

## Comparing Political Structure in both the United States and Canada

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### Description:

After the study of the physical features, history, and an understanding of the provinces and territories in Canada, the students will study the political structure in both the United States and Canada. First, in groups of three, the students will be given cards which explain the different parts of a bicameral government. These cards will be in the first person point of view except for the main headings (Legislative (Congress), Executive Branch, and Judicial). They will read the cards and, using the chart provided to them, decide where the different political leaders should be located on the chart. They will then present this to the class with an explanation as to why they chose the spots on the chart. The following day, the class will be arranged as if it were the House of Commons. A representative will read a card describing their role in the House. Next, the students will compare and contrast the two political structures based on what they have learned in class by using a Venn diagram (groups of three). Finally, they will write an expository paper comparing and contrasting the two structures of government.

### Grade Level:

Middle School 6-8

### Subjects:

World Geography and Language Arts

### Duration:

4 ? days

### Goal:

The essential questions that they will answer at the end of the unit and what will be displayed throughout the unit are:

1. How does the political structure in both the United States and Canada work?
2. How are the political structures of the United States and Canada both similar and different?

### Objectives:

The students will

- Decide where certain government positions fall on a grid
- Ultimately be able to compare and contrast two political systems.

### Standards:

- C2.3.2a Describe the purposes of government and how its powers are acquired, used, and justified
- C2.3.2b Describe a variety of forms of government

The final project for this lesson also meets all of the writing Washington State EALRs

**Background Information:**

The students will have had lessons on the history of Canada, how provinces and territories are established, and how the provinces are broken up as far as power within the provinces versus federal power. They will also have a basic understanding of the political parties in Canada.

**Materials:**

- Cards which explain the different government positions (both United States and Canada)
- Charts for both political structures
- Large charts for both political structures
- Definitions of Separation of Power, Fusion of Power, (Legislative) Congress, (Legislative) Parliament, Executive Branch (both democratic and parliamentarian), and Judicial Branch, to be placed in the front of the room throughout the unit.
- Individual Venn Diagrams for group work
- Lay out of tasks and due dates for Expository Paper
- Paper/ Pencil

**Procedures:**

Day One: (47 minute class period)

- The teacher will go over the Essential Questions that the students will need to be able to define at the end of this unit. These should be posted in the front of the room:
  1. How does the political structure in both the United States and Canada work?
  2. How are the political structure of the United States and Canada both similar and different?
- The teacher will ask students to talk with their neighbors about what they already know concerning the United States Government structure. (2 minutes)
- The teacher will then ask the students to report on what they have discussed with their neighbor. As the students share, the teacher will write their responses on the board. (5 minutes)
- The teacher will then gather students into pre-planned groups of three. (2 minutes)
- The teacher will explain that the students will be receiving 11 cards (see info. sheet) the cards will explain the different positions in the United States government. The students must decide where the different cards need to be placed on the chart provided to them (see worksheet). Some of the card's headings are underlined. These cards need to be placed where there is space for a heading. (2 minutes)
- The teacher will then have the students work together to plan out where they feel the cards should be placed. (10 minutes)
- Each group will then come to the front of the room and share their charts. They will tape their charts to the white board in the front of the room. (10 minutes)
- The teacher will then share the correct chart- large chart (see attachment). A quick explanation of "Separation of Power" will take place and the definition will be placed in the front of the room. (5 minutes)
  - The students will write down one thing they learned from today's lesson, and they will present it to the teacher on the way out the door. (3 minutes)

Day Two: (47 minute class period)

- The class will be set up just like the House of Commons. Students will be encouraged to sit wherever they want (see layout).

- At the start of class, the teacher will ask the students to share something they learned about the United States government structure. The teacher will place the definitions of the positions in the front of the class. (5 minutes)
- The teacher will then ask the class what they have already learned about the Canadian form of government. The teacher will write these responses on the board. (3 minutes)  
The teacher will then go around the room and place name cards where the different sections of government sit in the House of Commons: Speaker, Clerk of the house, Government Cabinet, Government Back Benchers, Shadow Cabinet, and Opposition Back Benchers. The Governor General and the Senate will have seats which are placed separate from the House of Commons. (2 minutes)
- The teacher will then give random students cards which explain their role according to where they are seated. Each student will stand and read their role. (3 minutes)
- The teacher will hand out individual charts (see attachment). The teacher will have the students who have the cards come forward and place them on the chart as the teacher goes over where each is placed and why. The students will fill in their own chart as the teacher goes over it along with the area for notes. The teacher will also explain that the judicial system is very similar in both the US and Canada. The teacher will then fill in the chart under the judicial branch title. (15 minutes)
- The teacher will then place the new definitions on the board.
- The teacher will then give out the Venn diagrams.
- The students will work in their teams of three from yesterday to begin filling in the Venn diagrams. The student will be encouraged to come up with as many similarities and differences that they can (until end of class).

