

From Short to Long Responses: Systematic Intermediate Writing Instruction



Text Set, Culminating Task, Short Response Question Ladder

Text: *The U.S. Constitution and You* by Syl Sobel
Shh! We're Writing the Constitution by Jean Fritz

Purpose: The purpose is to develop students' knowledge of the U.S. Constitution and the functions of the U.S. Federal Government.



Culminating Writing Task | Write an expository essay about how the Framers of the United States Constitution designed the government to prevent one person from becoming too powerful.

Short Response Question #6 | What responsibility do the people have in the United States' system of government?

Short Response Question #5 | How do the people have controlling power in the United States?

Short Response Question #4 | What might be some examples of governments giving into the temptations of power?

Short Response Question #3 | Complete the sentence frames to write a summary of the text: Somebody wanted _____, but _____. So _____. Then _____.

Short Response Question #2 | Based on how it is used in the passage, summarize how checks and balances work in the U.S. Federal Government.

Short Response Question #1 | Summarize the roles of the three branches of the U.S. Federal Government.

Question #1: Summarize the roles of the three branches of the U.S. Federal Government.

One branch of the federal government is the legislative branch. This branch is also called Congress because the Congress people make laws. Another branch is the executive branch. It has the President of the United States as the leader and many other people called cabinet members. The job of the executive branch is to make sure citizens follow the laws that Congress makes. The final branch is the judicial branch. It includes the U.S. Supreme Court and other U.S. courts. The role of the judicial branch is to interpret the laws that Congress makes and decide if someone has broken the laws.

Question #2: Based on how it is used in the passage, summarize how checks and balances work in the U.S. Federal Government.

Checks and balances means that each branch checks in on what the other branch does to make sure no branch is too powerful. They make sure no branch has more power than the others: "their object was to create a kind of obstacle game which would keep the government balanced" (*Shh! We're Writing the Constitution*). Both houses of Congress must agree on a law before it can be sent to the executive branch. Then the President must sign the law before it can be passed. The judicial branch provides another step in the process if there is a disagreement about the law. Also, the Supreme Court can strike down a law if they find it to be unconstitutional during a court case.

Question #3: Complete the sentence frames to write a summary of the text: Somebody wanted ____, but _____. So _____. Then _____.

The people who wrote the Constitution wanted to make sure no one person could become too powerful, but there was no way to make a government completely safe from all tyranny. So the writers of the Constitution created a system of checks and balances. Then no one branch of government could make all the decisions for the country without the others having a say.

Question #4: How do the people have controlling power in the United States?

The people have controlling power in the United States because they vote to elect leaders. They vote to elect a president every four years. Also, the people elect Congress (*Shh! We're Writing the Constitution*). The people vote these leaders and lawmakers into the government, so they protect the people's rights. Where do they get this controlling power? The Framers gave these powers to the people in the Constitution 230 years ago (*The U.S. Constitution and You*).

Question #5: What might be some examples of governments giving into the temptations of power?

Some countries have governments that give into the temptations of power. *The U.S. Constitution and You* describes many ways that some governments are tempted by power. Some countries have rulers who are in charge their whole lives. Other governments force people to follow a specific religion. The government punishes those who don't believe the government's religion. Some governments put people in jail and punish them for no reason.

Question #6: What responsibility do the people have in the United States' system of government?

The people have many responsibilities in the U.S. government. The people have to choose their leaders and lawmakers by voting. It is important to choose leaders and lawmakers who will follow the Constitution and make good decisions. According to *The U.S. Constitution and You*, the people also have to "serve on juries, to protect the right to jury trials." The people have to pay taxes so the government has enough money to do things. The U.S. has a government of the people. It is the people's job to keep up with these responsibilities so the government can work.

Grades 4-6 Expository Rubric

Responses are scored holistically by domain and earn scores by demonstrating *most* of the descriptors in a given score point.*

Score Point	Purpose/Structure	Development	Language
<p>4</p> <p>Above grade-level accomplishment demonstrated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea is focused on the task and consistently maintained throughout. • Organizational structure strengthens the response and allows for advancement of the central idea. • Varied transitional strategies connect ideas within and among paragraphs, enhancing the progression of the response. • Effective introduction and conclusion enhance the essay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skillful development demonstrates thorough understanding of the topic. • Effective elaboration may include original student writing combined with (but may not be limited to) paraphrasing, text evidence, examples, definitions, narrative, and/or rhetorical** techniques as appropriate to support the central idea. • Smoothly integrated, relevant evidence from multiple sources lends credibility to the essay. • Evidence is appropriately cited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of academic vocabulary strengthens and furthers ideas. • Skillful use of varied sentence structure contributes to fluidity of ideas. • Use of standard English grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling demonstrates consistent command of the communication of ideas. • Tone and/or voice strengthens the overall response.
<p>3</p> <p>Within the range of grade-level performance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea is focused on the task and generally maintained throughout. • Organizational structure is logical and allows for advancement of the central idea. • Varied transitional strategies connect ideas within and among paragraphs. • Sufficient introduction and conclusion contribute to a sense of completeness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical development demonstrates understanding of the topic. • Adequate elaboration may include (but may not be limited to) a combination of original student writing with paraphrasing, text evidence, examples, definitions, narrative, and/or rhetorical** techniques as appropriate to support the central idea. • Relevant, integrated evidence from multiple sources lends credibility to the exposition. • Evidence is appropriately cited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of academic vocabulary demonstrates clear expression of ideas. • Sentence structure is varied and demonstrates grade-appropriate language facility. • Use of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling demonstrates grade-appropriate command of standard English conventions. • Tone and/or voice is appropriate for the overall response.

