

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTIONS**

Read the text and then answer the questions.

The U.S. government has three branches. One branch is the *executive branch*. That branch is in charge of running the government. The president of the United States is the head of the executive branch. Another branch is the *legislative branch*. That branch is in charge of taxing. It also makes laws, prints money, and does other important jobs. Congress heads the legislative branch. The third branch of government is the *judicial branch*. That branch is in charge of making sure that laws are fair. It also interprets the most important set of laws, the Constitution. The judicial branch is also in charge of making sure that anyone accused of a crime gets a fair trial. The Supreme Court is the head of the judicial branch.

1. Which word best summarizes what the text is about?

- (A) running
- (B) accused
- (C) government
- (D) trial

2. Which branch of government is in charge of making sure laws are fair?

- (A) the president of the United States
- (B) the executive branch
- (C) the legislative branch
- (D) the judicial branch

3. Why is *Constitution* capitalized?

- (A) It is the last word in a sentence.
- (B) It is the first word in a sentence.
- (C) *Constitution* is a proper noun.
- (D) The president is the head of the executive branch.

4. What is the meaning of the word *head* in this text?

- (A) the leader
- (B) the mind
- (C) the start of something
- (D) a part of the body

5. What does it mean to be *in charge* of something?

- (A) to push
- (B) to be responsible for
- (C) to work together
- (D) to write

**SCORE**

1. (Y) (N)

2. (Y) (N)

3. (Y) (N)

4. (Y) (N)

5. (Y) (N)

\_\_\_ / 5

**Total**

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\_\_\_ / 5

**Total**

Why does the U.S. government have three branches? Each branch of government has special powers and jobs that the other branches do not have. And each branch *checks*, or stops, the other branches from having too much power. This system is called *checks and balances*. Here is an example of how checks and balances work: Congress creates bills, but bills do not become laws until the president signs them. Congress is the head of the legislative branch. The president is the head of the executive branch. The executive branch checks the power of the legislative branch. But the judicial branch checks both other branches. If a law is not fair, the judicial branch has the power to stop the law.

1. The government has a system of checks and balances so that

- (A) the president is the head of the executive branch.
- (B) Congress can create bills.
- (C) no branch has too much power.
- (D) there are three branches of government.

2. How does the executive branch check the power of the legislative branch?

- (A) Congress is the head of the legislative branch.
- (B) The president is the head of the executive branch.
- (C) Congress creates bills.
- (D) Bills do not become a law until the president signs them.

3. In this text, what is the definition of *checks*?

- (A) stops
- (B) marks
- (C) pieces of paper used to pay bills
- (D) examines

4. What is the tone of this text?

- (A) playful
- (B) guilty
- (C) somber
- (D) formal

5. *Bills do not become laws until the president signs them.* In this sentence, the word *them* refers to what?

- (A) until
- (B) the president
- (C) bills
- (D) signs

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**DIRECTIONS**

Read the text and then answer the questions.

How does the judicial branch decide whether a law is fair? This branch uses the Constitution. The *Constitution* is the most important set of laws in the United States. The Constitution tells how the government will work. It also tells what each branch will do and the powers each branch has. It tells what the states are allowed to do and what the federal government is allowed to do. The Constitution has been *amended*, or changed, twenty-seven times. The first ten amendments are called the *Bill of Rights*. The Bill of Rights explains the rights that we have. For example, we have the right to give our opinion. The government cannot make a law stopping us from stating our opinions. If a law goes against the Constitution, it is unfair. If a law is not fair, the judicial branch stops that law.

1. What would a reader learn after skimming the first few sentences?

- (A) The judicial branch uses the Constitution to decide if a law is fair.
- (B) The judicial branch uses other laws to decide if a law is fair.
- (C) The judicial branch makes changes to decide if a law is fair.
- (D) The judicial branch uses the federal government to decide if a law is fair.

2. What is one main idea about the Bill of Rights?

- (A) It is the judicial branch of government.
- (B) It tells how the government will work.
- (C) It tells what the states can do.
- (D) It tells the rights we have.