#### **Day Three:**

- If needed, the teacher will give the students a few minutes to continue working on their Venn diagrams. (5 minutes)
- The teacher will then have a few volunteers come up to present what they have on their diagram. Students may add to their diagram as other students present. If there is disagreement, students should express this also. (10 minutes)
- The teacher will then hand out the format sheet for the expository paper. The students will have the remainder of the day to work on the outline of their paper. If they finish early, they may begin working on their first draft.

\*The remainder few days will be spent self editing, drafting, peer editing, and writing finals.

#### **Assessment:**

The students will be assessed based on the six traits of writing for their final product. See attached rubric

#### **Student Rubric:**

The students will self assess according to the six traits rubric and have their paper assessed by their peers.

#### **Additional Notes:**

Although the rubric looks as if the students are only being graded on their writing, by following the task (content) they are meeting the Essential Questions and the State Standards listed above.

Copy and cut these out, paste them on construction paper, and give them out to the students (groups of three)

### **EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

Executive Branch, the branch of the United States government devoted to administering and enforcing the country's laws. The country's laws are written by the legislative branch (Congress), approved by the president of the United States, and subject to interpretation by the judicial branch. The executive branch has 15 major departments and scores of separate agencies.

#### **President:**

I am the President of the United States (George W. Bush for those who may be unsure). My jobs include: chief executive officer of the federal government (this means I am in charge); leader of the executive branch (this includes the cabinet and administrative departments); and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. If 2/3 of the Senate allows me to, I have the power to make treaties (which are agreements) with other nations. I also appoint, again with Senate approval, diplomatic representatives, Supreme Court judges, and many other officials. I run for a four year term.

#### **Cabinet**

I am part of the United States Cabinet and fall under the executive branch of government. My name is Donald Rumsfeld, and I am the current the secretary of state, I administer foreign policy, and I am the chief Cabinet officer. In the United States the Cabinet consists of the president's advisers, each of whom is a department head. The US Cabinet consists of fifteen of these department heads. The vice president (Dick Cheney) also participates, and the president may assign Cabinet rank to other executive-branch officials. Cabinet members are appointed by the president with the approval of the United States Senate and may be removed by the president either at will or as a result of censure or impeachment by Congress. Unless they resign or are removed, Cabinet members serve for the duration of the term or terms of the president who appoints them. The salaries of Cabinet officers are fixed by Congress. The formal Cabinet meets at times set by the president, usually once a week.

#### **Administrative Department**

There are 15 major departments in the executive branch. They employ about 1.6 million civilian employees. I am part of the treasury department. This department consists of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) which collects taxes. Other divisions of this department print money and mint coins, collect duties on goods imported from abroad, and regulate alcohol, tobacco, and firearms

### **JUDICIAL BRANCH**

Judicial Branch is the portion of the United States national government that decides cases arising under federal laws and under the Constitution of the United States. The judicial branch interprets laws that have been passed by the legislative branch (Congress) and approved by the president of the United States, who leads the executive branch.

#### **Supreme Court**

My name is Ruth Bader Ginsburg, of the United States Supreme Court. I am part of the highest court in the United States which is the chief authority in the judicial branch. There are a total of nine judges on the Supreme Court. I am one of the two women judges. The Supreme Court hears appeals from decisions of lower federal courts and state supreme courts, and it resolves issues of constitutional and federal law. It stands as the ultimate authority in constitutional interpretation, and its decisions can be changed only by a constitutional amendment. The president of the United States appoints us to the Court for life terms, but the U.S. Senate must approve each appointment with a majority vote.

