

# Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Leo & Layla Meet Justice John Marshall



*Directions: Read the following passage and answer the questions below in complete sentences as you watch the video.*

### Justice John Marshall

John Marshall was born on September 24, 1755, in the colony of Virginia. He was the oldest of 15 children. From an early age, Marshall developed a love of history and literature. He set his sights on becoming a lawyer but put his plans on hold when he joined the Continental Army in 1775 to fight alongside George Washington during the Revolutionary War. After the war, he focused on his law practice, served in Virginia's Congress, was elected to the United States Congress, and was appointed by President John Adams to be his Secretary of State. When John Adams lost his presidential reelection in 1800 to Thomas Jefferson (Marshall's second cousin), Adams nominated Marshall to be chief justice of the Supreme Court before he left office. Marshall was the fourth justice to ever hold that position.

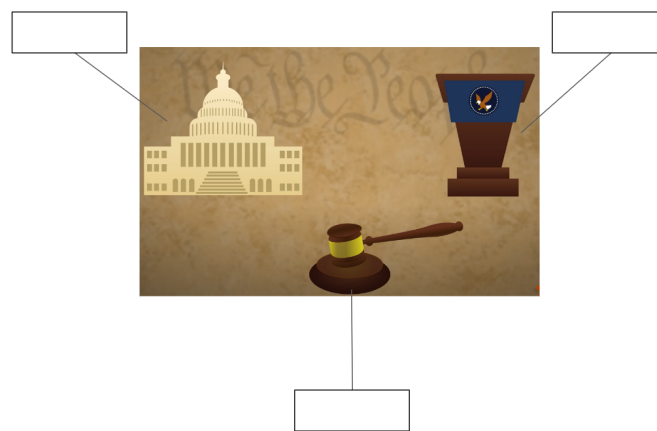
At the time, the Judicial Branch wasn't as powerful a branch of government in comparison to the Executive Branch, led by the president, and the Legislative Branch, made up of Congress (the House of Representatives and the Senate). But over Justice Marshall's 34 years as chief justice, he transformed the Judicial Branch into a governing body equal to the other two branches, that would settle disputes in a neutral way.

John Marshall is known for his many contributions to the country. He supported and played a major role in the ratification of the U.S. Constitution and made it the supreme law of the land. He set forth to make the Supreme Court the ultimate interpreter of the Constitution, the law to which the other branches had to be held accountable. Under Justice Marshall's leadership, the Supreme Court ruled on over 1,000 decisions, many of which Marshall wrote himself. Almost all of the rulings were unanimous, where all seven justices on the Court were in agreement, demonstrating Marshall's remarkable leadership skills in a time when getting everyone to agree

was particularly challenging, due to the fact that the justices appointed to the Court were nominated by presidents who had very different political views than Marshall.

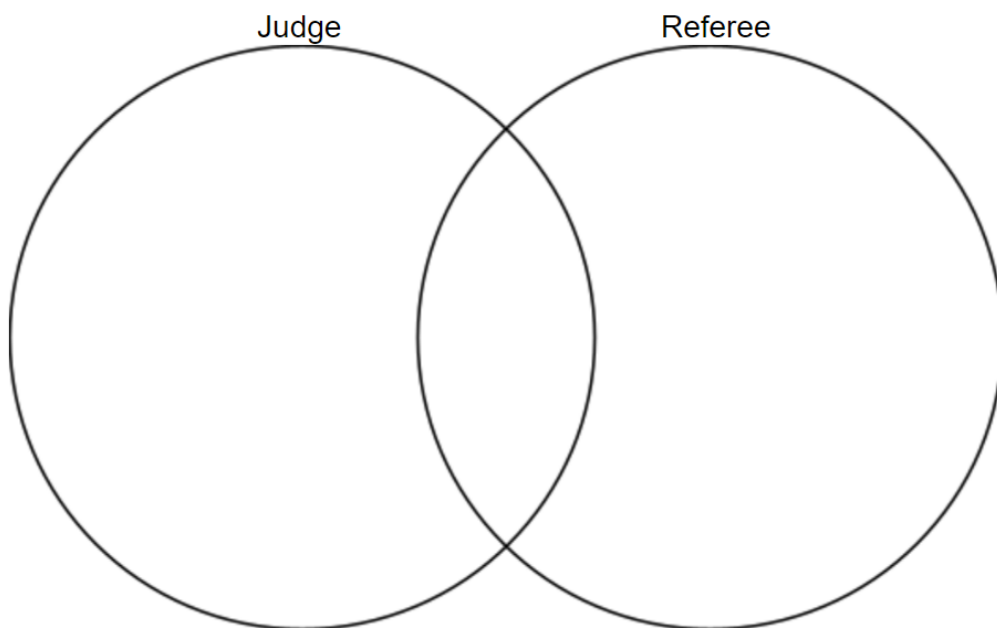
Marshall served as chief justice through six presidential administrations and served on the Supreme Court until his death on July 6, 1835, at the age of 79.

