

# The Constitution: A More Perfect Union

## ***How has the Constitution created “a more perfect Union”?***

### PREVIEW

Read the quotation and answer the questions that follow.

*If men were angels, no government would be necessary.*

—James Madison

1. In your own words, what is Madison saying?

*Answers will vary.*

2. According to Madison, why are governments necessary?

*Answers will vary, but students should note that Madison believed government was necessary to protect people.*

3. Do you agree with Madison? Why or why not?

*Answers will vary.*

### READING NOTES

#### **Social Studies Vocabulary**

As you complete the Reading Notes, use these terms in your answers.

popular sovereignty

judicial review

federalism

legislative branch

separation of powers

majority rule

executive branch

checks and balances

interest group

judicial branch

interstate commerce

**Section 1**

Read the Preamble to the Constitution below. In your own words, briefly explain what the framers meant by each phrase listed in the chart. An example is done for you.

*We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

“We the People”      The Constitution bases its authority on the people.

“form a more perfect Union”      The Constitution is designed to create cooperation among states and a strong relationship between the states and the national government.

“establish Justice”      The Constitution establishes rule by law, not by the military or a king.

“insure domestic Tranquility”      The Constitution aims to keep peace and maintain order within the country.

“provide for the common defence”      The Constitution provides for the nation to protect itself against foreign enemies.

“promote the general Welfare”      The Constitution supports an economy and a society in which people can prosper.

“secure the Blessings of Liberty”      The Constitution protects the freedoms gained in the American Revolution and preserves them for future Americans.