### **Appeals Court**

I am a judge in the federal appeals courts system which was created in 1891 to assist the Supreme Court with its workload. The Appeals court holds the hearing of part or the whole of a previously tried case by a superior court. About 50,000 such appeals are filed every year. For appeals purposes, the United States is divided into 12 judicial areas called circuits, each with an appeals court containing from 6 to 28 judges. An additional appeals court, the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, has nationwide jurisdiction over major federal questions. Decisions of the appeals courts are final, unless the U.S. Supreme Court agrees to hear a further appeal. In district courts, most cases are heard by a single judge. In the appeals courts, cases are usually heard by a panel of three or more judges.

### **District Courts**

I am a judge in the district court. Most federal cases start out in the district courts, which are trial courts—courts that hear testimony about the facts of a case. There are about 90 district courts. Each district is assigned from 2 to 28 judges, and there are about 650 district court judges in all. Each year the district courts handle more than 250,000 civil cases and more than 45,000 criminal cases, but only a tiny percentage of the civil and criminal cases actually go to trial.

### **CONGRESS**

Congress of the United States is the legislative branch of the United States government. Congress is composed of two chambers with equal powers: the 100-member Senate and the 435-member House of Representatives. The primary duty of Congress is to write, debate, and pass bills (proposed laws), which are then passed on to the president for approval. Once the president approves the legislation, the executive branch enforces the new laws and the judicial branch interprets them. Other congressional duties include investigating pressing national issues, supervising the executive and judicial branches, and shaping U.S. foreign policy.

### **Senate**

My name is Patty Murray and I am a senator from the state of Washington. The Senate is the smaller of the two legislative bodies of the Congress of the United States. Along with the House of Representatives, the Senate drafts and passes laws that, when signed by the president; govern the United States and its citizens. The Senate exercises some powers that the House of Representatives does not, such as approving treaties between the United States and other countries. The Senate has 100 members, two from each state.

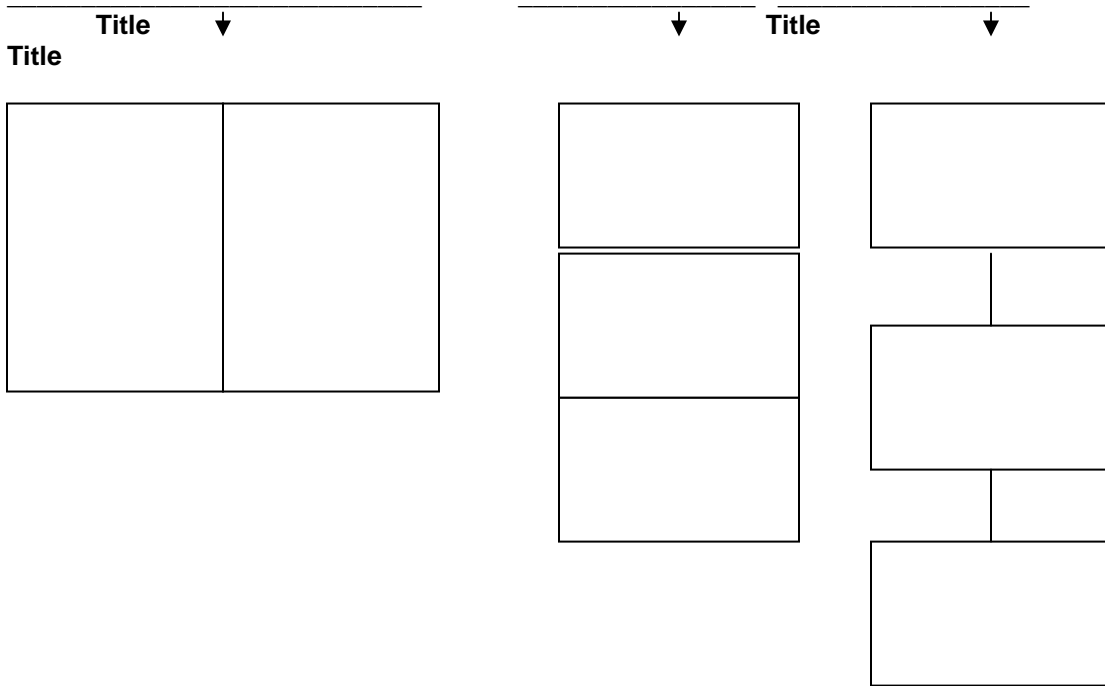
### **House of Representatives**

My name is Alex Wood, and I am on the in the House of Representatives in the Spokane area. The House of Representatives is the larger of the two legislative chambers that make up the Congress of the United States. Along with the Senate of the United States, it drafts and passes laws that, if signed by the president, govern the United States and its citizens. Usually called simply “the House,” it consists of 435 members chosen for two-year terms from districts of about equal population.

