*STUDENTS INVESTIGATING PRIMARY SOURCES –* ***Super Sized!***

**Big Civics Ideas Through Political Cartoons**

How do the political cartoons illustrate big civics ideas?

*An Activity for Middle School Civics*

***Benchmark Correlations***

**SS.7.CG.1.8** – Explain the purpose of the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

**Benchmark Clarification:** Students will identify the goals and purposes of the national government as set forth in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution.

**SS.7.CG.2.6** – Examine the election and voting process at the local, state and national levels.

**Benchmark Clarification:** Students will explain the origins of the Republican and Democratic political parties and evaluate their roles in shaping public policy.

**SS.7.CG.3.3** – Describe the structure and function of the three branches of government established in the U.S. Constitution.

**Benchmark Clarification:** Students will recognize the structure of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

**Benchmark Clarification**: Students will compare the roles and responsibilities of the three branches of the national government.

**Benchmark Clarification**: Students will identify the general powers described in Articles I, II, and III of the U.S. Constitution.

**SS.7.CG.3.7** – Explain the structure, functions, and processes of the legislative branch of government.

**Benchmark Clarification**: Students will examine the processes of the legislative branch (e.g., how a bill becomes a law, appointment confirmation, committee selection).

**Benchmark Clarification**: Students will compare and contrast the lawmaking process at the local, state, and national levels.

**SS.7.CG.3.8** – Explain the structure, function, and processes of the executive branch of government.

**SS.7.CG.3.9** – Explain the structure, function, and processes of the judicial branch of government.

**ELA.7.R.2.1 –** Explain how individual text sections and/or features convey a purpose in texts.

**ELA.7.R.2.2 –**Compare two or more central ideas and their development throughout a text.

***Time***

This SIPS is super sized! This activity will take 1-2 class periods depending on student background knowledge. This activity can be used to introduce big civics concepts or as a review prior to the end-of-course civics assessment. To shorten the activity, reduce the number of stations.

***Full Document Citations***

See Pages 26 and 27

***Activity Documents and Handouts***

* Big Civics Ideas Graphic Organizer Packets, Pages 3-8, print one copy of all graphic organizers for each student and one additional copy for each station
* Station Placards, Pages 9-25, print one copy of each placard to be cut into three pieces

**Teacher Note**: Prior to the start of this activity, cut out the political cartoon, caption and summary statement into three separate pieces. Place a copy of one graphic organizer and the related cutouts at each station. Be sure to mix up the political cartoons, captions and summaries at the station so that students have to match the ideas together. If you have multi-colored copier paper available, print the set of political cartoons for each station on the same color paper. This will ensure that cartoons, captions and summary statements don’t get mixed up between stations.

***Activity Vocabulary***

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| **constituents** – people public officials are elected to represent  **executive branch** – the branch of government that enforces the laws made by the legislative branch and the rulings decided by the judicial branch  **federal government** – the national level of government; the United States government  **Framers** – the group of men assembled to write the U.S. Constitution  **House of Representatives** - the house of the U.S. Congress that represents residents by districts  **judicial branch** – the branch of government that interprets the laws made by the legislative branch and executive orders signed by the president  **legislative branch** – the branch of government that makes laws  **political party** - an organization that tries to get political power by electing members to public office so that their political ideas can become laws or policies  **president** – the head of the executive branch  **Senate** – the house of the U.S. Congress that represents residents by states  **Speaker of the House** – an office identified in Article I, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution; the leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, usually the highest ranking member of the majority party |