<p>2</p> <p>Approaching the range of grade-level performance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea may be unclear, loosely related, or insufficiently sustained within the task. • Organizational structure may be repetitive or inconsistent, disrupting the advancement of ideas. • Transitions attempt to connect ideas but may lack variety. • Introduction and conclusion may be present but repetitive, simplistic, or otherwise ineffective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development may demonstrate partial or incomplete understanding of the topic. • Elaboration may attempt to develop the central idea but may rely heavily on the sources, provide loosely related information, be repetitive or otherwise ineffective. • Evidence may be partially integrated and/or related to the topic but unsupportive of or disconnected from the exposition. • Lacks appropriate citations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary and word choice may be imprecise or basic, demonstrating partial command of expression of ideas. • Sentence structure may be partially controlled, somewhat simplistic, or lacking grade-appropriate language facility. • Inconsistent use of correct grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling may contain multiple distracting errors, demonstrating partial command of standard English conventions. • Tone and/or voice may be inconsistent. • May be grammatically accurate but too brief to demonstrate grade-appropriate command of language skills.
<p>1</p> <p>Below grade-level performance demonstrated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea may be absent, ambiguous, or confusing, demonstrating lack of awareness of task. • Demonstrates little or no discernible organizational structure. • Transitions may be absent or confusing. • Introduction and conclusion may be unrelated to the response and/or create confusion. • Too brief to demonstrate knowledge of purpose, structure, or task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response may demonstrate lack of understanding of the topic and/or lack of development. • Elaboration may consist of confusing ideas or demonstrate lack of knowledge of elaborative techniques. • Evidence from sources may be absent, vague, and/or confusing. • Lacks appropriate citations. • Too brief to demonstrate knowledge of elaboration, topic, or sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary and word choice may be vague, unclear, or confusing. • Sentence structure may be simplistic or confusing. • Use of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling may contain a density and variety of severe errors, demonstrating lack of command of standard English conventions, often obscuring meaning. • Tone and/or voice may be inappropriate. • Brevity with errors demonstrates lack of command of language skills.

*Citation is not a holistic consideration. Without citation, the highest score possible in *Development* is a 2.

**Grade 6

Introductio

Some countries are run by one person who has all of the power, like a king. When the Framers were writing the U.S. Constitution, they wanted to avoid tyranny because they had so much trouble under the rule of the King of England. So the Framers of the Constitution designed the government to prevent one person from becoming too powerful by designing three branches of government with checks and balances and giving the people controlling power.

Body Paragraph 1
Short Response #5

Some countries have governments that give into the temptations of power. *The U.S. Constitution and You* describes many ways that some governments are tempted by power. Some countries have rulers who are in charge their whole lives. Other governments force people to follow a specific religion. The government punishes those who don't believe the government's religion. Some governments put people in jail and punish them for no reason.

Body Paragraph 2
Short Response #3

The people who wrote the Constitution wanted to make sure no one person could become too powerful, but there was no way to make a government completely safe from all tyranny. So the writers of the Constitution created a system of checks and balances. Then no one branch of government could make all the decisions for the country without the others having a say.

Body Paragraph 3
Short Response #2

Checks and balances means that each branch has to check in on what the other branch does to make sure no branch is becoming too powerful. They make sure no branch has more power than the others: "their object was to create a kind of obstacle game which would keep the government balanced" (*Shh! We're Writing the Constitution*). Both houses of Congress must agree on a law before it goes to the executive branch. Then the President must sign the law before it can be passed. The judicial branch provides another step in the process if there is a disagreement about the law. The Supreme Court can strike down a law if they find it to be unconstitutional during a court case.

The people have controlling power in the United States because they vote to elect leaders. They vote to elect a president every four years. Also, the people elect Congress (*Shh! We're Writing the Constitution*). The people vote these leaders and lawmakers into the government, so they protect the people's rights. Where do they get this controlling power? The Framers gave these powers to the people in the Constitution 230 years ago (*The U.S. Constitution and You*).

The Framers of the Constitution were very wise to create so many ways to stop one person from becoming too powerful. Some governments in the world give into the temptations of power. The system of checks and balances in the U.S. is important to keep one branch of government from being tempted by the power to make and enforce laws. Also, the people have controlling power to make sure the government leaders are following the will of the people. The only way one person can have too much power is if the people do not do their part in the government.

Reflection

Directions: Use the space below to reflect on today's learning.

What was most **valuable** from today's learning?

What is your **next step** to implement this learning?