Why It Matters

What would our country be without a judicial system or a way of enforcing our laws? The courts see to it that our nation’s laws are justly applied. They also interpret the laws that protect the rights the Constitution guarantees. As you read this chapter, think about how the federal court system developed.
Section 1: The Federal Courts

Under our federal system, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches share the responsibility of governing the nation. Three levels of federal courts try to ensure that everyone in the United States receives equal justice under the law.

Section 2: How Federal Courts Are Organized

Under our federal system, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches share the responsibility of governing the nation. The different levels of federal courts each deal with a different caseload, ensuring all citizens receive a speedy trial or day in court.

Section 3: The Supreme Court

The judicial branch is charged with interpreting the law. The Supreme Court’s decisions have wide-ranging effects because court justices interpret the meaning of the U.S. Constitution.

Section 4: The Supreme Court at Work

The judicial branch is charged with interpreting the law. Supreme Court justices weigh many factors and go through several complex steps before making a decision.

Sequencing Information Study Foldable Make the following Foldable to help you analyze and sequence key influences and responsibilities of the judicial branch of government.

Step 1 Fold a sheet of paper in half from the long way with edges evenly together.
Step 2 Turn the paper and fold it into thirds.
Step 3 Unfold and cut along the two folds on the front flap to make three tabs.
Step 4 Label as shown, including arrows.

Reading and Writing

As you read the chapter, compare and note the details of the responsibilities of each level of the court system from least influence to greatest influence.
Guide to Reading

Big Idea
Under our federal system, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches share the responsibility of governing the nation.

Content Vocabulary
- circuit (p. 240)
- jurisdiction (p. 240)
- exclusive jurisdiction (p. 242)
- concurrent jurisdiction (p. 242)

Academic Vocabulary
- acknowledge (p. 239)
- circumstance (p. 242)

Reading Strategy
Organizing As you read, complete a graphic organizer like the one below to identify the three levels of courts in the U.S. justice system.

Real World Civics Can you imagine being forced to live in a strange place simply because of your nationality? That is exactly what happened to these young boys during World War II. During the United States war with Japan, President Roosevelt ordered Japanese Americans to be sent to internment camps so that they could not spy on America. More than half of those interned in the “camps” were naturalized American citizens. By the 1980s the U.S. admitted it had acted too harshly, apologized to those who had been wrongly interned, and paid them damages.

NORTH CAROLINA STANDARDS
Civics and Economics
2.02 Explain how the United States Constitution defines the framework, organization and structure of the three branches of government at the national level.
5.02 Identify the jurisdiction of state and federal courts.
Equal Justice for All

Main Idea  The courts that make up the judicial branch try to ensure that our nation’s laws are justly enforced.

Civics & You  Do you think a society could exist without a court system that determines in a fair manner if laws have been broken? Read about the powers of the courts as established in the Constitution.

A native-born citizen, Mitsuye Endo was fired from a California state job in 1942 and sent to a relocation center like the boys discussed on the previous page. Her lawyer challenged the War Relocation Board’s right to intern a loyal American citizen.

Endo took the matter to the Supreme Court and won her case. In 1944, the Court ruled that Endo “should be given her liberty.” Justice William O. Douglas proclaimed that

“A citizen who is concededly loyal presents no problem of espionage or sabotage. Loyalty is a matter of the heart and mind not of race, creed, or color.”

—Ex parte Endo, 1944

Right to Trial  The judicial system provides fair trials to all accused, even if the crimes involve attacks against the United States, as in the case of accused al-Qaeda conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui. Predicting  What difficulties might arise in finding a fair jury to judge a crime such as terrorism?

Later the United States government would acknowledge, or admit to, the injustice of the internment camps and apologize. Shortly after the Court made its decision in the Ex parte Endo case, many detained Japanese Americans were released and returned home.
Role of the Courts

Federal courts, such as the Supreme Court, make up the third branch of the U.S. government. Courts use the law to settle civil disputes and to decide the guilt or innocence of people accused of crimes.

Whether a civil dispute is between two private parties (people, companies, or organizations), between a private party and the government, or between the United States and a state or local government, both sides come before a court. Each side presents its position. The court then applies the law to the facts that have been presented and makes a decision in favor of one or the other. The courts also hold criminal trials in which witnesses present evidence and a jury or a judge delivers a verdict.