1. Place students into pairs and pass out the Big Civics Ideas Graphic Organizer Packets, one per student.
2. Project the Power Point presentation and use Slides 1-3 to explain to students that they are going to use political cartoons to understand some big civics concepts.
3. Project Slide 4 and direct student attention to Graphic Organizer 1. Instruct students to work with their partner to read the paragraph together and circle the civics vocabulary terms.
4. Have students share out the terms they identified. Project Slide 5 to ensure that students have circled all of the key civics terms. **Teacher Note**: Depending on what has already been taught, check to make sure that each student understands the meaning of the terms that they have circled.
5. Pose the following question to the students: What can you predict about the political cartoons based on the key civics terms you circled?
6. Direct students back to the packet and instruct students to work with their partner to read and circle the key civics terms for the remaining graphic organizers.
7. Circulate through the class and check for student understanding of the key civics terms and concepts.
8. Use Slides 6-10 of the Power Point to review the remaining graphic organizers as a whole class.
9. Create six stations around the room. At each station place a graphic organizer and the corresponding political cartoons, captions and summaries. **Teacher Note**: Be sure to mix up the political cartoons, captions, and summaries at the station so that students have to match the ideas together.
10. Project Slide 11 and merge the student pairs into small groups. You will need six groups total. Place each group at one of the stations.
11. Explain to students that they will participate in a carousel activity, moving from one station to the next to connect the political cartoons on their graphic organizers to the correct summary and caption. Share with students that each cartoon illustrates a constitutional power of one of the branches of government.
12. Project Slide 12 of the Power Point and instruct students to reread the paragraph on the graphic organizer.
13. Project Slide 13 and instruct students to follow the directions on the graphic organizer to match the correct description and caption for each political cartoon and to respond to the question on the graphic organizer: How does the cartoon match the caption? **Teacher Note**: If needed, model the activity for the students before they begin using a graphic organizer that contains a least three cartoons.
14. Provide 5-7 minutes for students to work at their station and complete the graphic organizer.
15. Project Slide 14 and have the groups rotate to each station, providing 5-7 minutes for student groups to work at each station.
16. Instruct students to return to their seats and work with their group members to make any final notes on their graphic organizers. Rotate through the groups to check student work.
17. Close the activity by providing students with the following prompt: “Using one graphic organizer explain how the political cartoons on the graphic organizer relate to each other and to the legislative branch. Write your response in paragraph form and hand it in as an exit slip.”

**Enrichment Suggestion**: Have students create their own political cartoon illustrating a function of the legislative branch. Instruct students to create a caption and summary to accompany their cartoon.

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**Graphic Organizer 1: Congress and the Constitution**

The U.S. Constitution divides the federal government into three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. While the Constitution established a plan for government, the effectiveness of government is the result of how the branches work with and in opposition to each other. Article I of the Constitution outlines the powers of the legislative branch of the government (Congress), and Article II outlines the powers of the executive branch, which includes the presidency.

**Directions:**

1. Match the political cartoon with the correct description. Summarize the description in the box under the cartoon.
2. Match each caption with the correct cartoon. Write the caption in the box under the cartoon.
3. Respond to the following question and write your answer in the corresponding box: How does the cartoon match the caption?

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Cartoon** |  |  |  |
| **Summary of the Description** |  |  |  |
| **Caption** |  |  |  |
| **How does the cartoon match the caption?** |  |  |  |

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**Graphic Organizer 2: Congress, The Elected, Representative Branch of Government**

The Framers created Congress as the representative branch of government with a House of Representatives and a Senate that would represent the people in different ways. Article I of the Constitution establishes the House of Representatives and the Senate as distinct representative bodies with balanced responsibilities and the power to act together to create, or make, legislation. Each of the 435 House members represents a district, while each of 100 Senators represents a whole state. One of the important features of the design is that both houses of Congress must agree on a bill before it goes to the president.

**Directions:**

1. Match the political cartoon with the correct description. Summarize the description in the box under the cartoon.
2. Match each caption with the correct cartoon. Write the caption in the box under the cartoon.
3. Respond to the following question and write your answer in the corresponding box: How does the cartoon match the caption?

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Cartoon** |  |  |  |
| **Summary of the Description** |  |  |  |
| **Caption** |  |  |  |
| **How does the cartoon match the caption?** |  |  |  |

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**Graphic Organizer 3: Congress: Making Laws for the Nation**

Making laws for the nation is the primary responsibility of Congress. The legislative process in Congress is complex, but it allows every member of the House or Senate to introduce bills. A bill usually advances first to a committee that researches, debates, and amends the bill before reporting a successful bill to the full body for debate, further amending, and then voting. Only a small fraction of bills introduced in Congress become law.

