Checks, Balances, and the Expansion of Rights

First & Last Name: _____ Date: _____

CENTRAL QUESTION

How do institutions and people together limit power and pursue equal rights?

Learning objective

Analyze four source sets, evaluate evidence and limitations, and defend a civic judgment through interdisciplinary inquiry.

Demonstration of learning

Complete the daily evidence tasks, earn a score on 15 multiple choice items, and write a source based RACE response using the 19 point rubric.

Standards and task alignment

NJSLS Social Studies: 6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.b; 6.3.8.CivicsPR.2; 6.3.8.CivicsPR.3. Applied in daily analysis and the final civic judgment. NJSLS ELA (2023): RI.CR.6.1 (evidence), RI.CI.6.2 (central ideas), W.AW.6.1 (argument), SL.PE.6.1 (discussion). National CCSS: RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.2, RH.6-8.7; WHST.6-8.1 and WHST.6-8.9. NJSLS / CCSS Math: 6.RP.A.3 (ratios and percent); Science, technology, arts, history, and civic participation are integrated through the named tasks; no additional science or arts code is claimed.

Five lesson sequence

Days 1 to 4: read, annotate, analyze, collaborate, and write. Day 5: 15 question assessment and extended RACE response. Each lesson is designed for 40 minutes; teacher notes provide timing and supports.

Academic vocabulary

separation of powers: division of branch responsibilities; check: power that restrains another institution; balance: arrangement limiting domination; amendment: formal constitutional change; civil right: legal protection of equal treatment or participation; implementation: putting a rule into practice

Source integrity

Readings are original Ma’at instructional syntheses. Exact historical excerpts are marked. Classroom datasets and scenarios are labeled; they are not historical records or actual government budgets. Source references appear on page 13.

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DAY 1

Source A | Distinct powers, connected decisions

Do Now

Is delay always evidence that a system is broken? Explain an initial position.

[1] Separation of powers assigns different responsibilities to legislative, executive, and judicial institutions. Checks and balances allow institutions to restrain one another. Congress passes laws, the president may veto bills, and Congress may override a returned veto with the required vote in each chamber. Courts can review constitutionality in cases within their authority.

[2] The president nominates many federal judges, and the Senate provides advice and consent. Congress establishes lower federal courts and controls appropriations under the Constitution. The House may impeach federal officials, and the Senate conducts impeachment trials. Impeachment by the House is an accusation, not itself removal from office. Conviction in the Senate requires two thirds of members present.

[3] This design creates friction. A slower decision is not automatically a failure: deliberation can expose errors and protect against abuse. Yet delay can also obstruct needed protection. Students must evaluate the evidence and consequences rather than treating all conflict as healthy or all disagreement as dysfunction. A mechanism’s existence and its just use are different questions.

Annotation task: underline a central claim; box one civic term; mark one detail as evidence; add a question where evidence or authority needs clarification.

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