

# LESSON PLAN

## Judicial Branch

**Level:** Low Intermediate, Intermediate

**Suggested Length:** 1 class period

### Civics Test Questions

- #13—Name one branch or part of the government.
- #37—What does the judicial branch do?
- #38—What is the highest court in the United States?
- #39—How many justices are on the Supreme Court?
- #40—Who is the Chief Justice of the United States now?
- Related Test Items:
- #12—What is the “rule of law”?
- #66—When was the Constitution written?

### Key Vocabulary

equal justice under law, rule of law, value, obey

Constitution, unconstitutional

judicial branch, resolve disagreements

Supreme Court, justices, judges, Chief Justice of the United States

challenge, valid

## Objectives:

Students will:

- identify the judicial branch as one branch of the government
- learn about the role of the judicial branch
- identify the U.S. Supreme Court as the highest court in the United States
- name the current Chief Justice of the United States
- state the number of Supreme Court justices
- understand how justices are selected and their duration of service
- identify when the Constitution was written
- explain the meaning of the “rule of law”

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## Materials:

Handouts: *Equal Justice Under Law*, *The Judicial Branch*, *The U.S. Supreme Court*, and *Civics Test Questions—Judicial Branch*

*Intermediate Level Judicial Branch Lesson Answer Key*



## Lesson Overview and Notes to Teacher:

There are three intermediate lessons on the branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. We recommend teaching these lessons in that order, as some content builds on the previous lesson.

The Judicial Branch can probably be covered in one class period. Instructions for each handout are described below. The **Key Vocabulary** found on the first page is generally more advanced than the words in the vocabulary list for the reading and writing portion of the test; however, learning these words will help the students develop a deeper understanding of the concepts in this lesson. The handouts cover seven Civics Test items from three sections of the Civics Test: System of Government, Principles of American Democracy, and Colonial Period and Independence. This lesson provides more information than the students will need to know for the Civics Test,

so tell the students they will only be responsible for the questions and answers provided on the last handout.

The lesson begins with a discussion of “equal justice under law” to help frame the setup of the U.S. court system under the Constitution. The lesson continues with the role of the judicial branch in the government. There are suggested discussion questions to give the class an opportunity to share opinions related to the readings. At the end of each handout, the students can answer pertinent Civics Test questions. Naturalization applicants may be asked to name the current Chief Justice of the United States so encourage the students to verify this information immediately prior to their naturalization test on the official Supreme Court website, [www.supremecourt.gov](http://www.supremecourt.gov). The last handout has a complete list of the Civics Test items covered in this lesson.

**Equal Justice Under Law:** Have the students read aloud the wording **Equal Justice Under Law** carved over the entrance of the Supreme Court building. Explain that, in this situation, “law” refers to the Constitution and all other laws made in the country. Help the students understand that “equal justice” means that

everyone in the United States is promised the same consideration, or treatment, in the courts, and that the Supreme Court’s job is to ensure that all laws follow the Constitution. Let the students work in pairs or small groups to answer the discussion questions, or use the questions to lead a discussion with the entire class.

**The Judicial Branch:** Draw a simple 3-branch diagram titled “**U.S. Government**” on the board. Ask the students to name the three branches of government while you label each one. Explain that you will talk about the judicial branch and the law. Have the students read the first paragraph silently, underlining any new words while they read. When they finish, read the paragraphs

aloud while they listen. As you read each phrase or sentence, pause to explain any words they do not know. Then read each sentence out loud straight through, giving the students several chances to hear each sentence and repeat after you. Have the students fill in the answers to the Civics Test items and go over the answers together.

**The U.S. Supreme Court:** Write the word **supreme** on the board and ask the students what it means (**number one, highest**). Review the paragraphs as previously described. Have the students fill in the answers

to the Civics Test questions, and use the discussion prompts at the bottom to compare the legal systems of different countries.

**Civics Test Questions—Judicial Branch:** The seven Civics Test items from this lesson are listed on this last handout. This can be assigned for homework or pair work, where the students take turns interviewing

each other. Point out to the students that they can look up more information on the U.S. Supreme Court at [www.supremecourt.gov/about/biographies.aspx](http://www.supremecourt.gov/about/biographies.aspx).