**Directions:**

1. Match the political cartoon with the correct description. Summarize the description in the box under the cartoon.
2. Match each caption with the correct cartoon. Write the caption in the box under the cartoon.
3. Respond to the following question and write your answer in the corresponding box: How does the cartoon match the caption?

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| **Cartoon** |  |  |
| **Summary of the Description** |  |  |
| **Caption** |  |  |
| **How does the cartoon match the caption?** |  |  |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Graphic Organizer 4: Congress and the President**

The Framers separated the legislative and executive powers of the government into two separate branches and created balances between them. Article I of the Constitution outlines the powers of Congress, and Article II outlines those of the president.

**Directions:**

1. Match the political cartoon with the correct description. Summarize the description in the box under the cartoon.
2. Match each caption with the correct cartoon. Write the caption in the box under the cartoon.
3. Respond to the following question and write your answer in the corresponding box: How does the cartoon match the caption?

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Cartoon** |  |  |  |
| **Summary of the Description** |  |  |  |
| **Caption** |  |  |  |
| **How does the cartoon match the caption?** |  |  |  |

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**Graphic Organizer 5: Political Parties**

Political parties play a crucial role in shaping how Congress works. In the House of Representatives, the Speaker of the House is usually the highest ranking member of the majority party and the leader of the House of Representatives. The Speaker holds the power in the House and determines the policy agenda. The Senate has a more complicated power structure wherein the majority party sets the schedule, but the minority party can exercise great influence over the pace of events and can prevent many issues from coming to a vote.

**Directions:**

1. Match the political cartoon with the correct description. Summarize the description in the box under the cartoon.
2. Match each caption with the correct cartoon. Write the caption in the box under the cartoon.
3. Respond to the following question and write your answer in the corresponding box: How does the cartoon match the caption?

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| **Cartoon** |  |  |  |
| **Summary of the Description** |  |  |  |
| **Caption** |  |  |  |
| **How does the cartoon match the caption?** |  |  |  |

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**Graphic Organizer 6: A Member’s Job: Representing the People and the States**

Each member of the House and each Senator represents a group of constituents, makes laws for the nation, and participates in fulfilling specific constitutional duties of the House or Senate. House members represent, and are accountable to, the constituents of one of the 435 districts spread across the 50 states, while Senators represent a whole state. Elections give voters the opportunity to evaluate the work of their Representative or Senator or the party in which the Representative or Senator is a member.

**Directions:**

1. Match the political cartoon with the correct description. Summarize the description in the box under the cartoon.
2. Match each caption with the correct cartoon. Write the caption in the box under the cartoon.
3. Respond to the following question and write your answer in the corresponding box: How does the cartoon match the caption?

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Cartoon** |  |  |  |
| **Summary of the Description** |  |  |  |
| **Caption** |  |  |  |
| **How does the cartoon match the caption?** |  |  |  |

**Graphic Organizer 1: Congress and the Constitution – Cartoon 1**

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| **Caption** | **Responsibilities Are Shared Under the Constitution** |
| **Summary** | **The Constitution established branches of government with different powers. Congress makes the laws that the executive branch enforces and the judicial branch interprets. This cartoon depicts the harmony and interdependence of the legislative and executive branches by showing horses working together and pulling Uncle Sam (Uncle Sam = U.S.) representing the nation, around a course.** |

**Graphic Organizer 1: Congress and the Constitution – Cartoon 2**

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| **Caption** | **The Senate Reviews Presidential Appointments** |
| **Summary** | **This cartoon refers to the Senate’s review of individuals nominated to the Supreme Court, but it also could apply to any high official whose appointment is subject to Senate confirmation. The Senate has the constitutional responsibility to evaluate individuals nominated by presidents to serve in high federal offices. Although political divisions within the Senate and between the Senate and the White House have sometimes resulted in contentious nomination hearings, the Constitution mandates that the president and Senate must both agree on the appropriateness for office of every high level appointee.** |