Equal Treatment

The United States Supreme Court is at the top of the federal court system. If you visit the Court, you will see the words “Equal Justice Under Law” on the face of its marble building. Our legal system is based on this important ideal. The goal of the legal system is to treat every person the same. Under the Constitution, every person accused of breaking the law has the right to have a public trial and a lawyer. If an accused person cannot afford a lawyer, the court will appoint and pay for one. Each person is presumed innocent until proven guilty and has the right to ask for a review of his or her case if, in that person’s view, the courts have made a mistake.

The ideal of equal justice is difficult to achieve. Judges and juries are not free from personal prejudices or the prejudices of their communities. Poor people do not have the money to spend on the best available legal help, unlike wealthy citizens and large companies. Nonetheless, American courts try to uphold the ideal of equal justice.
The Constitution For example, if a person believes a constitutional right, such as freedom of speech, has been violated, that person has a right to be heard in a federal court.

Federal Laws Federal courts try people accused of federal crimes such as kidnaping, tax evasion, and counterfeiting. Federal courts also hear civil cases that involve federal laws.

Disputes Between States Disagreements between state governments are resolved in federal courts. If Colorado and California, for example, disagree over rights to water in the Colorado River, it is a federal case.

Citizens from Different States Lawsuits between citizens of different states also come under the federal courts. For example, Ms. Jones of Maine may bring suit in a federal court against Mr. Smith of Iowa for not fulfilling his part of a business agreement.

The Federal Government The U.S. government, for example, could take a company to court for failing to live up to a contract to deliver supplies to a government department. Individuals or companies can also take the government to court. For instance, if a United States Army van struck your car or the Department of the Interior failed to pay your company for equipment, you could sue the government.

Foreign Governments and Treaties In any dispute between a foreign government and the United States government, an American company, or an American citizen, the case will be heard in a federal court.
Admiralty and Maritime Laws  These laws concern crimes and accidents outside territorial waters. For example, a case involving disagreement over the rights of property recovered from a shipwreck would be tried in federal court.

U.S. Diplomats  If, for example, an American diplomat working in the U.S. embassy in France is accused of breaking an American law, the case would go to a federal court.

Types of Jurisdiction
For most of the areas just described, federal courts have exclusive jurisdiction, which means that only the federal courts may hear and decide cases. In the dual court system, federal courts have jurisdiction over cases involving federal laws, while state courts have jurisdiction over cases involving state laws. Most U.S. court cases involve state law and are tried in state courts.

Under some circumstances, or instances, however, both federal and state courts have jurisdiction, a situation known as concurrent jurisdiction. Either court may try crimes that violate both state and federal law. Concurrent jurisdiction also applies when citizens of different states are involved in a dispute concerning at least $50,000. In such a case, a person may sue in either a federal court or a state court. If the person being sued insists, however, the case must be tried in a federal court. Such appeals might eventually reach the United States Supreme Court.

Vocabulary
1. Define jurisdiction. Then explain the difference between exclusive and concurrent jurisdiction.

Main Ideas
2. Explaining What is meant by the words that are inscribed on the United States Supreme Court building: “Equal Justice Under Law.”
3. Describing Why do you think federal courts rule on disputes between states? What would be an example of such a case?

Critical Thinking
4. Describing How did the federal court system develop?
5. BIG Ideas On a chart like the one below, write four kinds of cases for which federal courts have jurisdiction and give an example of each kind of case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinds of Cases</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cases involving the Constitution</td>
<td>Person believes First Amendment right is violated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Analyzing Visuals Study the map of federal judicial circuits and districts on page 241. In which judicial circuit is your state?

7. Expository Writing Do research on the United States Supreme Court in the library or online. Select a famous case decided by the Supreme Court. Of the eight kinds of cases for which federal courts have jurisdiction, under which kind does your case fall? Write a paragraph explaining your choice.

Study Central™ To review this section, go to glencoe.com.
How Federal Courts Are Organized

Real World Civics  Most people do not grow up thinking they will someday hold important national offices—especially if they do not come from wealthy backgrounds. U.S. Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales, the first Latino to serve in this office, grew up with seven siblings in a two-bedroom house in Houston. President George W. Bush chose him to be in his cabinet. Now Gonzales represents the United States in legal matters and gives advice and opinions to the president.

Guide to Reading

Big Idea
Under our federal system, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches share the responsibility of governing the nation.

Content Vocabulary
• district court (p. 244)
• original jurisdiction (p. 244)
• appeals court (p. 244)
• appellate jurisdiction (p. 244)
• remand (p. 245)
• opinion (p. 245)
• precedent (p. 245)

Academic Vocabulary
• affect (p. 244)
• submit (p. 246)

Reading Strategy
Analyzing  As you read, take notes on a Venn diagram like the one below to compare the similarities and differences between two branches of the courts.

