

# Balancing Act

## The Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances

**Benchmark:** SS.7.C.1.7 Describe how the Constitution limits the powers of government through separation of powers and checks and balances.

### Clarifications/Objectives:

- Students will explain the concept of limited government as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
- Students will describe and distinguish between the concepts of separation of powers and checks and balances.
- Students will analyze how government power is limited by separation of powers and/or checks and balances.
- Students will be able to recognize examples of separation of powers and checks and balances.

**Time:** One class period

### Materials:

- Balancing Act PowerPoint
- Computer
- Projector
- Paper as students should be taking notes throughout presentation.

### Lesson Preparation

- Review all handouts and PowerPoints
- Print and review the PowerPoint in “notes view”. The PowerPoint includes notes to guide the lesson.

### Lesson Overview

**Warm Up Question:** What Enlightenment idea would help limit power and ensure that no one person or group could become too powerful? *Students should recall information from the Enlighten Me lesson. The image as provided as a memory cue.* Response: separation of powers.

**Review** the concept of limited government as found in Magna Carta and make sure students clearly understand the purpose of a limited government. Review the concepts of separation of powers and checks and balances in general terms as presented in *Enlighten Me*. The PowerPoint will provide specific definitions of both concepts and explain how these concepts are outlined in the U.S. Constitution. Students should take notes and create visuals to help them remember the concepts.

**Watch Flocabulary’s video** “Checks and Balances” and discuss the visuals and examples provided in the PowerPoint. Lastly, the PowerPoint will provide a slide that will distinguish the concepts before checking for understanding.

**Check for Understanding:** The final slide will include a question from the End of Course Exam Item Specifications book. Have the students independently write down their answer and ask student to explain how they made their decision.

**Extension activity:** Have students use a copy of the Constitution to do a scavenger hunt through Articles I-III where they will look for examples of checks and balances.