

The Tired King

The Three Branches of Government

Overview

In this lesson, students are introduced to the three functions of government (legislative, judicial, and executive) through a story about an overworked king who must handle all the tasks of government. Next, students are given descriptions of the three functions of government and asked to match tasks to departments (lawmakers, executives, and judges). Finally, students create job descriptions for lawmakers, executives, and judges.

Materials

- Handout A: The Tired King
 - One per student
- Handout B: King Louie's Letters
 - Cut out one letter per student pair and place in King Louie's Basket
- Handout C: In Your Own Words (Optional)
 - One per student
- King Louie's Signs
 - One set
- King Louie's Basket
 - A container to hold the letters
- Sample Letters
 - One set, cut individually

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the three functions of government.
- Sort a list of governmental tasks into executive, judicial, and legislative.

Procedure

A. Focus

1. Ask your students if they have ever had so much to do that they could not get it all done. Ask for volunteers to share how they dealt with that situation.
2. Ask by show of hands who has asked someone else for help when they have had too much to do. Ask for volunteers to share who they asked, and why they picked those people.
3. Explain that in the next lessons, students are going to learn about:
 - a. The different jobs a government must do to make laws and use them fairly.
 - b. What can happen when a government does **not** use laws fairly.

B. Teacher Reading—The Tired King

1. Tell students that they are going to hear a story about an imaginary king in a make-believe kingdom. Explain that this King, King Louis the Umpteenth, is exhausted because he has been running the kingdom with no real help. To make it run smoother, he has an idea. Tell students that the idea King Louis comes up with is one that our own government today is modeled on.

B. Teacher Reading (continued)

2. Distribute and read aloud **Handout A: The Tired King**.
3. Check student comprehension by asking the following questions:
 - Why was King Louie tired? (He had too many jobs to do.)
 - Where did King Louie's jobs come from? (Letters written by people in his kingdom.)
 - What jobs did the letters ask King Louie to do? (Make new rules, catch people who broke the rules, decide what to do with people who break the rules.)
 - What did King Louie decide to do about his jobs? (Form departments to help him run his kingdom.)

C. Paired Activity—Reading King Louie's Letters

1. Tell students that they are going to play the part of King Louie's nobles. Their job will be to read the letters in King Louie's basket and decide where each letter should go.
2. Tell students to look at the story of **The Tired King** to find King Louie's departments. As students name each department, place **King Louie's Signs** on the board.
 - **Department #1—Lawmakers.** Make new rules to keep the kingdom running smoothly.
 - **Department #2—King's Guards.** Enforce the rules to make sure that everybody is safe. Catch people who break the rules.
 - **Department #3—Judges.** Decide what the rules mean. Hold trials to decide if someone is guilty of breaking the rules.
3. Explain to the class that you have taken three letters from King Louie's basket to show them how to decide where each letter should go. Read each **Sample Letter**. Ask students:
 - What job is the letter talking about?
 - Which department should do that job?

Fasten each letter beneath the correct sign.

4. Have each pair of students take one of King Louie's letters from **Louie's Basket**. Explain that they should read their letter and use **Louie's Signs** on the board to decide which department should do the job.

As pairs finish, ask them to place their letter under the correct sign.

D. Debriefing—Finding the Right Department for the Job

1. Read each letter aloud and ask the class to determine if the letters are under the correct signs. Help the class recategorize any letters that are placed incorrectly.
2. Lead a discussion using the questions below:
 - Do you think that King Louis' government will run more smoothly now? Why or why not?
 - Do you think it is a good idea to divide up certain tasks in a government? Why or why not?
3. Explain to students that having three branches of government is very important to our democracy. Americans, past and present, have not liked the idea that one person, or King, could be in charge of all tasks and all decisions the government makes. This helps our government run more smoothly and protects the rights of our citizens against a ruler that might be unfair.

D. Debriefing (continued)

Tell students that our federal government has three branches: the legislative (Congress), the executive (headed by the president), and the judicial (headed by the Supreme Court). Ask students:

- Which of these branches is like the lawmakers? (Congress)
- Which of these branches is like the king’s guards? (Executive)
- Which of these branches is like the judges? (Judicial)

Enrichment (Optional)

1. Who Might Help?

Have students brainstorm problems in the community or nation. Once you have compiled a list, ask which branch of government might be able to do something about each of the problems.

