

Teaching Resources

Separation of Powers

Suggested Student Activities

1. Have your class read the newspaper daily for issues involving the separation of powers on the state or national level. Discuss the issues as they unfold. Have the students decide which branch should have the ultimate authority over the situation.
2. Divide the class into several groups. Assign each group one separation of powers issue (remember that state law forbids the discussion of abortion in class). Have the group conduct research on the topic and prepare a visual presentation on the issue. Have the group present their visual presentation to the class.
3. Identify court cases that involve separation of powers issues. Have students research those cases and write a report on the case and how it relates to the concept of separation of powers.
4. Invite a judge or lawyer to speak to your class on separation of powers issues. Have students write a reaction paper to thoughts presented by the guest speaker.
5. Divide students into several groups. Assign each group a political theorist like Montesquieu or Hume to research. Have the groups focus on the concept of separation of powers in the research and have them present their findings to the class.

Standards

This Separation of Powers Activity meets the following **South Carolina Social Studies Academic Standards**:

- 6-6.3**..... Explain the causes, events, and points of contention and denominational affiliations(of nations) of the Reformation and the Catholic Reformation (Counter Reformation).
- 7-2.5**..... Explain how the **Enlightenment** influenced the American and French revolutions leading to the formation of limited forms of government, including the relationship between people and their government, the role of **constitutions**, the characteristics of shared powers, the protection of individual rights, and the promotion of the common good.
- 8-2.6**..... Explain the role of South Carolinians in the establishment of their new state government and the national government after the American Revolution.
- 8-3.3**..... Explain the basic principles of government as established in the United States Constitution.
- 8-5.4**..... Summarize the policies and actions of South Carolina's political leadership in

implementing discriminatory laws that established a system of racial segregation, intimidation, and violence.

MWH-1.2..... Explain the impact of the Crusades and the Renaissance on European exploration, including the significance of humanism, the revival of learning, and the transfer of knowledge about sailing and ancient philosophy from the Arabs to the Europeans.

MWH-5.2..... Analyze the ideas of social equality, democracy, **constitutionalism**, and **nationalism** brought about by **Enlightenment** and their effects on institutions.

USHC-1.2..... Analyze the early development of representative government and political rights in the American colonies, including the influence of the British political system and the **rule of law** as written in the Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights, and the conflict between the colonial legislatures and the British **Parliament** over the right to tax that resulted in the American Revolutionary War.

USHC-1.4..... Analyze how dissatisfactions with the government under the Articles of Confederation were addressed with the writing of the Constitution of 1787, including the debates and compromises reached at the Philadelphia Convention about the ratification of the Constitution.

USHC-1.5..... Explain how the fundamental principle of **limited government** is protected by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, including **democracy**, **republicanism**, federalism, the **separation of powers**, the system of **checks and balances**, and individual rights.

USHC-8.1..... Analyze the African American Civil Rights Movement, including initial strategies, landmark court cases and legislation, the roles of key civil rights advocates and the media, and the influence of the Civil Rights Movement on other groups seeking equality.

USG-1.2 Analyze components of government and the governing process, including politics, power, authority, sovereignty, legitimacy, public institutions, efficacy, and civic life.

USG-1.5 Evaluate **limited government** and **unlimited government** with regard to governance, including **rule of law**, the role of **constitutions**, civil rights, political freedom, economic freedom, and the ability of citizens to impact or influence the governing process.

USG-2.1 Summarize core principles of United States government, including **limited government**, federalism, **checks and balances**, **separation of powers**, **rule of law**, **popular sovereignty**, **republicanism**, individual rights, freedom, equality, and self-government.

USG-2.2 Analyze developmental influences on the core political principles of American government, including Greek **democracy**, Roman **republicanism**, the Judeo-Christian heritage, and the European philosophers John Locke, Charles de Montesquieu, and William Blackstone.

USG-2.3 Analyze the British heritage that fostered development of the core political

principles of American government, including the Magna Carta, the Petition of Right (1628), the Glorious Revolution, the English Bill of Rights, and the Mayflower Compact.

USG-2.4 Evaluate significant American founding documents in relation to core political principles, including the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, state **constitutions**, the United States Constitution, *The Federalist* papers, and the Bill of Rights.

USG-3.1 Evaluate the Constitution as the written framework of the United States government, including expression of the core principles of **limited government**, federalism, **checks and balances**, **separation of powers**, **rule of law**, **popular sovereignty**, **republicanism**, individual rights, freedom, equality, and self-government.

USG-3.2 Evaluate the formal and informal structure, role, responsibilities, and authority of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the national government as the embodiments of constitutional principles.

USG-3.3 Analyze federalism and its application in the United States, including the concepts of **enumerated**, **concurrent**, and **reserved** powers; the meaning of the ninth and tenth amendments; the principle of states' rights; the promotion of **limited government**; the protection of individual rights; and the potential for conflict among the levels of government.

USG-3.4 Analyze the organization and responsibilities of local and state governments in the United States federal system, including the role of state **constitutions**, the limitations on state governments, the typical organization of state governments, the relationship between state and local governments, and the major responsibilities of state governments.

This Separation of Powers Activity meets the following **South Carolina English Language Arts (ELA) Standards:**

Inquiry-Based Literacy **Grades 6, 7, 8**
English I, II, III, and IV

- Standard 1:** Formulate relevant, self-generated questions based on interests and/or needs that can be investigated.
- Standard 2:** Transact with texts to formulate questions, propose explanations, and consider alternative views and multiple perspectives
- Standard 3:** Construct knowledge, applying disciplinary concepts and tools, to build deeper understanding of the world through exploration, collaboration, and analysis.
- Standard 4:** Synthesize integrated information to share learning and/or take action.

Reading Informational Text **Grades 6, 7, 8**
English I, II, III, and IV

- Standard 1:** Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.
- Standard 2:** Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds.
- Standard 3:** Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
- Standard 4:** Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
- Standard 5:** Determine meaning and develop logical interpretations by making predictions, inferring, drawing conclusions, analyzing, synthesizing, providing evidence, and investigating multiple interpretations.
- Standard 6:** Summarize key details and ideas to support analysis of central ideas.
- Standard 7:** Research events, topics, ideas, or concepts through multiple media, formats, and in visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modalities.
- Standard 10:** Analyze and provide evidence of how the author’s choice of purpose or perspective shapes content, meaning, and style.

Writing **Grades 6, 7, 8**
English I, II, III, IV

- Standard 1:** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- Standard 2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- Standard 4:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing and speaking.

Communication..... Grades 6, 7, 8
English I, II, III, and IV

Standard 1: Interact with others to explore ideas and concepts, communicate meaning, and develop logical interpretations through collaborative conversations; build upon the ideas of others to clearly express one's own views while respecting diverse perspectives