Attorney General Gonzales (left) congratulates newly appointed Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito, Jr., in 2006.

NORTH CAROLINA STANDARDS
Civics and Economics
5.02 Identify the jurisdiction of state and federal courts.
The Lower Federal Courts

Main Idea There are three types of federal courts: district courts, courts of appeals, and the Supreme Court.

Civics & You What makes the U.S. court system effective? Read to learn how the federal court system is organized.

At the top of the federal court system is the Supreme Court. Below the Supreme Court are two lower courts—the district courts and the appeals courts.

Media Coverage The media often film trials as they happen. Federal court buildings are located in each state and trials must be held in the state where the crime was committed. Analyzing In what way can extensive media coverage help ensure a fair trial?

U.S. District Courts

District courts are the federal courts in which trials are held and lawsuits are begun. There are 94 district courts in all. Every state has at least one district court, and some states have more. All federal cases must begin in a district court, because district courts have original jurisdiction, the authority to hear cases for the first time. District courts are responsible for determining the facts of a case; they are the trial courts for both criminal and civil federal cases. Thus, in a criminal case, a district court will decide if a person is guilty or innocent based on the evidence presented. District courts are the only federal courts in which witnesses testify and juries hear cases and reach verdicts.

U.S. Courts of Appeals

Above the district courts in the federal court system are the United States courts of appeals. These courts are also referred to as federal appeals courts, circuit courts of appeals, or appellate courts. The job of the appeals courts is to review decisions made in lower district courts. This is referred to as appellate jurisdiction, or the authority of a court to hear a case appealed from a lower court.

Lawyers usually appeal when they feel that the district court judge in their case followed the wrong procedure or did not apply the law. Some appeals may be based on new evidence that could affect, or impact, the verdict. Appeals courts may also review federal regulatory agency rulings if those involved believe the agency acted unfairly.

Organization Today, each of the 12 United States courts of appeals has jurisdiction over a circuit, or particular geographic area. In addition, a thirteenth appeals court, the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, has nationwide jurisdiction to hear special cases, such as those involving patent law or international trade. This court’s headquarters is in Washington, D.C., but it can hear cases in other parts of the country.
Appeals courts do not hold trials. Instead, these courts may decide an appeal in one of three ways: by upholding the original decision, by reversing that decision, or by remanding the case, that is, by sending the case back to the lower court to be tried again. A panel of three or more judges reviews the record of the case being appealed and listens to arguments. The judges then meet and make a decision by majority vote.

The judges do not decide the guilt or innocence of a defendant in a criminal case or which side should win in a civil lawsuit. They rule on only whether the defendant’s rights have been protected and on whether he or she received a fair trial. Unless appealed to the Supreme Court, decisions of the courts of appeals are final.

**Announcing the Decision**

When an appeals court makes a decision, one judge writes an opinion for the court. The opinion offers a detailed explanation of the legal thinking behind the court’s decision. The opinion sets a precedent for all courts and agencies within the district.

A precedent gives guidance to other judges by offering a model upon which to base their own decisions on similar cases. A precedent does not have the force of law, but it is a very powerful argument to use in court. Judges and courts follow precedents in nearly all cases.

**Early Precedents**

Certain judicial principles were established early in the nation’s history. Neither any federal court nor the Supreme Court may initiate action. A judge or justice may not seek out an issue and ask both sides to bring it to court. The courts must wait for litigants, or people engaged in a lawsuit, to come before them.

Judicial precedents derive their force from a common law principle. This principle states that the decisions of the highest court in the jurisdiction are binding on all lower courts in the jurisdiction. Thus, all courts in the United States are bound by precedent to follow the decisions of the United States Supreme Court. Furthermore, each panel of judges on the courts of appeals for a circuit is bound to follow the prior appellate decisions of the same circuit. You will read more about this precedent in Section 4.

**CivicsOnline**

**Explaining** Why are precedents important to the enforcement of laws?

**Student Web Activity** Visit glencoe.com and complete the Chapter 8 Web Activity.
Federal Judges

Main Idea  Federal judges interpret the laws and protect the rights the Constitution guarantees.

Civics & You  What qualifications do you think are important in selecting a person for a position of responsibility? Read on to find out about how federal judges are selected.

The chief decision makers in the judicial branch are the federal judges. There are more than 650 judges who preside over the district courts. Each district court has at least two judges. Some district courts in high-population areas have more judges because there are more cases to hear. Each appeals court has from 6 to 28 judges. The Supreme Court has nine justices.