2. In Your Own Words

Distribute **Handout C: In Your Own Words** to each student. Ask students to describe each of King Louie’s departments in their own words and give one example of a job that each department might do.

3. Help Wanted

Have students write “Help Wanted” classified ads describing jobs from each department and qualifications and skills necessary.

Standards Addressed

National Civics Standard 5: Understands the major characteristics of systems of shared powers and of parliamentary systems. Level III (Grade 6–8) (1) Understands the primary responsibilities of each branch of government in a system of shared powers (e.g., legislative, executive, judicial) and ways in which each branch shares the powers and functions of the other branches.

California History Social Science Content Standard 5.7: Students describe the people and events associated with the development of the U.S. Constitution and analyze the Constitution’s significance as the foundation of the American republic. (4) Understand how the Constitution is designed to secure our liberty by both empowering and limiting central government and compare the powers granted to citizens, Congress, the president, and the Supreme Court with those reserved to the states.

The Tired King

King Louie the Umpteenth ruled over a large kingdom. It had thick forests, green fields, and peace-loving people. His tall stone castle was full of fancy furniture, beautiful paintings, and precious jewels. But King Louie had a big problem.

King Louie was a very tired man. He was tired because he had too many jobs to do. Finally, King Louie couldn't stand it anymore. He told all the nobles of his kingdom to meet in the throne room of the castle.

King Louie marched into the throne room. He was followed by three pages who huffed and puffed under the weight of three heavy bags. The pages dumped the contents of each bag into a huge basket beside Louie's throne. King Louie sat down on his throne. He looked at the basket and sighed. "This basket is full of letters from the people of my kingdom," he said. "They all need my help. Listen to this..." Louie pulled a letter out of the basket and read it.



Dear King Louie,

The people of my village want to let their cows and sheep eat the grass in the village square. We need a new rule to keep us from fighting about the grass.

*Signed,
Sam, the Shepherd*

"This is an important problem," said Louie. "But I can't spend my time making new rules for every village. I need help!" King Louie pulled a second letter out of the basket.

*Dear King Louie,
Every night, someone comes and steals vegetables
out of my garden. Please come and catch him for me.
Signed,
Hungry Hannah*

“First, they want me to make the rules,” he groaned. “Now they want me to catch the people who break my rules. I can’t do both. I don’t have time!” King Louie pulled a third letter out of the basket.

*Dear King Louie,
I think we found the man who set fire to my barn.
Please come and help us decide if he did this dirty
deed.
Signed,
Burnt-Out Barney*

“Do you see my problem?” asked Louie. “First, I have to make the rules. Then I have to see that everyone follows my rules and now...” Louie waved the third letter in the air. “Now I have to decide what to do with people who break my rules.”

“We need rules. We need to make sure people follow the rules. And we need to decide how to use the rules fairly. That is too much work for me to do alone.” King Louie looked at his nobles. “So I am going to form three new groups, or departments, to run my kingdom more smoothly.”

Next, King Louie clapped his hands three times. The royal artist brought out three signs. Each sign described the different jobs that Louie's new departments would do.

King Louie held up the first sign. **"Department #1 will be called the Lawmakers,"** said Louie. **"The lawmakers will make new rules to keep the kingdom running smoothly."**

King Louie held up the second sign. **"Department #2 will be called the King's Guards,"** said Louie. **"They will enforce the rules to make sure that everybody is safe. And they will catch people who break the rules."**

King Louie held up the third sign. **"Department #3 will be called the Judges,"** said Louie. **"They will decide what the rules mean. And they will hold trials to decide if someone is guilty of breaking the rules."**

"Take this basket," Louie told his nobles. "Read the letters. I want you to decide which new department should do the job described in each letter. Now, I am going to take a nap."



King Louie's Department #1

Lawmakers

Make new rules to
keep the kingdom
running smoothly.

King Louie's Department #2

King's Guards

**Enforce the rules
to make sure that
everybody is safe.**

**Catch people who
break the rules.**

King Louie's Department #3

Judges

Decide what the
rules mean.

Hold trials to decide
if someone is guilty of
breaking the rules.

