



The three branches of the US government

Identify and explain the three branches of the US federal government and their roles

SOCIAL STUDIES · GRADE 4 · 45 MIN



TODAY

What we will do

Identify and explain the three branches of the US federal government and their roles

- 1 I can name the three branches of the US federal government.
- 2 I can describe the main job of each branch.
- 3 I can match each branch to its home building in Washington, D.C.
- 4 I can explain why power is shared across three branches.

LOOK CLOSELY

What do these three buildings share?

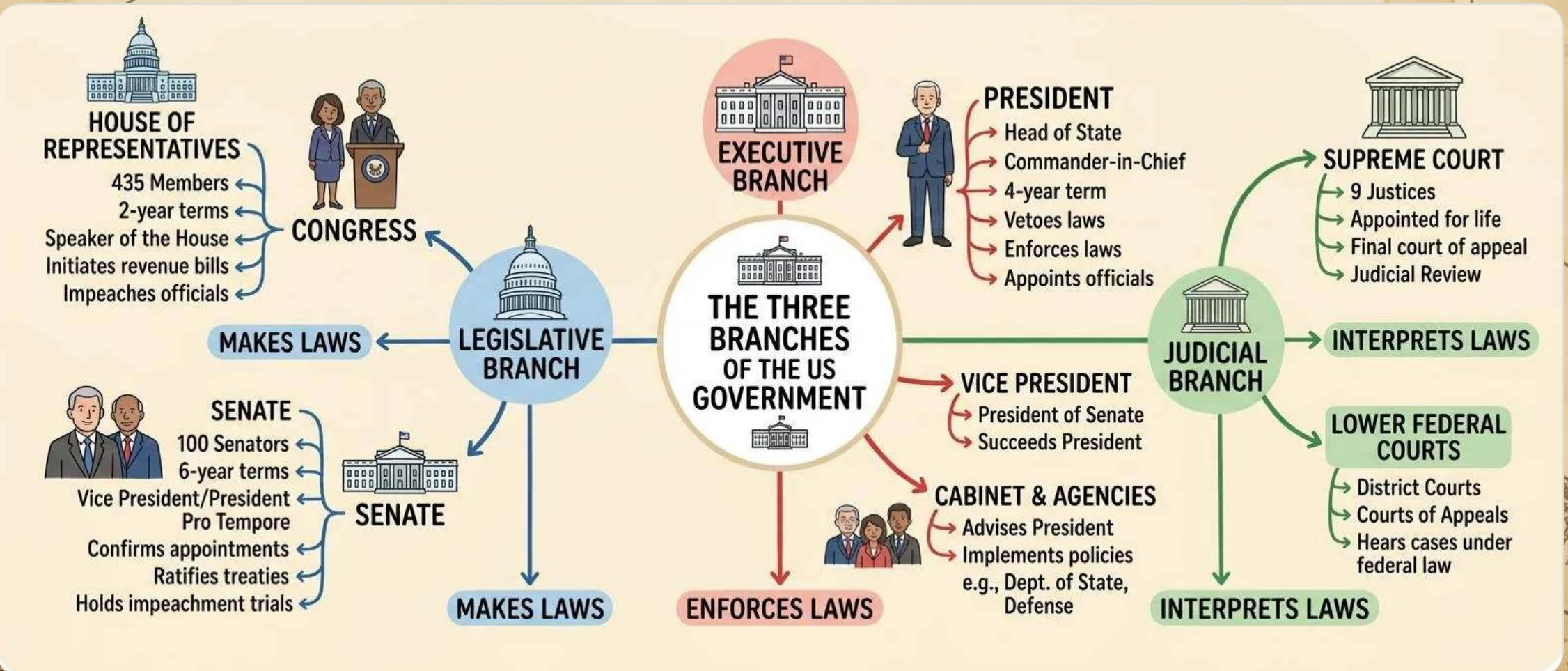
One country. Three power centers. Why not just one leader in charge of everything?