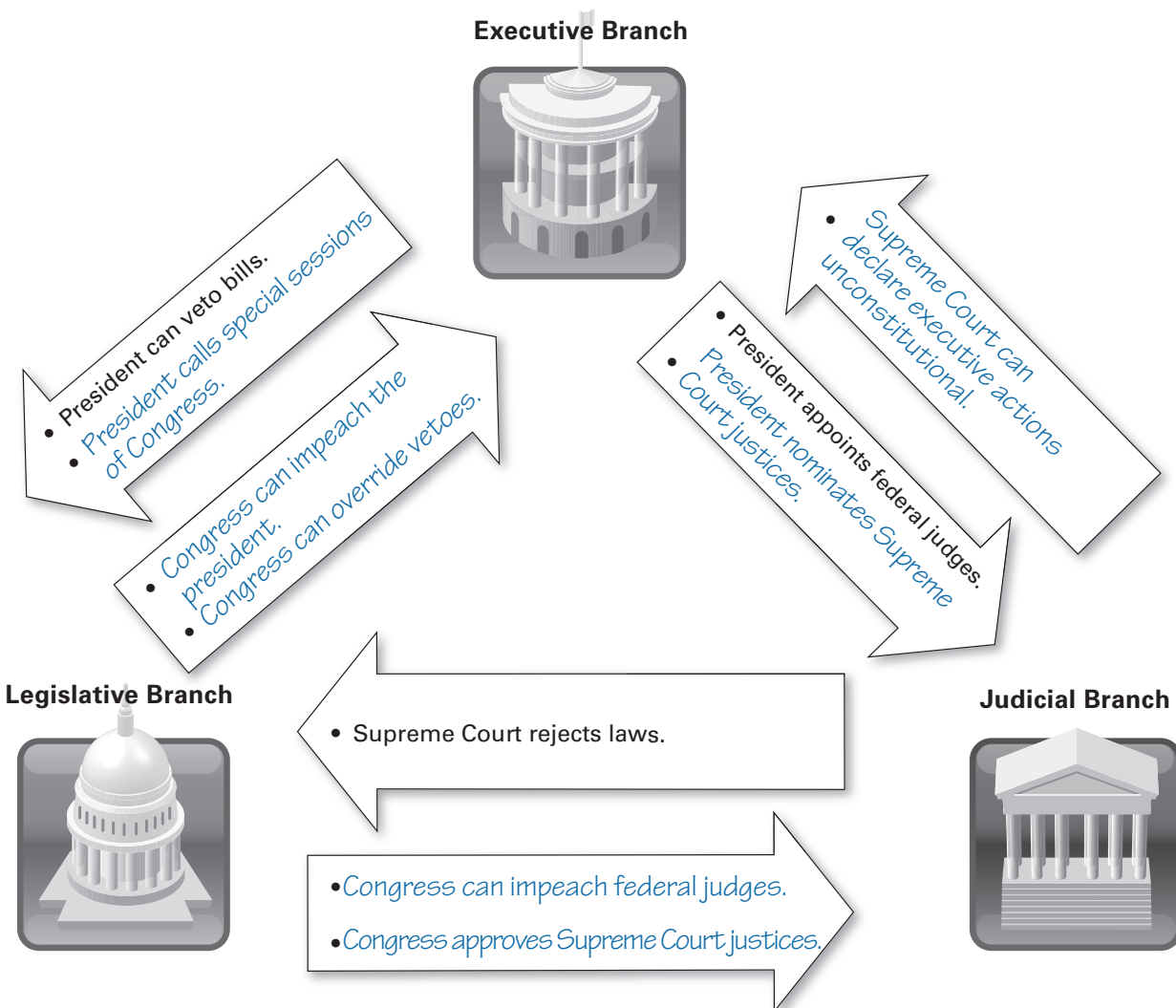
**Sections 2 to 4**

For each of Sections 2 to 4, draw a simple illustration at the top of the column to represent that branch of government. Then complete the column.

	<b>Section 2 Legislative Branch</b>		<b>Section 3 Executive Branch</b>	<b>Section 4 Judicial Branch</b>
	<i>Illustrations of the branches of government will vary.</i>			
	Congress House	Senate	Office of the President	Supreme Court
Number of Members	435	100	1	9
Length of Term	2 years	6 years	4 years	Life
Are Members Elected or Appointed?	Elected	Elected	Elected	Appointed
Age Requirement	25	30	35	None
Citizenship Requirement	7 years	9 years	Natural-born citizen	None
Two or More Powers of This Branch of Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To decide how to spend tax money</li> <li>To raise an army and navy</li> <li>To declare war</li> <li>To pay government debts</li> <li>To grant citizenship</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To serve as commander in chief of the military forces</li> <li>To make treaties</li> <li>To nominate ambassadors and Supreme Court justices</li> <li>To grant pardons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To rule on cases involving a state or an ambassador from another country</li> <li>To decide whether laws and actions by the other two branches conflict with the Constitution</li> <li>To protect the "supreme Law of the Land"</li> </ul>

**Section 5**

1. Why did the framers adopt the principle of separation of powers and develop a system of checks and balances? *By separating the functions of government among the three branches, the framers hoped to prevent any one branch from gaining too much power. The system of checks and balances further this goal by allowing each branch of government to limit the power of the other two branches. This ensures that one branch will not dominate the others.*
2. Complete the diagram by writing each of the following checks and balances in the correct arrow.
  - Congress can impeach the president.
  - President calls special sessions of Congress.
  - Supreme Court can declare executive actions unconstitutional.
  - President nominates Supreme Court justices.
  - Congress can override vetoes.
  - Congress can impeach federal judges.
  - Congress approves Supreme Court justices.



**Section 6**

1. Why did the framers make it possible to change the Constitution but difficult to do so?

*The framers made it possible to change the Constitution so that the document could evolve with the nation's ideals. The framers made changing the Constitution difficult when they created a system of checks and balances. This system limits the government's power to ensure that one branch did not dominate the others.*

2. Create a simple flowchart showing one way that a constitutional amendment can be proposed and ratified.

*Flowcharts will vary.*

*An amendment can be proposed by a two-thirds vote of each house of Congress or by a national convention called by Congress at the request of two-thirds of the state legislatures. An amendment can be ratified by at least three-fourths of the state legislatures or by special conventions in at least three-fourths of the states.*

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**Section 7**

1. Why did the framers establish a federal system of government for the United States?

*The framers wanted a strong national government. At the same time, they wanted the states to have significant powers.*

2. What power does the Commerce Clause give the national government?

*The Commerce Clause gives the national government the power to regulate interstate commerce.*

3. What advantages were there to having the states share a common market?

*With a common market, goods and resources could flow more easily across the country, and large businesses could cross state lines. The common market also helped to create a single national economy.*

**Section 8**

1. Describe the principle of majority rule.

The principle of majority rule is based on the idea that government actions reflect the popular will. Laws are passed in Congress by majority vote and elections are decided by a majority of voters.

