Checks and Balances

The framers of the U.S. Constitution realized that too much power can be dangerous. To prevent any part of the government from becoming too powerful, the Constitution created three separate branches of the federal government. The Constitution gives each branch its own powers. This separation of powers creates a system of checks and balances. Each branch can check (limit) the power of the other two. This helps maintain a balance of power among the three. Study the diagram to see how this works.

**Words to Know**
- **appropriate** (v): to set aside for a specific use
- **impeach** (v): to bring a charge of wrongdoing against a public official
Questions

1. What does it mean to check the power of a branch of government?
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   __________________________________________________

2. Who can veto legislation passed by Congress?
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3. How can Congress override a presidential veto?
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4. Which branch has the power to appoint Supreme Court justices and other federal judges?
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5. How does Congress check that power?
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6. How can federal courts check the president’s power?
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7. How can federal courts check the power of Congress?
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8. What limits the president’s power to make treaties with other countries?
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9. Suppose a law has been declared unconstitutional. What can be done to try to make it constitutional?
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10. What is meant by “separation of powers”? 
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