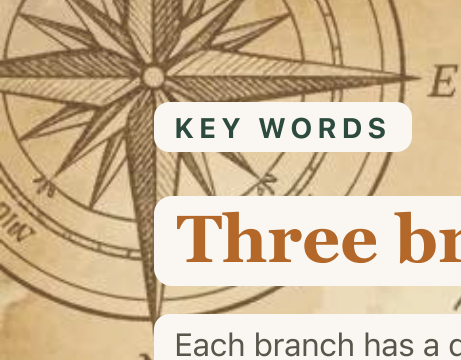


TALK Tell your partner what you think.

Three branches of the US government

Power is split across three branches so no single person or group can control everything.





KEY WORDS

Three branches, three jobs

Each branch has a different job and a different home in Washington, D.C.

Legislative Branch

Capitol Building

Congress. The Senate and House of Representatives. Makes the laws.

Executive Branch

White House

The President signs laws and makes sure they are carried out.

Judicial Branch

Supreme Court Building

The Supreme Court decides whether laws follow the Constitution.

BRANCHES IN ACTION

Making a law vs. Checking a law

Congress creates laws. The Supreme Court checks whether those laws are fair.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH



Congress writes and votes on a new law. If most members agree, it passes to the President.

JUDICIAL BRANCH



The Supreme Court reviews whether a law follows the Constitution. It can strike laws down.

Each branch keeps an eye on the others. That is the system of checks and balances.

CHECKS AND BALANCES

No branch holds all the power

Each branch can limit the other two. This stops any one branch from becoming too powerful.

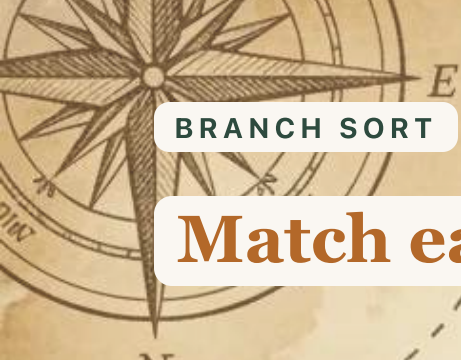


EXAMPLE

The President can veto a law Congress passed. Congress can override that veto with enough votes.

⚠ WATCH OUT

Checks and balances does NOT mean the branches are equal in every way. Each has its own unique powers.



