Teaching English Across the Content Areas: Social Studies
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Theme: The American Constitution and Political System: Distribution of Powers and Responsibilities

Topic: Three Branches of the United States Government at the Federal (national) Level

Target: 12th Grade Proficient Level (Intermediate)

Rationale: This is a 12th-grade Social Studies Lesson about American Government, its political system and the distribution of powers and responsibilities: Legislative, Executive and Judicial. It is the second lesson of the unit. In the first lesson, students learned about the philosophy and ideologies of the Enlightenment and Pre-Enlightenment Periods which include natural rights and representative government greatly influenced the framers of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Focus Skill: Reading

N.B.: Though reading is the main focus skill, students will also practice listening to a short video, their partners’ reading aloud in pair-share work, whole-class share and as individual students read aloud. Silent reading will also be included at times. Writing skills including appropriate grammar use like Passive Voice and phrases for comparing and contrasting will be used. Students will also be engaged in speaking and listening throughout small group or pair work and in whole class share.

Therefore, the four language-learning skills will be practiced even though the main focus of this lesson is reading.

Content Area: Social Studies (Government and Civics: TCC, SOC, GOV, CIV)

Standards Addressed: NYS CCS--Social Studies: 12G1, 12G1a, 12G1b; NYS ELA CCR 1, 1a, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; NYC Scope & Sequence: Social Studies 12.G1b, 12.G1c, 12.G5a.

Language Objective: SWBAT use Passive Voice to describe the three branches of the federal government.
• Students will be able to (SWBAT) to compare and contrast the three branches of the federal government by reading a variety of primary and secondary sources (e.g., print and electronic).
• SWBAT determine the meaning of words and phrases using contextual evidence in readings.
• SWBAT comprehend the vocabulary regarding politics and government of the United States and other countries in readings, websites and the textbook.
• SWBAT identify the main ideas presented in primary and secondary sources about the three branches of government by reading in silence in their groups/pairs and/or in whole class share.
• SWBAT to read their summaries aloud to partners or pairs and/or in whole class share.
• SWBAT analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis (e.g., such as Passive Voice).

Instructional Objective:
• SWBAT identify the three branches of government: Legislative, Executive and Judicial in readings.
• SWBAT summarize each in written format and read it aloud and in silence.
• SWBAT distinguish the duties and power each branch of the federal government holds when creating a law. SWBAT summarize these duties and powers in written and oral formats.
• SWBAT recognize that government exists at the national (federal) and state levels.
• SWBAT summarize the key events or ideas in a written paragraph (e.g., using the KWL Chart as a guide) and read it aloud. SWBAT to read to their partner(s) and/or in all-class share.

Key Vocabulary: Legislative Branch/es--Congress, Senate, the House of Representatives; Executive Branch--President, Vice-President, Cabinet; Judicial Branch--Supreme Court and other federal courts; enlightenment, pre-enlightenment--philosophy/ies, ideology/ies, theory/ies, Founding Fathers; Separation of Powers (phrase); Constitution--(series of) checks and balances.

Materials: Poster of the American Constitution and three branches of Government of the United States; Cards with Key Vocabulary and Government Terms; National Archives digitized copy of the U.S. Constitution, Handout on the Separation of Powers; Smartboard or Dry White Board --Projector and Markers; Textbook; headsets, earbuds, computer workstations in lab,
selected websites for technology tools (e.g., Three Branches of the U.S. Government, Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances, Brainpop Game: Branches of the U.S. Government, Congress for Kids); KWL Chart (graphic organizer) and corresponding handouts for students.

Motivation:

- Students will be asked to call upon prior knowledge about the theories, philosophies and ideologies of the Enlightenment and Pre-Enlightenment Eras. They will apply these concepts to their readings on the three branches of the federal government.
- Students will be asked to apply their detective or CSI skills (see attached KWL Handout) to ask and analyze questions about the federal government. This scaffolded inquiry process will help students comprehend the branches of the U.S. government, separation of powers and the system of checks and balances.
- Using new knowledge built upon prior knowledge, students will summarize these concepts in a written summary (one short paragraph). They will read the summary aloud to partner(s) and/or the entire class.
- In their groups or pairs students will use this knowledge in the final Knowledge Sharing Project created in digital format (e.g., website, wiki, blog, digital story, etc.) about the three branches of federal government in America.

Procedure:

1. The teacher will ask students to recall the main philosophies, concepts and ideologies of the Enlightenment and Pre-Enlightenment Eras learned in the previous lesson.
2. Students will assess their prior knowledge about the Enlightenment and Pre-Enlightenment Eras by using Brainpop Game.
3. The teacher will show a short video about the three branches of the federal government. He/she will then tape a chart of the U.S. government branches on the front wall.
4. The teacher will have cards with key vocabulary and terms prepared in advance. Students may borrow the cards throughout the lesson. Cards have varying levels of information to address leveled and differentiated learning.
5. Students will be separated into small groups of three or pairs where they will collaborate on the assignment about the three branches of the national (federal) government.
6. The teacher will write the three branches of the national (federal) government on the KWL chart (hanging on the wall in the front of the room), and students will follow along writing on the new information on their KWL handouts.
7. Students will be instructed to become *Detectives or Crime Scene Investigators* (CSI) to learn about the three branches of government, extracting main ideas and key elements from readings and other teacher-selected sources (e.g., government/other websites, articles, textbook, etc.).

8. Students will work as detectives or CSIs in groups of three. Using technological devices (e.g., computers, Ipads, laptops, etc.) each group will gather information from teacher-selected articles and the textbook. They will also use teacher-selected online videos and websites (e.g., National Archives).

9. Students will then organize their knowledge by completing the KWL Chart (distributed earlier).

10. Then each student will create a diagram, artistic representation, or a flyer with a brief description (one paragraph) explaining the three branches of government at the federal level.

11. Problem-solving and analysis-skills like detectives or CSIs to decide whether they would
   - create a new federal (national) government branch system for America,
   - create a new country with three federal government branches OR
   - adhere to the current system and present their opinion through a digital creation/product (e.g., wiki, digital story, website, etc.).

This activity will probably be completed in the next lesson.

**Assessment:**

- The teacher will ask students to recall prior knowledge about the Enlightenment and Pre-Enlightenment Eras.
- Students will assess their prior knowledge by taking a short Brainpop Quiz on these topics.

- **Formative Assessment**
  
  The teacher will rotate around the room to monitor students’ progress in completing the KWL chart and participating in the small group/pair conversations. The teacher will periodically return to the computer to check knowledge understanding through student screen-captures of content game outcomes. The teacher will verify that each student is participating in the small group or pair collaborations.
The teacher will also assess progress during consultations with groups or pairs and individual students.

- He/she will invite students to share their new knowledge by reading aloud their summary to their partner(s) and/or the entire class.
- As he/she rotates around the classroom, teacher will monitor and check each student’s segment of learning: knowledge recalling, gaining, organizing, reading and writing, and sharing.
- Leveled and differentiates cards with key terms and phrases may be used and the teacher can verify comprehension by evaluating assignments and in conversations.

**Summative Assessment**

The Final project in "Knowledge Sharing" will assess students’ content understanding, thoughtfulness, argument/support for opinion, use of academic language and creativity as well as comparing and contrasting. They will be required to read three articles or a textbook segment and two articles, plus two other online sources.

Each student will be required to answer the following questions in the Knowledge Sharing Project:

- **What are the three branches of government?**
- **What are the powers of each branch?**
- **What makes up each of these branches?**
- **How does our government prevent one branch from becoming too powerful?**
- **Compare and contrast the three branches of government on the federal level to that on the state level.**