3. Which word has the same root word as *allowed*?

- (A) low
- (B) wed
- (C) allowance
- (D) lower

4. Which is a synonym for *change*, as it is used in the text?

- (A) money
- (B) amend
- (C) law
- (D) power

5. What does it mean when the Bill of Rights says that it is legal to *give our opinions*?

- (A) People can do anything they want.
- (B) People must stop an unfair law.
- (C) People can make laws.
- (D) People can say what they think.

**SCORE**

1. (Y) (N)

2. (Y) (N)

3. (Y) (N)

4. (Y) (N)

5. (Y) (N)

\_\_\_ / 5  
**Total**

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## THE SUPREME COURT

The Supreme Court is the head of the judicial branch of the United States government. It is made up of a group of nine judges called *justices*. The head justice is called the *chief justice*. The president nominates, or names, justices. The Senate votes on the justices. Justices cannot be on the Supreme Court until the Senate votes for them. The Senate is part of the legislative branch of government. The president is the head of the executive branch. Those branches check the power of the judicial branch.

The Supreme Court also checks the power of the other two branches. Congress makes laws, and the president signs them. But if a law is unfair, the Supreme Court can stop the law. The justices look at the law carefully. They read the Constitution. They decide whether the law goes against it. If it does, then the justices can stop the law.

The Supreme Court also has other duties. If two states are having a disagreement, the Supreme Court decides the case. The Supreme Court is the top court in the country. So it also hears some cases from other courts. Sometimes, people do not think they got a fair trial. People who do not think they got a fair trial can *appeal*. That means they can ask another court to hear their case. Sometimes, people appeal to the Supreme Court. The justices hear some of those cases. There are a lot of cases, so the Supreme Court does not hear all of them. When the Supreme Court hears a case, it makes a decision. That decision is final and cannot be appealed.

The Supreme Court meets in a special building in Washington, DC. When people want their cases to be heard, all of the information on the case is sent to the justices. They decide whether to hear the case. If the justices decide to hear a case, the people involved in that case go to the Supreme Court Building. They state their points of view. Then the justices make a decision. Some decisions are *unanimous*. That means that all of the justices agree. Other decisions are not. When the justices do not agree, the Supreme Court rules the way that the majority of the justices vote.



*The Supreme Court Building*

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**DIRECTIONS**

Read "The Supreme Court" and then answer the questions.

1. Who is the head of the Supreme Court?

- (A) the president
- (B) the chief justice
- (C) the Senate
- (D) Congress

2. What do justices read in order to decide whether a law is fair?

- (A) newspapers
- (B) the Internet
- (C) textbooks
- (D) the Constitution

3. What is the author's purpose?

- (A) to write about unfair laws
- (B) to write about the Supreme Court
- (C) to explain how to get to the Supreme Court Building
- (D) to get people to visit Washington, DC

4. The Supreme Court probably has an odd number of members so that

- (A) votes will not end in a tie.
- (B) the justices will hear cases.
- (C) the Supreme Court will be larger.
- (D) the president will nominate justices.

5. Which happens first?

- (A) Justices decide to hear a case.
- (B) The people in a case go to DC.
- (C) The justices get the case information.
- (D) The justices make a decision.

6. What is a real-life example of something that is *unanimous*?

- (A) A soccer team wins a game.
- (B) A kid eats all the cookies in a jar.
- (C) A class votes on a celebration, and all the students want a movie day.
- (D) The library has already checked out your favorite book.

7. Which is a summary of the text?

- (A) People can appeal to the Supreme Court if they did not get a fair trial.
- (B) The president nominates justices.
- (C) The Supreme Court is made up of nine justices.
- (D) The Supreme Court checks the powers of the other branches and hears some cases.

8. How does the Supreme Court check the power of the other branches?

- (A) It nominates the president.
- (B) It votes on justices.
- (C) It decides whether a law is unfair.
- (D) It meets in the White House.

**SCORE**

1. (Y) (N)

2. (Y) (N)

3. (Y) (N)

4. (Y) (N)

5. (Y) (N)

6. (Y) (N)

7. (Y) (N)

8. (Y) (N)

\_\_\_ / 8

**Total**

