

2026 MCAS Sample Student Work and Scoring Guide

Grade 8 Civics

Question 10: Constructed-Response

Reporting Category: Government Structures

Practice Category: Explanations and Reasoning

Standard: [8.T3.2](#) - Examine the interrelationship of the three branches (the checks and balance system).

- Congress: enumerated powers, general powers, limits on power, checks on other two branches; roles of political parties in the organization of Congress; roles within the legislative branch, such as the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate, minority party leaders; the system for accomplishing legislation, including committees, hearings and legislative procedures
- the Presidency: roles, powers and limits, checks on other two branches, role of the Cabinet, such as the Vice President, Attorney General and Secretaries of State, Defense, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security; executive departments and agencies (such as the Department of Education, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or the Food and Drug Administration), and branches of the military
- the Supreme Court: role and powers, checks on other two branches, lower courts

Item Description: Analyze two political cartoons and evaluate a claim using evidence from the cartoons.

This item can be found in the released item sets on the [MCAS Resource Center](#).

Question

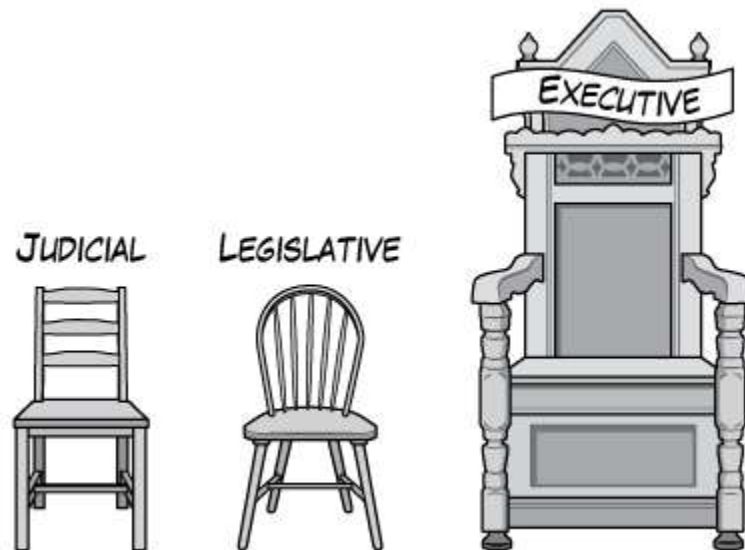
A student claims that Congress is the most powerful part of the federal government.

Identify which source, Source 2 or Source 3, shows the political cartoon that best supports the student's claim. Explain your reasoning.

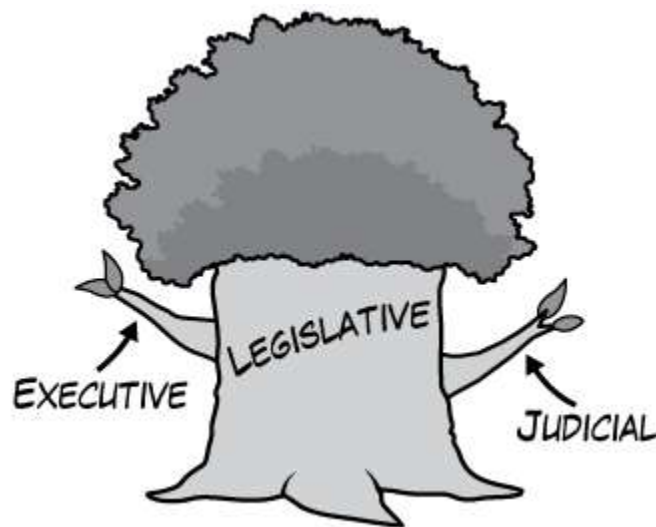
Continue to the following page to see Source 2 and Source 3. Continue to page 3 to see the sample student responses for this question.

Source 2

A political cartoon about the three branches of the federal government is shown.

**Source 3**

Another political cartoon about the three branches of the federal government is shown.



Score Point 1A*

The source that best supports the students claim is source three. Source three best supports the students claim because it shows that the legislative branch takes on a bigger role than the other branches. The legislative part of the tree is bigger and is the trunk not the branches like the other branches. It shows that Congress is the most powerful part of the federal government and the other don't have as much responsibility and authority.

Score Point 1B*

Source 3, because it shows/explains that the Legislative branch is more powerful than the Executive branch and the Judicial branch the the legislative part of the tree is bigger than the executive and judicial part of the tree.

Score Point 0

Source two because it has a better visual of showing how theyre ranked. Executive is bigger and I think congress is in Executive. (im not sure)

*Letters are used to distinguish between sample student responses that earned the same score (e.g., 1A and 1B).