairs, remind them of the previous lesson’s homework and ask them to now complete their chart by labeling any new items from today with a CB that are an example of checks and balances.

5. Review Checks and Balances – When students have mostly completed this ask for students to give you examples of checks and balances and to be clear about which branch is “checking” which other branch and “how”. For example for #4, the “legislative branch checks the power of the executive branch because they have the power of impeachment and can remove a President”. Expect this to be difficult for some students, but do not spend a tremendous amount of time on it. Only 5 to 7 minutes.
 6. Next, pass out the **Checks and Balances** (Student Page) to the students and have them work on it in their pairs. Walk around class and try to help students that are struggling.
 7. **Vocabulary** – With about 10 minutes remaining, have students, on the back of their handout, write a definition for “separation of powers” and “checks and balances”. When students are mostly completed, go over the **Checks and Balances** with them and then write “class definitions” on their Vocabulary List 2 for “checks and balances” and “separation of powers”.
 8. Parallel Structure – With a minute or two remaining in class, have students “step back” and look at the Constitution and their **Three Branches of Government** handout and explain that this is the structure of the federal (national) government. Tell them, though that this is also the structure for the state and city governments also. That they too have legislative, executive, and judicial branches but they have different names.
 9. Homework Review – Their homework is to find out the names of the three branches at the state and city levels of government.
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HOMEWORK

- 1) Find out the official names of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government at the state and city levels of government.
 - 2) If you have not finished, using your study guide as an outline, make flash cards for each piece of information you are required to know. OR Flesh out the pieces of the study guide in note form.
 - 3) Begin studying for your exam (Lesson 25).
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GROUP ROLES

None

DOCUMENTATION FOR PORTFOLIO

None