

## Creating a Metaphor for the Three Branches of Government

### OBJECTIVES

Students will create a metaphor poster that completes this comparison: "The three branches of government under the Constitution are like a..." They will also design and create an illustration for their metaphor, complete with a brief written explanation of why the metaphor is accurate. Each group's metaphor must have the features listed in the lesson plan.

### LESSON PLAN

#### Features

**1. An Accurate Metaphor.** The major challenge of each group is to choose a metaphor that most accurately completes the statement, "The three branches of government under the Constitution are like a..." Students may choose from the following list of ideas, or they can come up with one of their own:

- A three-ring circus
- A football team
- A musical band
- A tricycle
- A three-part machine

**2. Use of Proper Materials.** One 24" x 28" piece of butcher paper or poster board; felt pens, crayons, or colored pencils; creative minds.

**3. Title.** At the top of their poster, they must have a title, written clearly and in large letters, that reads, "The three branches of government under the Constitution are like a \_\_\_\_\_."

**4. Visual Image.** Create a central image for the metaphor. The image should be bold and artistic. It can involve drawing, cut-out magazine pictures, or both. For each of the ten required items and the five optional items, create a visual or part of a visual that represents each item. Be sure they are labeled and that they fit in with the theme of the metaphor.

**5. Labels.** The metaphor must make direct comparisons between the three branches of government and the metaphor. In doing so, students must label on their metaphor the 10 required items listed below plus at least 5 of the others. They include:

- Required: Constitution, The People, Executive Branch, Legislative Branch, Judicial Branch, President, Congress, The Supreme Court, Checks and Balances, Separation of Powers.
- Choice of at Least Five: Constitutional Convention, James Madison, Articles of Confederation, Great Compromise, George Washington, Shays' Rebellion, John Locke, Baron de Montesquieu, Thomas Hobbes, Iroquois Confederacy, Senate, House of Representatives

For example, if a student chooses the metaphor of a three-ring circus, he/she might label each of the three rings the Legislative, Executive, or Judicial branch. Or, if they chose the metaphor of a football team, they might label the quarterback as the President.

**6. Explanation.** Alongside or below the image, students should write the word “because,” followed by a list of the three most important similarities between the thing they illustrated and the three branches of government.

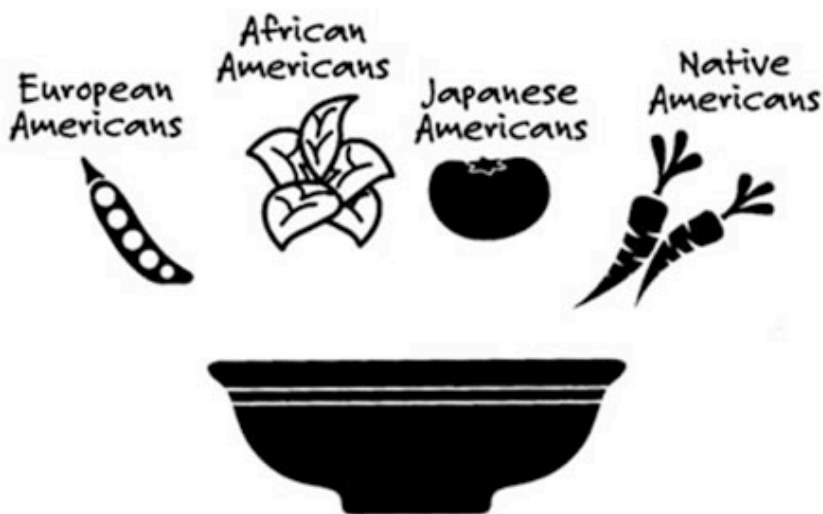
**7. Differences.** On the back of the poster, have students write the two most important ways in which the thing in their metaphor is different from the three branches of government.

**8. Extras.** The metaphor should be neat, colorful, and creative.

**9. Sample Metaphor.** The metaphor should look something like the following:

### SAMPLE METAPHOR

America is like a tossed salad...



because:

- People from different backgrounds mix to create a rich salad or society.
- America's culture is made up of distinct and wonderful flavors and traditions.
- The different cultures retain their flavor and are not sacrificed for the whole.

## CHECKLIST FOR METAPHOR PROJECT

Make sure everybody understands his or her role:

**Project Manager:** Makes sure the metaphor project is complete, accurate, and creative. Leads the brainstorming session and makes sure everyone has an equal chance to contribute ideas for the metaphor. Works closely with the presenter to determine ways to incorporate the required components into the metaphor. Makes sure all required components are included on the poster.

**Presenter:** Responsible for presenting the group's metaphor to the class. Points out to the class the similarities and differences between the illustrated thing and the three branches of government. Contributes ideas for the metaphor. Works closely with the project manager to determine ways to incorporate the required components into the metaphor.

**Graphic Designer:** Responsible for creating the "look" for the poster. Takes notes and contributes ideas during the brainstorming session. Determines what kinds of visuals should be incorporated in the poster. Works closely with the artist to create a rough sketch of the poster. Assists the artist with the final production of the poster.

**Artist:** Has primary responsibility for creating the artwork for the poster. Contributes ideas during the brainstorming session. Works with the graphic designer to create both the rough draft and final draft. Participates in the group "brainstorming session," contributing ideas for the different visuals. Holds the poster during the presentation.

Review Guidelines for Creating a Metaphor carefully. Choose the best metaphor. Brainstorm ideas for how to label and explain in the most accurate way. Make sure you have all the necessary features on the poster.

Have the artist and graphic designer create a rough sketch of the poster. Have all members give suggestions for improvements.

Complete the final draft of the poster. Help prepare the presenter for the presentation.

## RESOURCES

- Each group should have four copies of Guidelines for Creating a Metaphor
- A piece of poster board or butcher paper
- Colored pens, crayons, or colored pencils

## CREDIT

This lesson was presented by a past Congress in the Classroom® participant and is adapted from the Teacher's Curriculum Institute's unit, The Constitution in the New Nation.

Source: The Dirksen Congressional Center, CongressLink,  
[http://www.congresslink.org/print\\_lp\\_metaphor.htm](http://www.congresslink.org/print_lp_metaphor.htm)  
Copyright © 2006