



The Supreme Court | Lesson Plan

What is the Supreme Court's role and how does it safeguard civil rights and liberties in the United States?

Students will learn about the Supreme Court's foundation, its constitutional role, and how it ensures justice and liberty.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the establishment and purpose of the Supreme Court as dictated by Article III of the Constitution.
- Recognize the Supreme Court's role in the federal judiciary system and its significance as the court of last resort.
- Comprehend the principles of checks and balances and the separation of powers as they apply to the judicial branch.
- Learn about the lifetime tenure of justices and its importance in maintaining judicial independence.
- Grasp the concept of judicial review and its impact on legislative and executive actions.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Supreme Court:** The highest federal court in the United States, established under Article III of the Constitution.
- **Judicial Review:** The power of the Supreme Court to declare legislative and executive actions unconstitutional.
- **Lifetime Tenure:** The term of service for Supreme Court justices, lasting until death, retirement, resignation, or impeachment, to protect judicial independence.
- **Checks and Balances:** A fundamental principle of the American Constitution that ensures no single branch of government becomes too powerful.
- **Separation of Powers:** The division of government responsibilities into distinct branches to prevent any one branch from exercising the core functions of another.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.6

Academic Subject Areas: Civics, U.S. History, Western Civilization

What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: The Supreme Court* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: The Supreme Court* (Click [Here](#))

Scan to watch episode:



Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm Up: (15 minutes)

1. Explain to students that in this lesson, they will explore the foundational role and functions of the Supreme Court, drawing parallels between the Court's judicial processes and the familiar structures in their own school environment. Ask them if they know who interprets the rules at the school and resolves conflicts.
2. Introduce the concept of the Supreme Court briefly, mentioning that it is the highest court in the country and makes crucial decisions. Create a comparison chart on the whiteboard with two columns. Write "Supreme Court" as the heading of one and "School/Classroom" as the heading of the other. Guide students to understand the parallels between the two by going through these sections, asking students to contribute what they know about how teachers or administrators may respond to each section, and then demonstrating the similarity to the Supreme Court's role:

Aspect	Supreme Court	School/Classroom
Decision-Making Authority	Final arbiter on legal and Constitutional issues.	The teacher or administrator makes final decisions on policies and classroom management.
Rule Interpretation	Interprets the Constitution and federal laws.	The teacher or administrator interprets school rules and policies, applying them to situations that arise in the classroom, such as issues of fairness or student behavior.
Conflict Resolution	Resolves disputes between states or major legal questions that affect the country.	The teacher or administrator handles conflicts between students, resolving issues through mediation or disciplinary action.
Precedent Setting	Establishes legal precedents that guide future court decisions.	The teacher or administrator sets precedents in how they handle situations (cheating, participation, etc.), influencing how similar citations are handled in the future.

3. Introduce the *Street Smarts* video as a fun way to see what kids across America know about the Supreme Court. Invite students to play along as they watch.

Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Give each student a copy of the “Street Smarts: The Supreme Court of the U.S. Worksheet” and display it on a screen.
2. Watch the video as a class, confirming or correcting answers on the worksheet as each question is addressed in the video.
3. Pause the video after the presentation of each key question and concept. Encourage students to share their answers to check for accuracy.

Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. After the video, allow students to ask questions or express their opinions about what they learned about the Supreme Court.
2. Collect the completed worksheet as a formative assessment or participation credit.

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

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