BRANCH SORT

Match each job to its branch

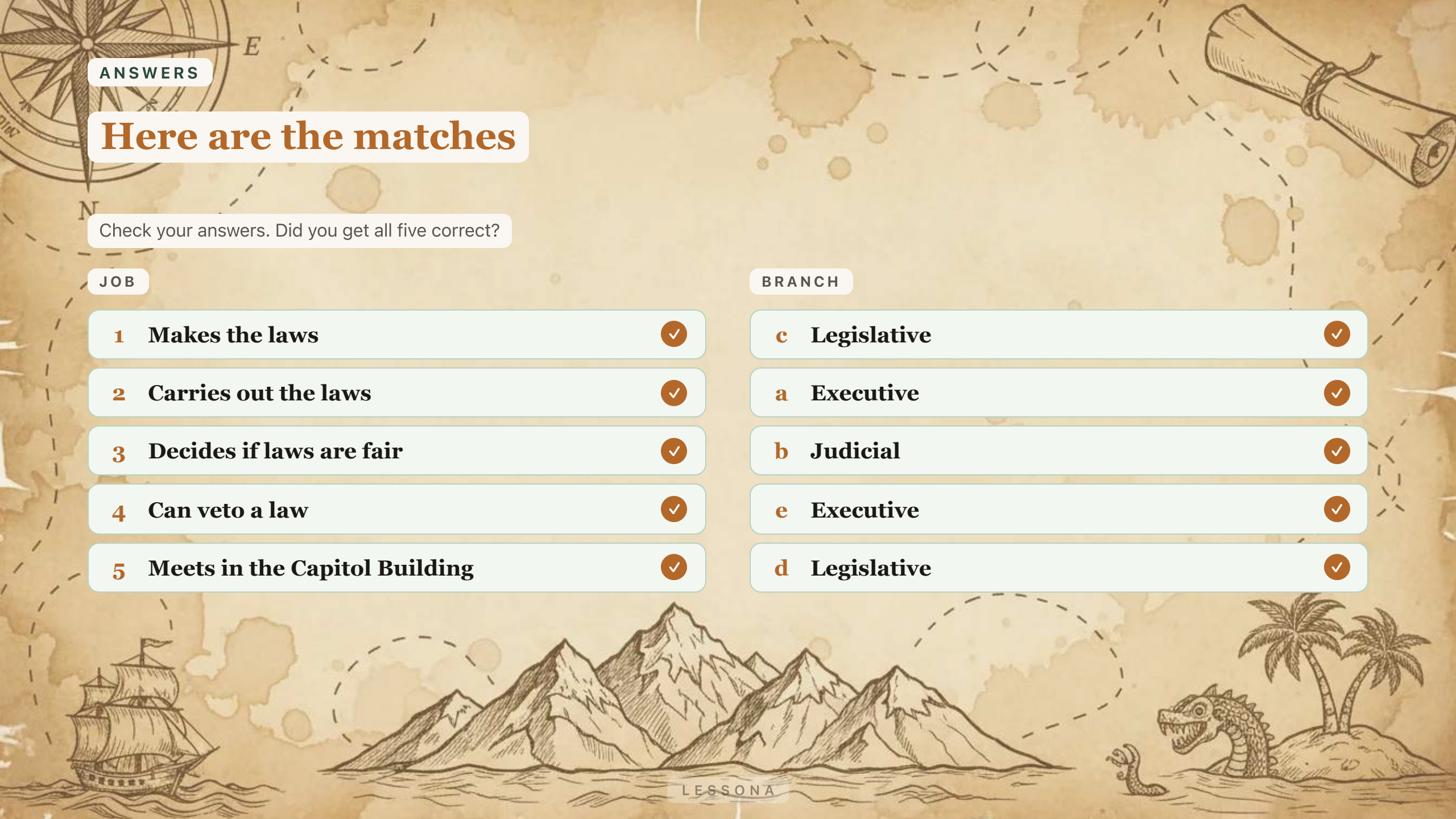
Which branch does each job belong to? Think first, then check with a partner.

JOB

- 1** Makes the laws
- 2** Carries out the laws
- 3** Decides if laws are fair
- 4** Can veto a law
- 5** Meets in the Capitol Building

BRANCH

- a** Executive
- b** Judicial
- c** Legislative
- d** Legislative
- e** Executive