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

### United States- Separation of Powers

**Directions:** After you have read through the different government positions of the United States, decide where these positions should be placed by writing the title in the appropriate box. Remember, the cards that are underlined go where the title lines are.



**Why did you choose to place the above government positions where you did?**

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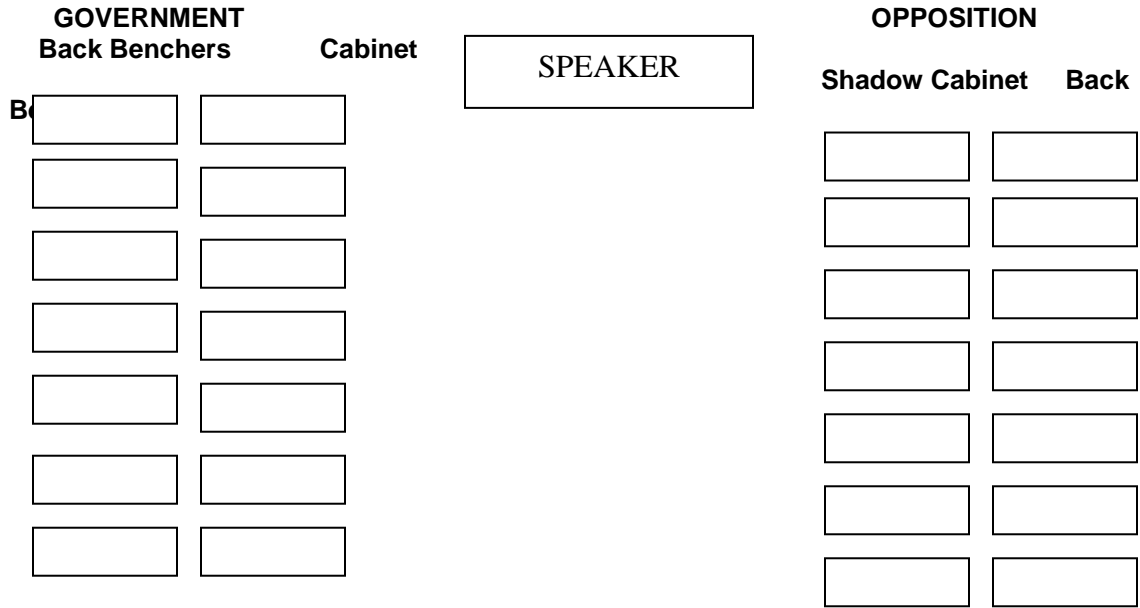
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**House of Commons – classroom layout**



Canadian Government structure (Cut out and give to students who are seated in the correct areas)

### House of Commons

I am a member of the House of Commons. I am currently part of the Conservative Party. Because my party did not win the last election, our leader is not the Prime Minister. The current Prime Minister is from the Liberal party. The house of commons is made up of 301 members. The house of commons is based on population, so the larger the population in a province, the more members that province has. Ontario and Quebec hold 60% of the seats because of their population. The Prime minister and his party members (the liberals) sit to the right of the Speaker. The Prime Minister and the cabinet sit in the front rows. The other members of the party sit in the back row and are called "back benchers." They still vote, but do not have as much say. The party who comes in second with the number of seats in the house sits to the left of the Speaker (this is my party). The leader of my group sits opposite of the Prime Minister. This leader appoints a "shadow cabinet" (this is where I sit) that criticizes the governing party when meetings take place.

### Senate

I am a member of the Canadian Senate. Unlike the US, I do not have a very important job. I am appointed by the Prime Minister, not elected like the US senators. I keep my position as a Senator until the age of 75. For the most part we conduct investigations and make recommendations on government policies.

### Governor General

My name is Adrienne Clarkson and I am the Governor General. I was appointed by the Queen of England as her representative. Because she has other duties in England, I run her duties here in Canada. My job is mostly ceremonial. I have no real political power.

### Speaker

I am the presiding officer of the House of Commons. I run the meetings and make sure everyone is on task and focused on the agenda.

