



Separation of Powers:

Lessons & Activities

Clue Me in on the Constitution



Grade Levels: Middle School

MSDE Outcome: 6.3 Students demonstrate understanding of how the United States allocate power and responsibility in government.

MSDE Indicator: 6.3.8.1 Describe how the United States Constitution provides for separation of powers and checks and balances.

Objectives

1. To reinforce the distinctions among the three branches of government
2. To increase understanding of the powers of each branch of government
3. To enhance reading, speaking, and listening skills
4. To promote critical thinking skills

Timeframe: 2-3 class periods

Materials:

Copies of Clues Worksheet
Copies of Three Branches of Government Worksheet
Copies of Articles I, II, III of the United States Constitution
Scissors or envelopes containing pre-cut set of clues
Glue sticks (optional)

Directions:

- Have class count off by threes
- Explain that all one will become experts on the Legislative branch of government, twos on the executive branch and threes on the Judicial branch.
- Distribute copies of Article I, II, III to designated students
- Provide time for reading and study and note taking on Articles I, II, and III. This may be assigned as homework.
- Divide the class into groups of three with an expert of each branch in each group.
- Distribute one copy of the Clues and the Three Branches of Government worksheets to each group.
- Direct the groups to sort out the clues according to which branch of government has the power described in the clue.
- Debrief the activity by having groups share their results. Using an overhead to create the composite is an effective technique.

“Aware of the tendency of power to degenerate into abuse, the worthies of our country have secured its independence by the establishment of a Constitution and form of government for our nation, calculated to prevent as well as to correct abuse.”

-Thomas Jefferson to
Washington Tammany Society,
1809