Dear King Louie,

I need to get some sleep. We need a new rule in my village to stop people from making loud noises at night.

Tired Mary

Which department should do the job?



Dear King Louie,

A musician in my village plays his trumpet until 11 o'clock every night. The rule says "no loud noises late at night." Please catch him when he breaks the rules.

Sleepy Marie

Which department should do the job?



Dear King Louie,

The musician admits that he plays the trumpet every night. The rule says, "no loud noises late at night." The musician says that 11 o'clock is not late. Can you help us decide if he is breaking the rules?

Wide Awake Wayne

Which department should do the job?

Dear King Louie,

Two knights from your kingdom keep fighting in our pastures. We need our pastures to grow crops and feed the cows. We need a new rule to keep the knights from ruining our pastures.

-David Deadgrass

Which department should do the job?



Dear King Louie,

One of your guards saw two knights fighting in a farmer's wheat field. The rule says, "No knights shall fight in the farmers' fields." But both knights said they were slaying a dragon on that day and were nowhere near the field. Please hold a trial to decide if these two knights are guilty of breaking the rules.

-Suspicious Sid

Which department should do the job?



Dear King Louie,

Yesterday, two of your knights got into a big fight. Their horses stomped all the wheat in my field. Your new rule says, "No knights shall fight in the farmer's fields." Please catch these knights who are breaking the rules.

-Carrie Wheatcrush

Which department should do the job?

Dear King Louie,

Yesterday, a farmer nearly ran over my child. The new rule says, "Farmers must drive slowly through the village." Please enforce the rules to make sure everyone is safe from these farmers.

-Worried Father

Which department should do the job?



Dear King Louie

Every morning, farmers hurry to get their fruits and vegetables to market ahead of each other. They race past my front door in their heavy wagons. It is very dangerous. We need a new rule to keep the farmers from racing their wagons through our village.

-Vera the Villager

Which department should do the job?



Dear King Louie,

One of your guards caught a farmer racing his wagon through our village. The farmer says he was driving slowly. Please hold a trial to decide what your new rule means when it says "Farmers must drive slowly."

Connie Confused

Which department should do the job?

Dear King Louie,

My daughter Sally won't go to school. She says she doesn't care about learning. I want her to be smart. We need a new law to keep our children in school.

-Esther Slipoff (Sally's mother)

Which department should do the job?



Dear King Louie,

One of your guards caught Sally Slipoff skipping school. Sally says she is not a child anymore. Please hold a trial to decide what your new rule means when it says, "All children must go to school."

-Larry Slipoff (Sally's father)

Which department should do the job?



Dear King Louie,

I saw Sally Slipoff in the next village on a school day. Your new rule says, "All children must go to school." Please catch Sally when she breaks this rule.

-Sally's Teacher

Which department should do the job?

Dear King Louie,

I own the mill in my village. Last month I ground Tom Pitt's corn. He had no money to pay me. Now he refuses to pay me. We need a new rule saying that people must pay for their corn when I grind it.

-Bill Miller

Which department should do the job?



Dear King Louie,

Tom Pitt and Bill Miller have been fighting about grinding corn in the mill. They argue day and night. The new rule says that people must pay the miller when he grinds their corn. Please come and decide if anybody is guilty of breaking the rules.

-Chester Peacemaker

Which department should do the job?



Dear King Louie,

Bill Miller owns the mill in our village. Every time I take corn to his mill to be ground he steals some from me. Will you help me catch him stealing?

-Tom Pitt

Which department should do the job?

Dear King Louie,

Yesterday my son was almost killed by a man who was hunting deer in the forest. These hunters are not following the law. Please come and make sure that everybody is safe from hunters in the forest.

-Scared Steve

Which department should do the job?



Dear King Louie,

My family is hungry. I need to be able to hunt wild animals in the forest. Wild animals belong to no one. Please come decide what the rule means that says, "Animals belong to the people who own the land."

Henry Hunter

Which department should do the job?



Dear King Louie,

Someone has been sneaking onto my land and shooting the deer that live there. We need a new law that says that animals belong to the people who own the land.

-Bob of York

Which department should do the job?

In Your Own Words

Describe in your own words what each of Louie's New Departments does. Give an example of a job that each department might do.

Lawmakers

For example

King's Guards

For example

Judges

For example