### Prime Minister

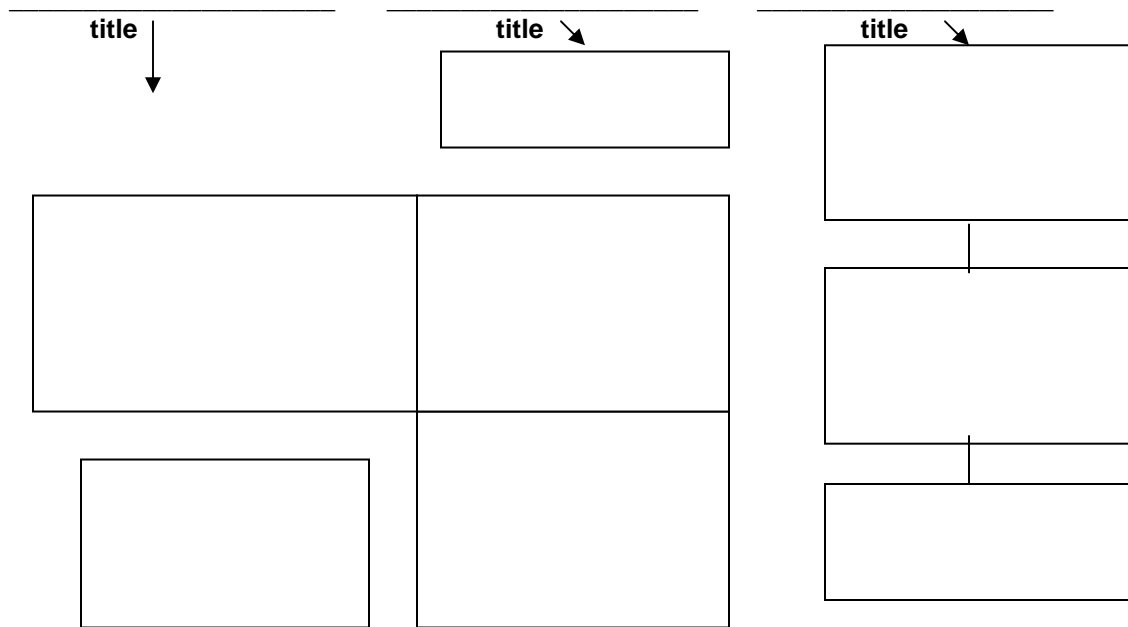
My name is Paul Martin, and I am the current Prime Minister of Canada. I am the chief executive of the Canadian government. I am the head of the government but not head of state (unlike the US president). This means that I have less responsibility than the US president. I manage government policy and administration. I approve the federal budget, allocate responsibilities to Cabinet ministers and government departments, control the Cabinet agenda, articulate the government's strategic direction, and represent Canada abroad. In addition to selecting the Cabinet, I appoint the permanent or administrative heads of all government departments. I also select members of the Canadian Senate, although the governor-general technically appoints them. I also choose justices for the Supreme Court of Canada. I was chosen because my party had the most seats in the House of Commons. Because I was the head of that party, I became the Prime Minister. I was not voted in by the people.

### Cabinet

I am a current member of the cabinet. The Prime Minister chose me to be in the cabinet because I was a part of his winning party. There are usually about 20-30 members in the cabinet. Another name for us is ministers. Each of us heads one of the administrative departments such as Foreign Affairs. The Prime Minister and the cabinet are the source of most legislation.

