**Claim Your Powers**

**Objectives:**

1. In this activity, students will review the powers delegated to the three branches of government.
2. Students apply the powers granted to the government in the first three Articles of the Constitution to hypothetical situations.
3. Students will increase their understanding of the separation of powers and the resulting conflict between shared enumerated powers.

**Materials Needed:** Claim/Not Claim cards for each of the three groups

Score Sheet

Constitution

**Time Needed:** One class period

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Procedure:**

1. Divide the class into three groups. One group represents the executive, one the legislative, and one the judicial branch of the national government. (If the class is large, two groups may represent each branch.)

2. Provide each group with two signs: “CLAIM” and “DO NOT CLAIM”. Each branch will also need the list of its powers found in the Constitution.

3. Establish the purpose of the activity by explaining that the exercise is intended to review and reinforce the student’s knowledge of the first three Articles of the Constitution. Tell the class that in this activity they will be acting as a branch of government and that it is their responsibility to maintain the powers granted to them in Articles I, II, or III of the Constitution.

4. Tell the class that you will read a series of situations, each involving a power of one or more branches of the government. In some instances, a branch will have the sole power; in others, the power may be shared. After each situation is read, each group will have a short period of time to discuss the situation and decide if the power described belongs to its branch and to find the part of the Constitution justifying that decision. At the end of one minute, the leader will say the word “vote” and each group must hold up a card, either “CLAIM” or “DO NOT CLAIM”. Every group must vote on each situation.

5. Explain that scoring will be as follows:

a. Two points will be given for correctly claiming the claim of a power

b. One point will be given for correctly voting not to claim a power.

c. A zero will be given to a group incorrectly claiming or not claiming a power.

6. Tell students that in some cases, under the facts of the situation, more than one branch can claim power.

Adapted from The Constitution, Law in a Changing Society, Dallas, Texas, 1982.

**Situations** (these may be read aloud or written on index cards and distributed to each group)

a. A bill proposing immigration reform is being considered.

b. You hold your office for life during good behavior.

c. The United States needs an ambassador to Argentina.

d. There is a vacancy on the Supreme Court and a new justice must be nominated.

e. The state of Arizona is suing California over water rights.

f. The army wants more money for tanks.

g. A law recently passed by the state of Louisiana has been challenged as being unconstitutional.

h. Ralph Z. is being tried for a federal crime of internet computer hacking.

i. Impeachment trial against the president is being conducted.

j. A vetoed bill is overridden.

k. A State of the Union message is being prepared.

l. An ambassador from a foreign country is being tried for driving while intoxicated.

m. A law is declared null and void.

n. War is declared on Transylvania.

o. A federal income tax cut is being proposed.

p. A treaty with a foreign country to import oil is being negotiated.

q. A case has arisen over land between two Indian tribes who claim the land was given to each of them under separate treaties.

**Claim Your Powers Score Sheet (Possible Points)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Situation** | **Branches** | | | | | | | |
|  | **Judicial** | |  | **Executive** | |  | **Legislative** | |
|  | Claim | No Claim |  | Claim | No Claim |  | Claim | No Claim |
| a. |  | 1 |  | 2 |  |  | 2 |  |
| b. | 2 |  |  |  | 1 |  |  | 1 |
| c. |  | 1 |  | 2 |  |  | 2 |  |
| d. |  | 1 |  | 2 |  |  |  | 1 |
| e | 2 |  |  |  | 1 |  |  | 1 |
| f. |  | 1 |  | 2 |  |  | 2 |  |
| g. | 2 |  |  |  | 1 |  |  | 1 |
| h. | 2 |  |  | 2 |  |  |  | 1 |
| i. | 2 |  |  |  | 1 |  | 2 |  |
| j. |  | 1 |  |  | 1 |  | 2 |  |
| k. |  | 1 |  | 2 |  |  |  | 1 |
| l. | 2 |  |  |  | 1 |  |  | 1 |
| m. | 2 |  |  |  | 1 |  |  | 1 |
| n. |  | 1 |  |  | 1 |  | 2 |  |
| o. |  | 1 |  | 2 |  |  | 2 |  |
| p. |  | 1 |  | 2 |  |  | 2 |  |
| q. | 2 |  |  |  | 1 |  |  | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | **16** | **9** |  | **16** | **9** |  | **16** | **9** |

**Claim Your Powers Score Sheet**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Situation** | **Branches** | | | | | | | |
|  | **Judicial** | |  | **Executive** | |  | **Legislative** | |
|  | Claim | No Claim |  | Claim | No Claim |  | Claim | No Claim |
| a. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| b. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| c. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| d. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| h. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| i. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| j. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| k. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| l. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| m. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| n. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| o. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| p. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| q. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **TOTAL** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Claim

Do Not

Claim