ANSWERS

Here are the matches

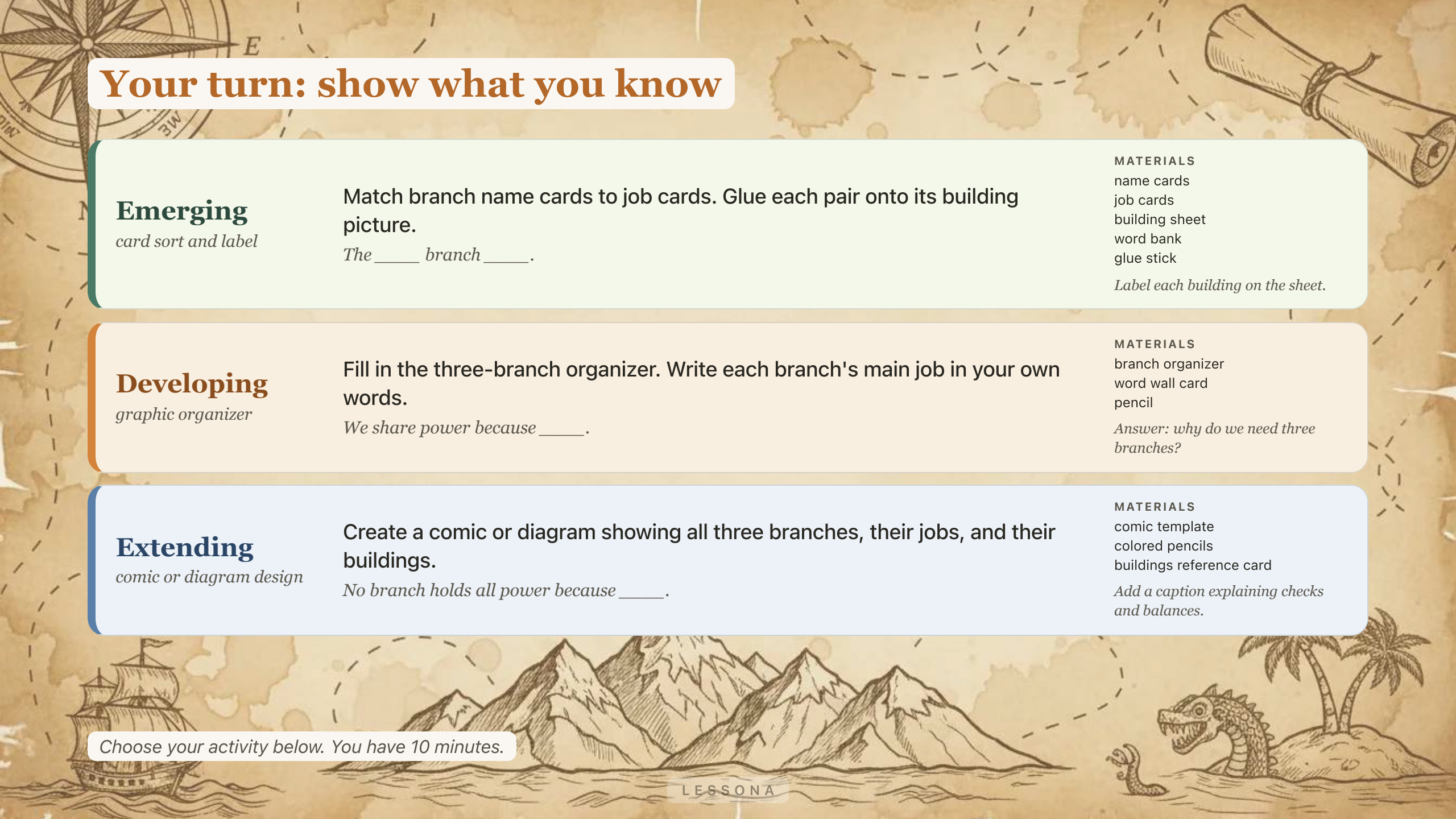
Check your answers. Did you get all five correct?

JOB

- 1** Makes the laws ✓
- 2** Carries out the laws ✓
- 3** Decides if laws are fair ✓
- 4** Can veto a law ✓
- 5** Meets in the Capitol Building ✓

BRANCH

- c** Legislative ✓
- a** Executive ✓
- b** Judicial ✓
- e** Executive ✓
- d** Legislative ✓



Your turn: show what you know

Emerging

card sort and label

Match branch name cards to job cards. Glue each pair onto its building picture.

The _____ branch _____.

MATERIALS

name cards
job cards
building sheet
word bank
glue stick

Label each building on the sheet.

Developing

graphic organizer

Fill in the three-branch organizer. Write each branch's main job in your own words.

We share power because _____.

MATERIALS

branch organizer
word wall card
pencil

Answer: why do we need three branches?

Extending

comic or diagram design

Create a comic or diagram showing all three branches, their jobs, and their buildings.

No branch holds all power because _____.

MATERIALS

comic template
colored pencils
buildings reference card

Add a caption explaining checks and balances.

Choose your activity below. You have 10 minutes.



WE LEARNED TODAY

Three things to remember

- ✓ I can name all three branches: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial.
- ✓ I can describe each branch's main job and its home building.
- ✓ I can explain why power is shared across three branches, not one.