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

**Canada – Fusion of Power**



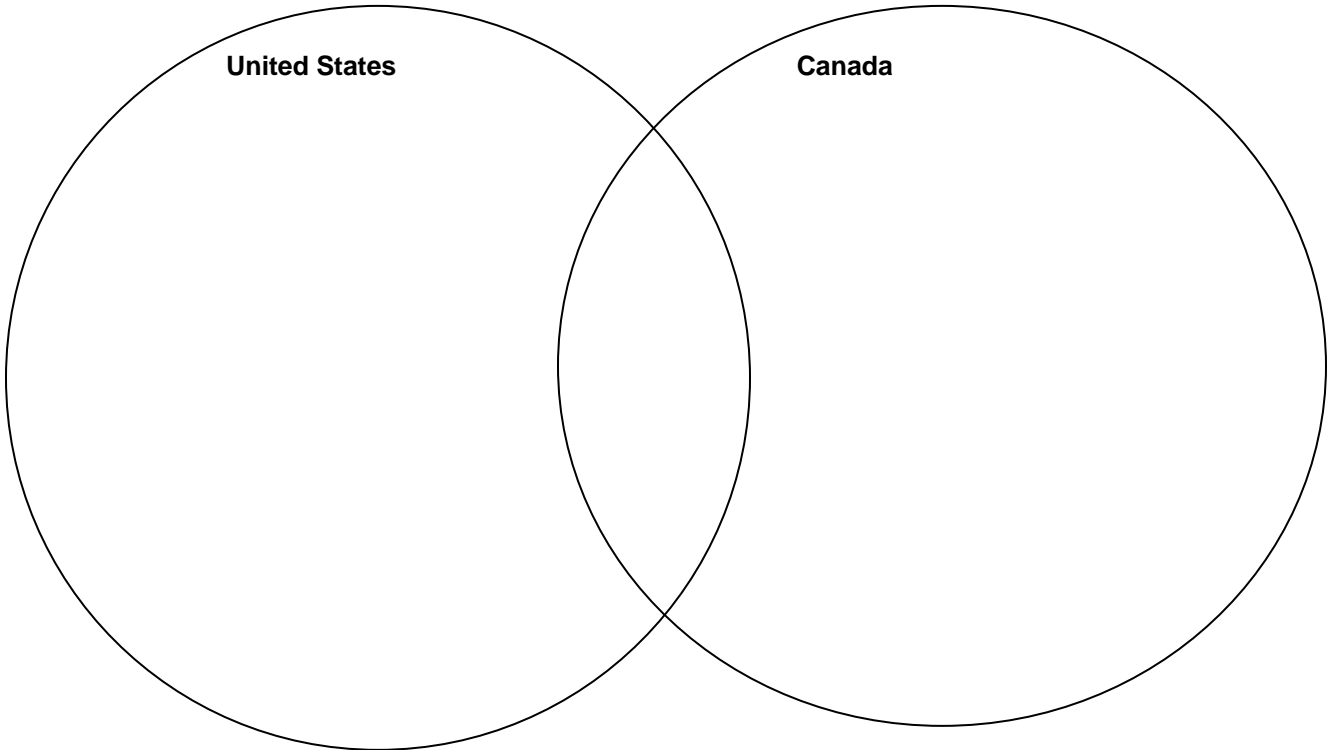
**Notes:**

Position	role
House of Commons	
Senate	
Governor General	
Prime Minister and Cabinet	
Administrative Department	
Supreme Court	
Court of Appeals	
District Courts	

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Unites States' and Canada's structure of government**

**Directions: In groups of three, fill in the following Venn diagram. You can use your charts and the definitions in the front of the room to help you. Come up with as many similarities and differences as you can.**



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

### Expository Writing

**Mission:**

Using what you have learned about the two governmental structures of both the United States and Canada, write a multi-paragraph paper to the publisher of your text book **explaining** the similarities and differences between the two structures.

**Task#1** Topic \_\_\_\_\_  
Audience \_\_\_\_\_  
Purpose \_\_\_\_\_

**Task#2** On a separate sheet of paper, take some time to pre-write how you might construct this paper. Remember, a well written paper has a catchy introduction, three main body paragraphs, and a conclusion that wraps everything up! A web, list, or free write would be a good place to start.  
Due \_\_\_\_\_

**Task #3** Take you ideas and write a draft. Don't think about what you are writing **JUST WRITE!!** Remember, this is not a final. Due \_\_\_\_\_

**Task #4** Using you rubric, a dictionary, and a thesaurus, self edit your paper. Remember to leave your self notes on what areas you want to change, move around, add to, or just take out.  
Due \_\_\_\_\_

**Task #5** Write a second draft. This time concentrate on the notes you wrote yourself in your first draft. Remember to always refer to your rubric while you write. Due \_\_\_\_\_

**Task #6** Around the room editing

**Task #7** Write a final. **DO NOT FORGET TO CONSIDER YOUR PEERS SCORES AND COMMENTS!** This final should be **QUALITY**, publishable work. Due \_\_\_\_\_

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

- 4- Perfect! Absolutely No changes need to be made.
  - 3- Average. This will do, but could be improved.
  - 2- Below average. You have not met a majority of the requirements.
  - 1- Very below average. You have not met any of the requirements.
- Fill in what we are looking for in each trait as we go over them.

Trait	Self	Peer	Teacher	Comments
Content:				
Organization				
Sentence Fluency				
Voice				
Word Choice				
Conventions				