

**Let's Talk Branches, and I Don't Mean Tree Branches!
The Three Branches of Government**

Prepared By:
Christina Andersen
Rapid City Area School District
Robbinsdale Elementary School
Rapid City, SD



Chiesman Center
for DEMOCRACY, INC.

Developed for
Legislative Education for Greater Inquiry and Study (LEGIS)
Chiesman Center for Democracy, Inc.
1641 Deadwood Ave.
Rapid City, SD 57702
www.chiesman.org
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LEGIS: Legislative Education for Greater Inquiry and Study



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Lesson Title: Let's Talk Branches, and I Don't Mean Tree Branches! The Three Branches of Government.

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Grade Level: 1st and/or 2nd

Time Required: One 45 minute session

- 1st **Lesson 2 of 4 in Unit:** What is Government?
Lesson 1 of 1 in Unit: Relationships between Citizens and Legislators
- 2nd **Lesson 2 of 5 in Unit:** What is Government?
Lesson 1 of 2 in Unit: Relationships between Citizens and Legislators

I. Essential Questions:

What are the three branches of government?

What are some basic characteristics of each branch of government?

II. South Dakota Grade Level Content Standards

Indicator 1: Analyze forms and purposes of government in relationship to the needs of citizens and societies including the impact of historical events, ideals, and documents.

2.C.1.3. Students are able to explain the basic political roles of leaders in the larger community.

III. Assessment Strategies

1. Observe comments made during group discussion of the topic with the attached checklist.
2. Grade the tree that they complete.

IV. Learning Objectives

1. The students will be able to name the three branches of government.
2. The students will be able to explain at least one characteristic of each branch of government.

V. Necessary Materials/Technology:

1. Assessment Checklist (optional)
2. Three Branches of Government Tree Picture (One picture per child)
3. Copies of the Leaves (One sheet with 3 leaves on it per child).
4. Projector and Internet access (Optional)

VI. Background information

The students will need to know some basic information about the government, such as why we have a government. The students will need to have some understanding of the President and his job. The Kindergarten lesson titled "The President of our Country" is a good precursor to this lesson and it could easily be taught in the 1st or 2nd grade.

VII. Detailed Lesson Description

What are the three branches of government and what are the characteristics of each branch?

1. Draw a tree on the board with three branches, similar to the one that the children will use for their independent activity. Explain that this tree represents the Government of the United States. Ask them to tell you what they know about the United States Government. Explain that they will learn about the Three Branches of the United States Government; the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, and the Judicial Branch. Write the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, and the Judicial Branch on the three branches of the tree.
2. Project the website, <http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/government/branches.html> on the wall. Discuss the branches of government. Discuss each branch and its components. On the board, next to the tree you drew earlier, draw a large leaf next to each branch. While discussing the branches of government list characteristics of each branch on the leaves. (If you do not have internet access, go to the website and print information on the branches of government, make overheads of it, and use it for your discussion. There is also an information sheet on the branches of government with this lesson that may be helpful.
3. After discussing the different branches of government, hand out the tree worksheet and the leaves. Ask the children to label each branch on the tree just like you did and then write 1-2 characteristics of the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the Judicial Branch on the 3 leaves. Have them cut out each leaf and glue it next to the correct branch of government.
4. End the lesson by letting the children share their "Branches of Government Trees" with the class.

VIII. Enrichment

If you teach 2nd grade, divide the children into groups of three, give each group a variety of resources on the branches of government, have each child in each group choose one different branch of government and have them write 3-5 facts about their branch from the resources provided. Have them teach the information they found to the rest of their group.

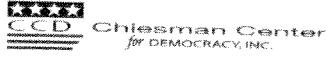
IX. Bibliography/Resources

Branches of Government Information (Ben's Guide to the Government)
<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/government/branches.html>

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The Three Branches of Government ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

STUDENT NAME	Student knows Legislative Branch plus one characteristic.	Student knows Executive Branch plus one characteristic.	Student knows Judicial Branch plus one characteristic.



Basic Information on the Three Branches of Government

LEGISLATIVE

Consists of the Congress...there are two groups in the Congress.