2. Create and label drawings that show two ways people can participate in government.

Illustrations will vary.

Possible answers: People can join political parties or interest groups, vote, and express their interests and concerns to their elected officials.

**P R O C E S S I N G**

Use this rubric to evaluate the Processing assignment.

Score	Description
3	The letter includes the following elements: the listed Social Studies Vocabulary terms, an introductory paragraph outlining the purpose of the letter, two supporting paragraphs with relevant examples, and a concluding summary. The letter is well-written and free from grammar and spelling errors.
2	The letter includes most of the following elements: the listed Social Studies Vocabulary terms, an introductory paragraph outlining the purpose of the letter, two supporting paragraphs with relevant examples, and a concluding summary. The letter is well-written but may have some grammar and spelling errors.
1	The letter lacks several of the following elements: the listed Social Studies Vocabulary terms, an introductory paragraph outlining the purpose of the letter, two supporting paragraphs with relevant examples, and a concluding summary. The letter has grammar and spelling errors.

**INVESTIGATING PRIMARY SOURCES**

**Identifying Evidence**

Consider this question: *How did state constitutions influence the U.S. Constitution?*

Examine the four primary sources in the reading, and write down evidence from each source that helps answer this question.

<p><b>Primary Source 1</b> Possible answer: The Pennsylvania constitution emphasizes equality, stating that “all men are born equally free.” This constitution also grants many “inalienable rights” to the state’s citizens, such as “defending life and liberty,” property, and “pursuing . . . happiness and safety.”</p>	<p><b>Primary Source 2</b> Possible answer: The South Carolina constitution establishes a legislature with “two distinct bodies, a senate and house of representatives,” the members of which are elected. This constitution also establishes criteria for who could be elected governor, lieutenant governor, or member of the privy council.</p>
<p><b>Primary Source 3</b> Possible answer: Like the Pennsylvania constitution, the Massachusetts constitution discusses equality. It states that “all men are born free and equal” with “unalienable rights” such as property and “defending their lives and liberties.” This excerpt also shows that the people have the right to institute and change the government and elect public officers.</p>	<p><b>Primary Source 4</b> Possible answer: Like the Pennsylvania and Massachusetts constitutions, the U.S. Constitution aims to “secure the Blessings of Liberty.” The Constitution also establishes two houses in their legislature, a Senate and a House of Representatives, similar to the South Carolina constitution. Like the Massachusetts constitution the U.S. Constitution allows for amendments to the framework of government.</p>

Use the evidence you gathered to make a claim to the question.

**Claim:** *Claims will vary. Accept all reasonable responses.*

## Constructing an Argument

Create an argument to answer the question: *How did state constitutions influence the U.S. Constitution?* Your argument should:

- clearly state your claim.
- include evidence from multiple sources.
- provide explanations for how the evidence supports the claim.
- use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion.
- create cohesion among claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- establish and maintain a formal style.
- produce a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports your argument.

Use this rubric to evaluate your argument. Make changes as needed.

Score	Description
3	The claim clearly answers the question. The argument uses evidence from two or more primary sources that strongly support the claim. The explanations accurately connect to the evidence and claim.
2	The claim answers the question. The argument uses evidence from one or more primary sources that support the claim. Some of the explanations connect to the evidence and claim.
1	The claim fails to answer the question. The argument lacks evidence from primary sources. Explanations are missing or are unrelated to the evidence and claim.