**Graphic Organizer 1: Congress and the Constitution – Cartoon 3**

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| **Caption** | **Congress has the Power to Declare War** |
| **Summary** | **The Constitution vests in Congress—the representative branch—exclusive power to declare war. Congress’s war power also illustrates the separate powers and responsibilities of Congress and the president. As Commander in Chief of the armed forces, the President implements and is bound by the goals, means, and limitations Congress specifies in the declaration of war. In this cartoon, the House and Senate report to Uncle Sam (Uncle Sam = U.S.), a symbol of the nation, not the president.** |

**Graphic Organizer 2: Congress, The Elected, Representative Branch of Government - Cartoon 1**

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| **Caption** | **Congress is the People’s Representative Assembly** |
| **Summary** | **A new Congress assembles every two years when voters elect the entire House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate. The House and the Senate share legislative powers but have different rules and procedures. The House represents the people in their congressional districts, and the Senate represents them as residents of their states. As the representative branch of government, Congress taxes, decides how the government should spend public monies, keeps track of past spending, and serves as a public forum wherein all the great issues facing the nation are debated.** |

**Graphic Organizer 2: Congress, The Elected, Representative Branch of Government - Cartoon 2**

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| **Caption** | **The Speaker Leads the House by Majority Rule** |
| **Summary** | **Led by a powerful Speaker of the House whose party holds the majority of seats, the House of Representatives often works at a faster pace than the Senate and frequently leaves the minority party limited influence. This cartoon depicts the House under its most powerful Speaker to that point, Joseph G. Cannon of Illinois, who led the Republican majority in the House from 1903 to 1911.** |

**Graphic Organizer 2: Congress, The Elected, Representative Branch of Government - Cartoon 3**

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| **Caption** | **All Senators are Equal, and Senate Minorities are Protected** |
| **Summary** | **The Senate operates in a manner and at a pace far different from the House. Senators represent states and serve staggered six-year terms, which means that only one-third of the Senators face reelection every two years. The Senate Majority Leader typically has less power than the Speaker of the House, Senate rules recognize the equality of all Senators, and Senate procedures protect the power of the minority. This 1897 caricature shows the slow deliberative pace of the Senate.** |

**Graphic Organizer 3: Congress: Making Laws for the Nation – Cartoon 1**

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| **Caption** | **Congress Makes the Nation’s Spending and Taxing Bills** |
| **Summary** | **The power to tax balances Congress’s power to appropriate money for spending. Article I, Section 8, of the Constitution grants Congress power to “lay and collect taxes.” Article I, Section 7 specifies that tax legislation must originate in the House of Representatives. Since the beginning of the United States, Congress has grappled with which taxes should be levied, how much revenue should be raised, and who should bear the greatest tax burden. This cartoon shows Uncle Sam hoping that Congress is prepared to take an ax to taxes.** |

**Graphic Organizer 3: Congress: Making Laws for the Nation – Cartoon 2**

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| **Caption** | **Amended Bills Reflect Compromises when Passed** |
| **Summary** | **The legislative process established in the Constitution requires that each bill pass through rigorous procedures in both houses of Congress, including opportunities to add amendments. A bill’s journey through Congress is not complete until both houses have passed it in identical form. This cartoon depicts a bill that has been amended so much in the Senate that it is practically unrecognizable to its original House author.** |

**Graphic Organizer 4: Congress and the President – Cartoon 1**

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| **Caption** | **Successful Bills Become Laws with the President’s Signature** |
| **Summary** | **Even when a bill has cleared all the hurdles in the legislative process through both houses of Congress, it still requires the signature of the President to become law. Only a small percentage of bills introduced in any Congress make it this far in the legislative process. This cartoon conveys a railroad bill’s anxiety about how it will be received by the President.** |