1. The Senate
2. The House of Representatives

Powers of the Congress:

1. Propose bills and vote them into laws
2. Approve the making of money
3. Declare war on other countries

EXECUTIVE

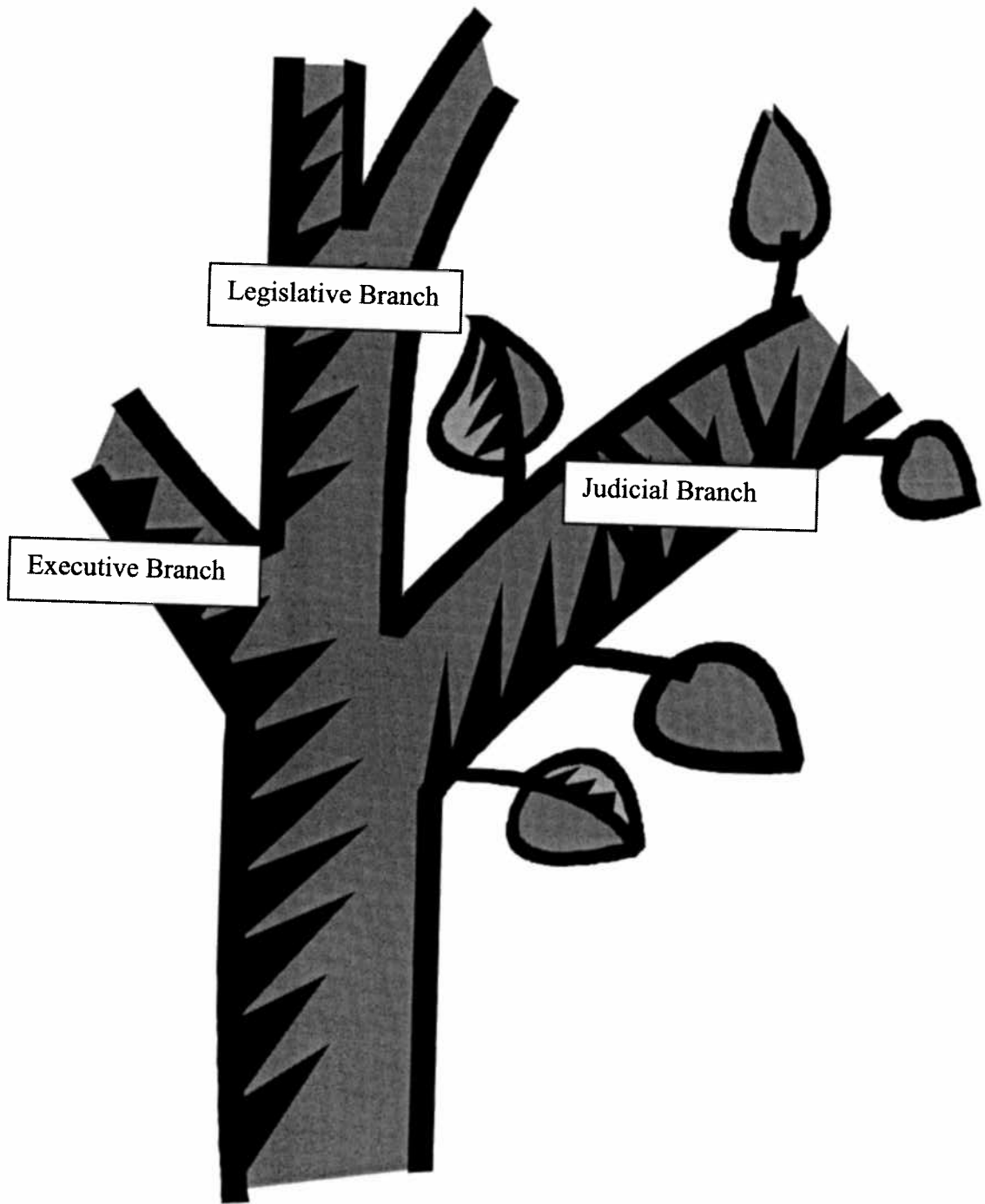
The Executive Branch consists of:

1. The President...who is the leader of the country as well as commander of the military.
2. The Vice President....who aides the president and becomes president if the president can no longer do his job.
3. Departments-Groups...these groups advise the president on issues that may or may not help our country.

JUDICIAL

The Judicial Branch consists of:

1. Our Court System
2. Purpose to enforce laws.
3. The Supreme Court is the highest court of the land.



The Three Branches of Government

