

SOCIAL STUDIES · GRADES 5–6

Branches of Government

Separation of powers

The three branches

Branch	What it does	US example	UK / Commonwealth equivalent
Legislative	Makes laws	Congress (House + Senate)	Parliament
Executive	Carries out laws	President & Cabinet	Prime Minister & Cabinet
Judicial	Decides what laws mean	Supreme Court & lower courts	Supreme Court & lower courts

Why three branches?

If one person or group held all the power, they could do anything they wanted. Splitting power across three branches means each one can CHECK the others — this is called 'checks and balances'. Most modern democracies have this idea built into their system in some form.

Apply

1. Which branch makes laws?
2. If the president signs a bill that the courts later rule is unconstitutional, what does that show?
3. Why is it important that judges are not chosen by lawmakers alone?
4. Name one job your country's leader (head of government) is responsible for.