1. What is a chief justice?
2. Label the three branches of government. Who makes up each branch?



3. When the country was first founded, it wasn't clear what the powers of the Supreme Court would be. How did the role of the judicial branch change under the leadership of Justice John Marshall?
4. A judge's job is not to do what is popular or what will make people happy. What is the main responsibility of a judge?
5. Justices are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate to serve on the court for the rest of their lives, or at least until they retire. Why are justices appointed and not elected?

6. What was the name of the first court case that declared a law passed by Congress to be unconstitutional?
7. What does it mean for a law to be unconstitutional?
8. How is it possible for laws to be passed that are unconstitutional?
9. *Make Connections:* Fill in the Venn diagram below, comparing and contrasting judges and referees.

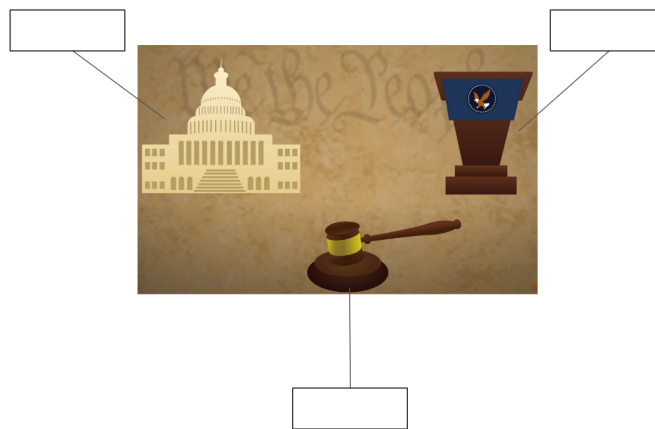


### Answer Key

1. What is a chief justice?

**Answer: A chief justice is the highest-ranking lead judge who presides over the United States Supreme Court.**

2. Label the three branches of government. Who makes up each branch?



**Answer:**

- **Legislative Branch, made up of Congress (the House of Representatives and the Senate)**
  - **Executive Branch, led by the president**
  - **Judicial Branch, made up of the Supreme Court**
3. When the country was first founded, it wasn't clear what the powers of the Supreme Court would be. How did the role of the judicial branch change under the leadership of Justice John Marshall?

**Answer: The Supreme Court wasn't as powerful a branch of government in comparison to the Executive Branch, led by the president, and the Legislative Branch, made up of Congress. But as chief justice, Justice John Marshall worked hard to make the Supreme Court a governing body equal to the other two branches, that would settle disputes in a neutral way.**

4. A judge's job is not to do what is popular or what will make people happy. What is the main responsibility of a judge?

**Answer: A judge's job is to make well-thought-out decisions that are in alignment with the Constitution, nothing more and nothing less.**

5. Justices are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate to serve on the court for the rest of their lives, or at least until they retire. Why are justices appointed and not elected?

**Answer: The Court was designed that way so outside political pressures wouldn't influence the judges' decision-making.**

6. What was the name of the first court case that declared a law passed by Congress to be unconstitutional?

**Answer: Marbury vs. Madison**

7. What does it mean for a law to be unconstitutional?

**Answer: It means that the law goes against what is stated in the Constitution.**

8. How is it possible for laws to be passed that are unconstitutional?

**Answer: It mainly has to do with how people interpret the laws. It is emphatically the duty of the Judicial Department to say what the law is. Some legislators try to bend the laws to serve their interests, which is not true justice.**

9. *Make Connections:* Fill in the Venn diagram below, comparing and contrasting judges and referees.

## Possible Answers