**Graphic Organizer 4: Congress and the President – Cartoon 2**

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| **Caption** | **A President’s Objection (Veto) Return a Bill to Congress** |
| **Summary** | **Veto power—derived from the Latin phrase “I forbid”—gives the President the authority to veto legislation. This executive power over a legislative action is an example of a constitutional check by one branch upon the authority of another. The Founders designed the Constitution with multiple checks and balances to ensure that no one branch can independently exert control of the government.** |

**Graphic Organizer 4: Congress and the President – Cartoon 3**

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| **Caption** | **Congress Can Reconsider a Returned Bill and Override a Veto** |
| **Summary** | **When a President vetoes a piece of legislation—provided that the action takes place within 10 days of the bill being presented to the president (Sundays excepted)—it is returned to the chamber of Congress where it originated along with a statement of why the president objects to it. That chamber then has an opportunity to override the president’s veto. If the vote results in at least a two-thirds majority, it is sent to the other chamber where another override vote takes place. With a minimum two-thirds majority in that chamber as well, the bill becomes law without the President’s signature.** |

**Graphic Organizer 5: Political Parties – Cartoon 1**

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| **Caption** | **Each Party Seeks Issues that Will Lure Voters** |
| **Summary** | **Political parties try to win elections by choosing and angling for issues that will appeal to voters. This cartoon shows the two parties on the lookout for issues that will lure undecided voters to their side and away from the other party.** |

**Graphic Organizer 5: Political Parties – Cartoon 2**

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| **Caption** | **Party Rivalry Reflects the Range of Opinions on Issues** |
| **Summary** | **The rivalry between the two parties is a regular feature of congressional politics, and Democrats and Republicans often view congressional action and legislation from opposite perspectives. Going home at the end of the session, the two characters depicted in this cartoon have very different opinions about the results of the session. Despite their differences, both parties contribute to the work of Congress, with the minority party often suggesting policy alternatives and blocking bills that lack needed support to pass.** |

**Graphic Organizer 5: Political Parties – Cartoon 3**

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| **Caption** | **The People Show Their Support for Each Party When They Vote** |
| **Summary** | **Having the voters choose their representatives is an important way that the ideal of popular sovereignty is translated into political reality. Each election allows the voters to take stock of the work of their representatives, and every two years voters have a chance to evaluate the work of their representatives in Congress.** |

**Graphic Organizer 6: A Member’s Job: Representing the People and the States – Cartoon 1**

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| **Caption** | **Each Member Juggles a Wide Range of Responsibilities** |
| **Summary** | **Whether in the majority or minority party, each Representative or Senator must juggle a wide range of demanding daily tasks related to the needs of constituents, their district or state, and the nation. Each member must keep informed about bills on many topics, participate in the work of committees and fulfill numerous other responsibilities. Also, if the member of Congress is running for re-election, they must raise money for the next election campaign.** |

**Graphic Organizer 6: A Member’s Job: Representing the People and the States – Cartoon 2**

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| **Caption** | **Casting Votes is the Defining Duty of a Member** |
| **Summary** | **Voting is the engine of democracy. Decisions at all levels of government are based on this expression of popular will. The House and Senate take many votes on each measure they debate. Votes in committee lead to votes in the full House and additional votes in the Senate. Typically, by the time a law is passed, members of Congress have had many opportunities to demonstrate their support or opposition.** |

**Graphic Organizer 6: A Member’s Job: Representing the People and the States – Cartoon 3**

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| **Caption** | **Communicating with Voters is the Key to Reelection** |
| **Summary** | **Communicating with constituents is a critical element of representation. Members of the House and Senate are busy addressing many complex issues on behalf of voters. When they return home from Washington, they must explain the actions they took, decisions they made, and their thoughts and plans for the future. This cartoon shows that the Members’ work does not end when Congress is in recess.** |

***Full Document Citations***

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[The House in Session (According to the Minority Point of View)](https://catalog.archives.gov/id/6010752), cartoon by Clifford Berryman, April 16, 1908; U.S. Senate Collection, Record Group 46; National Archives Building, Washington DC, National Archives Identifier: 6010752.

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