The Main Idea Strategy: Student Practice Lessons

Name

Date

Passage #17

**Structure of Government**

The people who wrote the Constitution were called Framers. They needed to create a government that was strong enough to rule while keeping a balance of power. The Americans remembered the English kings and were afraid of a leader that was too strong. The new Constitution tried to solve this problem. It set up a government with three branches, Congress, the Executive Branch, and the Judicial Branch. It allowed each branch to check the power of the other two.

The first branch of government is Congress. It has two houses. They are called the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress has the power to tax, to coin money, to borrow money and to control trade. It can also set up courts and a postal system. Congress has the power to declare war also.

The House of Representatives is the larger of the two houses. There are 435 members. The representatives are based on the population of individual states. Every state has at least one member. Members of the House of Representatives serve a two-year term. They are chosen from districts picked by their states. The Senate is the other part of Congress. There are 100 members. Each state has two senators. They are elected to six-year terms.

The House of Representatives has the power to remove federal officers. This includes the President. The Senate tries these officials. Their power is a good example of checks and balances. This is how one branch can keep the other branches, executive and judicial, from abusing their power.

The executive branch is a powerful branch. The powers of the President have grown. People look to the President for leadership. Presidents who have shown strong leadership have been more successful in history. It is the President’s duty to carry out the laws and act as Commander-in- Chief of the Armed Forces. The President may recommend laws to be passed. The President may also veto a law passed by Congress as part of the checks and balances. Congress can get rid of the veto, but seldom does.

Adapted from: Hereford, J. (1998). *Passing the North Carolina Seventh Grade EOG in Reading: The Competitive Edge* (pgs. 36-67). Raleigh: Contemporary Publishing Company. Used by permission.

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