The federal government in the United States is divided into three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. To prevent any one branch from having too much power, they have a system of checks and balances. That is, they have ways to keep each other in “check” and “balance” each other out.

The legislative branch is made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Together they are called Congress. Congress makes new laws and changes existing laws.

The Senate also has some ways of balancing the other branches on its own. It gets to approve or reject people appointed by the President, who is the head of the executive branch. This includes judges appointed to serve in the judicial branch. The Senate also decides whether to ratify or reject treaties the President wants to make with other countries.

Being Checked and Balanced

Any law Congress makes can be ruled unconstitutional by a federal court. If the Supreme Court—the highest court in the country—agrees with that ruling, then the law is removed or changed.

While Congress makes laws, it rarely makes them on its own. Proposals for laws are called bills. If the majority of both the House and the Senate approves a bill, it is sent to the President to be signed into law. If the President vetoes it, it does not become a law. Unless two-thirds of the House and Senate still approve it. Then the veto is overridden.
A System of Checks and Balances:

Legislative Branch

1. Write an L (legislative), E (executive), or J (judicial) on the lines to show which branch is checking or balancing the other in each example.
   a. ___ finds a law unconstitutional ___
   b. ____ impeaches a judge ___
   c. ____ ratifies a treaty ___

What does the word *investigate* mean?
   a. angrily send to jail
   b. carefully question and look into
   c. purposefully ignore
   d. quickly kick out of office

4. Which of the following is not a way the legislative branch can check or balance the executive branch?
   a. impeach a president
   b. override a veto with two-thirds majority
   c. reject an appointment
   d. decide an executive order is unconstitutional

5. Congress can start the process of amending, or making changes to, the Constitution. Imagine they do manage to amend it. How would that impact the judicial branch?

________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
A System of Checks and Balances:

Legislative Branch

The following terms are vocabulary words from the article. Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing the corresponding letter on the line.

1. _____ veto  
   a. to make and change laws in order to govern

5. _____ impeachment  
   e. to undo; to cancel out and do something else

6. _____ Senate  
   f. process to remove someone from office

7. _____ budget  
   g. plan for what money can be spent on and how much can be spent

8. _____ ratify  
   h. to disapprove a bill

9. _____ investigate  
   i. more than half

10. _____ override  
    j. to carefully question and look into
In the article, “A System of Checks and Balances: Legislative Branch,” you learned about many ways the legislative branch balances and is balanced by the other branches.

Which of Congress's ways of checking and balancing the other branches do you think is the most important? Why? Be sure to state if it’s something all of Congress does or just one part of it, and which branch(es) it impacts.
If there is a problem, Congress can investigate other branches of government.

What does the word *investigate* mean?

a. angrily send to jail
b. carefully question and look into
c. purposefully ignore
d. quickly kick out of office

4. Which of the following is not a way the legislative branch can check or balance the executive branch?

a. impeach a president
b. override a veto with two-thirds majority
c. reject an appointment
d. decide an executive order is unconstitutional

5. Congress can start the process of amending, or making changes to, the Constitution. Imagine they do manage to amend it. How would that impact the judicial branch?

__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

1. Write an **L** (legislative), **E** (executive), or **J** (judicial) on the lines to show which branch is checking or balancing the other in each example.

   a. ____ finds a law unconstitutional __________
   b. ____ impeaches a judge __________
   c. ____ ratifies a treaty __________
   d. ____ vetoes a bill __________
   e. ____ increases the number of Supreme Court justices __________

2. What does Congress set that directly affects all parts of the government?

__________________________________________________________

3. Reread the following sentence from the article.

   **J** **L** **J** **L** **E** **L** **J** **L** **L**

   Legislative Branch

   *A System of Checks and Balances:*

   **Legislative Branch**

   *Answers will vary. An example is: The judicial branch decides if laws are constitutional. If Congress changes the Constitution, then that will change what the judicial branch decides is constitutional or not.*

   Super Teacher Worksheets - www.superteacherworksheets.com
A System of Checks and Balances:

Legislative Branch

1. ______ veto
2. ______ reject
3. ______ majority
4. ______ legislate
5. ______ impeachment
6. ______ Senate
7. ______ budget
8. ______ ratify
9. ______ investigate
10. ______ override

The following terms are vocabulary words from the article. Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing the corresponding letter on the line.

a. to make and change laws in order to govern
b. chamber of Congress that approves appointments
c. to disapprove; to refuse to accept something
d. to approve, especially a treaty

e. to undo; to cancel out and do something else
f. process to remove someone from office

g. plan for what money can be spent on and how much can be spent
h. to disapprove a bill

i. more than half
j. to carefully question and look into