



GRADE 6+

The Judicial Branch | Lesson Plan

What is the role of the Judicial Branch in the United States government?

Students learn about the Judicial Branch and the role it plays in interpreting laws as they are written in the Constitution. They'll join Uncle Sam as he quizzes kid contestants about the topic and complete a fun follow-along worksheet.

Learning Objectives:

- Explain the structure and functions of the Judicial Branch.
- Describe the purpose and function of judicial review in American constitutional government.
- Explain why Supreme Court justices are appointed for life.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Judicial Branch:** The Judicial Branch is made up of the federal court system, which includes district courts, appellate courts, and the highest court in the nation, the Supreme Court. When people disagree about whether a law or government action is constitutional, the job of the Judicial Branch is to resolve the issue by interpreting the Constitution.
- **Supreme Court:** The Supreme Court, also known as the “court of last resort,” is the final court of appeals. The Supreme Court has nine justices that are appointed by the President and confirmed by a simple majority of the Senate.
- **Judicial Review:** Judicial review is the process in which the Supreme Court judges impartially in the event of a dispute about a law or the meaning of the Constitution.
- **Chief Justice:** The Chief Justice is the highest-ranking justice of the Supreme Court.

Educational Standards: Civics, American Values, U.S. History, Western Civilization

What You'll Need

- Video: [Street Smarts: The Judicial Branch](#)



Scan to watch video.

- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The Judicial Branch* ([Download PDF](#))

Lesson Plan (45 mins.)

Warm-Up: (10 mins.)

1. Present the students with the following scenario: *Let's imagine that during lunchtime, our class is playing a game of basketball. One student claims that another student fouled him. The other student denies that she committed the foul. How can this dispute be resolved?*
2. Students will share their answers in a brief discussion. If needed, guide the students to the solution of having a neutral umpire/referee make a decision.
3. Ask: *Now, that's how something could be settled during a sports game at school, but how are disputes resolved in the real world? If two citizens need someone neutral to settle a disagreement, where can they go/who can they turn to?*
Students: *You can go to court! See a judge!*
4. Say: *Today, we are going to learn about the Judicial Branch of the United States government and the role it plays in interpreting laws as they are written in the Constitution.*
5. Display a copy of *Street Smarts: The Judicial Branch* Worksheet on a screen in the classroom.
6. Call on a couple of students to read each statement aloud/preview the statements before they watch the video.

Watch and Complete: (25 mins.)

1. Watch the video.
2. Pause after each question, and allow students to try and answer.
3. Continue to pause periodically so students can complete the worksheet/fill in the answers.
4. Model how to fill in the first blank. Students can copy down your response. As a class, fill in the next blank. Have students turn and talk to a deskmate to fill in the next blank. Then the students fill in the remaining answers independently.

Wrap-Up: (10 mins.)

1. Allow students 5 minutes to complete the remainder of the worksheet independently.

2. Collect as formative assessment or discuss in class.
3. Closing Questions: *What is the Judicial Branch of the United States? What is the role of the Judicial Branch? How is the Supreme Court organized? What is the purpose of judicial review? Why are Supreme Court justices appointed for life?*

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 mins.)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.