

5. Is the Supreme Court Supreme? | Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____



Crisis! Fair? Or Unfair?

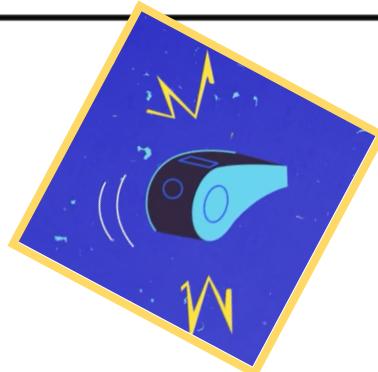
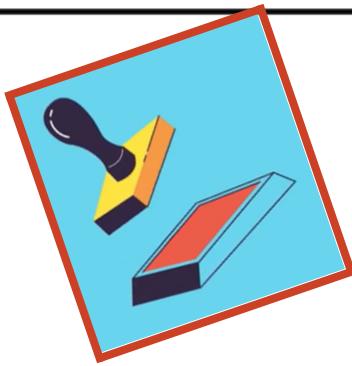
Government Type: _____

Civilization Name: _____

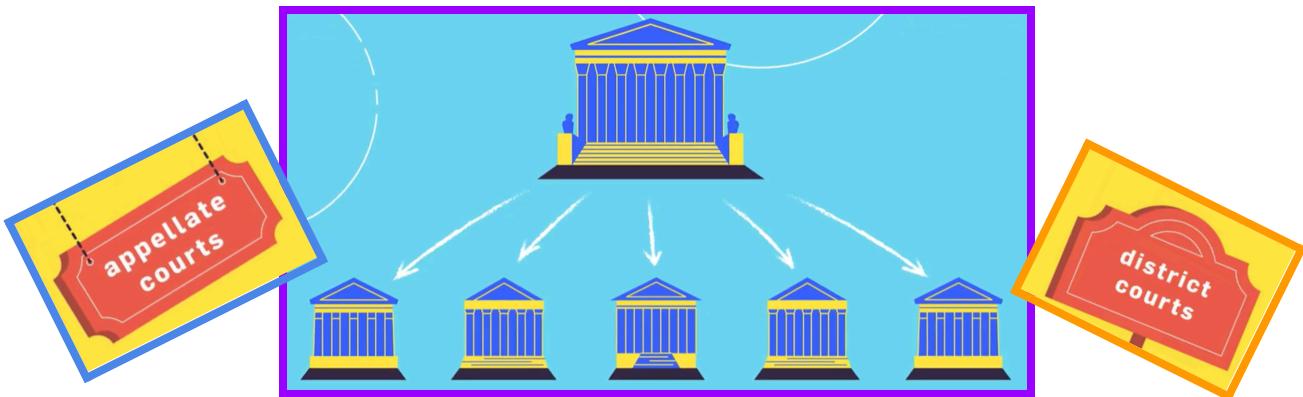
What is the rule the government makes?
_____What does the court do in response (for Direct Democracy, what does the mob decide?)
_____What unfair thing happens to the people/person? (what is the injustice)

What limits help the courts deliver justice without interference from powerful people? (for Direct Democracy: what limits would prevent the mob from making emotional decisions?)

- Independent judges** (the ruler cannot fire them)
- Evidence required** (you must prove someone is guilty)
- Fair trial** (a chance to defend yourself)
- Jury of regular citizens**
- Same punishment for everyone** (leaders don't get special treatment)
- Written constitution/rulebook** that even leaders must follow
- A separate lawmaking group** (representatives make laws; judges interpret them)



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Comprehension Questions

1. Article III of the Constitution explains the _____ branch.

2. What is the main job of this branch?

3. What is the highest court in the United States called? _____

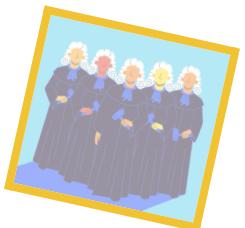
4. What do the “lower federal courts” do?

5. Why did the Founders want judges to be “above politics”?

6. How long can federal judges serve, and why does that matter?

7. What does it mean when the Supreme Court declares a law “unconstitutional”?

8. What is the main concern about the Supreme Court today?



Answer Key | Is the Supreme Court Supreme?

Box 1: Fair? Or Unfair?

Answers will vary by group. Grade for understanding. (Use this to check student responses against the intended model.)

Dictatorship

Rule the government makes: "Spreading dangerous ideas is illegal" / "Criticizing the dictator is dangerous."

Court response: The dictator controls the trial (chooses judge/jury/verdict); the court finds them guilty automatically.

Injustice: No real trial; people are punished for criticism; courts are not fair.

Limits that help: Independent judges Evidence required Fair trial Written constitution/rulebook (any 2–3)

Absolute Monarchy

Rule the government makes: "Anyone who causes trouble will be punished."

Court response: The king tells the court to find the person guilty because the king is always right.

Injustice: Peaceful disagreement becomes a crime; the court cannot be fair; the king controls the outcome.

Limits that help: Independent judges Fair trial Evidence required Written constitution/rulebook (any 2–3)

Oligarchy

Rule the government makes: "Everyone must follow the law equally."

Court response: Regular person punished for stealing; leader is declared innocent for the same crime.

Injustice: Two sets of rules; powerful people get special treatment; law is not applied equally.

Limits that help: Same punishment for everyone Independent judges Evidence required Written constitution/rulebook (any 2–3)

Theocracy

Rule the government makes: "Only the leader's religion is legal."

Court response: Courts punish people for believing/speaking/praying differently; court supports the religious leader's rule.

Injustice: People are jailed for beliefs; no freedom of religion; court is controlled by religious power.

Limits that help: Written constitution/rulebook Fair trial Evidence required Independent judges (any 2–3)

Communist Government

Rule the government makes: "Dangerous lies are illegal."

Court response: Reporter arrested for sharing true information; court sides with the government because judges follow the ruling party.

Injustice: Truth can be punished; courts become tools of the government; people cannot challenge leaders fairly.

Limits that help: Independent judges Evidence required Fair trial Written constitution/rulebook (any 2–3)

Direct Democracy

Rule: “If someone is dangerous, the people may vote to remove them for 10 years.”

Mob decision (instead of courts): The crowd votes quickly to remove the speaker because they are angry; there is no court to appeal to.

Injustice: Mob rule; emotional punishment; someone can lose rights for disagreement; no fair hearing.

Limits that help (mob-focused):

Evidence required Fair trial Written constitution/rulebook A separate lawmaking group (representatives)

(Optional teacher note: A time delay or second vote can also prevent emotional decisions.)

Comprehension Questions | Answers

1. Article III of the Constitution explains the _____ branch.
Judicial

2. What is the main job of this branch?
To settle disputes in courts by interpreting laws and the Constitution.

3. What is the highest court in the United States called?
The Supreme Court

4. What do the “lower federal courts” do?
They hear most cases first and handle trials and appeals before a case might reach the Supreme Court.

5. Why did the Founders want judges to be “above politics”?
So judges would make fair decisions based on the law, not popularity, trends, or political pressure.

6. How long can federal judges serve, and why does that matter?
They can serve for life (if they don’t commit serious wrongdoing), which helps them stay independent and not fear being fired for unpopular decisions.

7. What does it mean when the Supreme Court declares a law “unconstitutional”?
It means the law goes against the Constitution, so it cannot be enforced.

8. What is the main concern about the Supreme Court today?
Some people think the Court has become too powerful and sometimes acts like it is making or rewriting laws instead of only interpreting them.