Selection of Federal Judges

Article II, Section 2, of the Constitution provides that the president, with the advice and consent of the Senate, will appoint all federal judges. The Constitution, however, sets no particular qualifications for federal judges. In general, presidents want to appoint judges who share their ideas about politics and justice. Thus, presidents usually choose people who belong to their political parties.

When naming judges, presidents usually follow a practice called senatorial courtesy. Under this system, a president submits, or presents, the name of a candidate to the senators from the candidate’s state before submitting it to the entire Senate for approval. If either or both senators object to the candidate, the president usually withdraws the name and nominates another candidate. The practice of senatorial courtesy usually applies only to the selection of judges to the district courts and other trial courts, not to the selection of judges to courts of appeals or the Supreme Court.
Tenure Once appointed, federal judges may have their jobs for life. A judge can be removed from office only through the process of impeachment. The writers of the Constitution gave federal judges this sort of job security because they wanted judges to be able to decide cases free from public or political pressures.

Other Court Officials Judges do not work alone. They have help from clerks, secretaries, court reporters, probation officers, and other workers.

Magistrates Each district court has magistrate judges. These officials take care of much of a judge’s routine work. They issue court orders, such as search and arrest warrants, in federal cases. They hear preliminary evidence in a case to determine whether the case should be brought to trial. They also decide whether people under arrest should be held in jail or released on bail. Magistrates may also hear minor cases.

U.S. Attorneys Each judicial district has a United States attorney and one or more deputies. U.S. attorneys are government lawyers who prosecute people accused of breaking federal laws. They look into complaints of crime, prepare formal charges, and then present evidence in court. It is the U.S. attorney’s job to represent the nation in civil cases in which the government is involved. U.S. attorneys are appointed to four-year terms by the president, with consent of the Senate.

U.S. Marshals Each federal judicial district also has a United States marshal. Marshals and their staffs make arrests, collect fines, and take convicted persons to prison. They protect jurors, keep order in federal courts, and serve legal papers, including subpoenas. A subpoena is a court order requiring someone to appear in court.

Vocabulary
1. Write sentences using each of the following key terms: district court, original jurisdiction, appeals court, appellate jurisdiction, circuit, remand, opinion, precedent.

Critical Thinking
4. Analyzing A judge who shares a president’s views when first appointed may rule differently on cases later. Why?

5. BIG Ideas On a graphic organizer like the one below, identify the people who help federal court judges with their duties.

Main Ideas
2. Describing What are the responsibilities of judges in district courts?

3. Explaining Why do federal judges serve for life? Who appoints them to these terms?


Activity
7. Creative Writing Write a job description for a federal district judge. Include the qualifications you believe federal judges should have.

Study Central™ To review this section, go to glencoe.com.
The Supreme Court

Guide to Reading

Big Idea
The judicial branch is charged with interpreting the law.

Content Vocabulary
• judicial review (p. 252)
• constitutional (p. 252)

Academic Vocabulary
• philosophy (p. 250)
• conflict (p. 252)

Reading Strategy
Summarizing On a graphic organizer similar to the one below, describe the powers of the Supreme Court and give an example of each.

Real World Civics How many people are appointed to a job for life? U.S. Supreme Court justices are. William O. Douglas served on the Court for 36 years, longer than any other justice. John Marshall served longest as chief justice, 34 years. Since justices can serve a lifetime, many different groups want a say in their confirmation. When Justice Sandra Day O’Connor announced she was stepping down in 2005, the White House saw its chance to select a judge who supports President Bush’s views. Samuel Alito, Jr., was confirmed and sworn in following a tough confirmation battle in the Senate.

NORTH CAROLINA STANDARDS
Civics and Economics

2.02 Explain how the United States Constitution defines the framework, organization and structure of the three branches of government at the national level.
2.05 Analyze court cases that illustrate that the United States Constitution is the supreme law of the land.
5.02 Identify the jurisdiction of state and federal courts.
Jurisdiction and Powers

Main Idea The Supreme Court is composed of nine justices: the chief justice of the United States and eight associate justices.

Civics & You What qualities do you think a judge should have? Read on to find out how the justices of the Supreme Court are selected.

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John G. Roberts, Jr., summarized his view of the Court’s role in the following way:

“What Daniel Webster termed, ‘the miracle of our Constitution’ is not something that happens in every generation. But every generation in its turn must accept the responsibility of supporting and defending the Constitution, and bearing true faith and allegiance to it.”

—Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr.

As Justice Roberts noted, all Americans are called upon to support the Constitution. It stands above all other courts. The Supreme Court’s main job is to decide whether laws are allowable under the U.S. Constitution.

Jurisdiction

Like the federal government, the power of the Supreme Court is limited. Article III of the U.S. Constitution established the boundaries of federal judicial power.

The Supreme Court has original jurisdiction in only two instances. It can preside over cases that involve diplomats from foreign countries and in disputes between states. In all other instances, the Supreme Court hears cases that have been appealed from lower district courts or federal regulatory agencies.

The Supreme Court does not hear all the cases it receives. It chooses the cases it hears. It has final authority in any case involving the Constitution, acts of Congress, and treaties with other nations. The decisions of the Court are binding on all lower courts. When the Court refuses to hear a case, the decision of the lower court stands.


Describing Why do you think Congress keeps the number of justices an uneven number?
Organization and Duties

The Supreme Court is made of eight associate justices led by a chief justice. Congress sets this number and has the power to change it. The justices are important political decision makers. Their rulings often affect citizens as much as do presidential or congressional decisions.

The main duty of justices is to hear and rule on cases. They choose which cases to hear from among the thousands appealed to the Court each year, then decide the case itself and issue a written explanation for the decision, called the Court’s opinion.

Selecting the Justices

The president appoints Supreme Court justices, with the approval of the Senate. Vacancies in the Court open up due to the resignation or death of a justice. In 2005, for example, President Bush appointed John G. Roberts, Jr., as chief justice, following the death of Chief Justice William Rehnquist. He also selected Samuel Alito, Jr., to replace Sandra Day O’Connor, who resigned.

Presidents are careful to choose nominees who are likely to be approved by the Senate. The president’s decision is often influenced by the attorney general and other Justice Department officials, other Supreme Court justices, the American Bar Association, and interest groups, such as labor and civil rights groups.

Senators typically give the president advice in appointing new justices, which he is free to accept or ignore. The Senate also has rejected nominees based on doubts about the qualifications or the legal philosophy (system of beliefs) of the persons nominated.
Background of the Justices

Supreme Court justices are always lawyers, although there is no legal requirement that they must be lawyers. They have had careers practicing or teaching law, serving as judges in lower courts, or holding other public positions prior to appointment.

Political support and agreement with the president’s ideas are important factors in who gets appointed. Of course, once appointed, a justice may make rulings with which the president does not agree.

The first African American justice, Thurgood Marshall, joined the Court in 1967. The first female justice, Sandra Day O’Connor, was appointed in 1981.

Powers of the Court

Main Idea  The Supreme Court is the final court to which anyone can appeal a legal decision.

Civics & You  How do you feel when someone makes a decision that you feel is against the law? Read to find out about the Supreme Court and the constitutionality of the law.

The Supreme Court enjoys a great deal of power and prestige. The legislative and executive branches of government must follow the Supreme Court’s rulings. The fact that the Supreme Court is removed from politics and from the influences of special-interest groups makes it more likely that the parties involved in a case will get a fair hearing.

Special Rulings  The Supreme Court ruled on whether these residents of Washington, D.C., burning their federal tax statements could vote in federal elections.  Identifying Which branches of the federal government must follow Supreme Court rulings?
Judicial Review

One of the most important powers of the Supreme Court is the power of judicial review. Judicial review means that the Court can review any federal, state, or local law or action to see if it is constitutional, or allowed by the Constitution. If the Court decides a law is unconstitutional, it has the power to nullify, or cancel, that law or action. Chief Justice John Marshall described the great power of judicial review when he said,

“It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is. Those who apply the rule to particular cases, must of necessity expound and interpret that rule. If two laws conflict with each other, the courts must decide on the operation of each.”

—Chief Justice John Marshall

Marbury v. Madison The Constitution does not give the Supreme Court the power of judicial review. A provision of the Judiciary Act of 1789 gave the Court the power of judicial review for acts of state governments. In 1803 the case of Marbury v. Madison established that the Supreme Court had the power to decide whether laws passed by Congress were constitutional.

(See Landmark Supreme Court Case Studies on page 260 for information about this case.)

John Marshall’s opinion set forth three principles of judicial review:

• The Constitution is the supreme law of the land.
• If there is a conflict, or a disagreement, between the Constitution and any other law, the Constitution rules.
• The judicial branch has a duty to uphold the Constitution. Thus, it must be able to determine when a law conflicts with the Constitution and to nullify unconstitutional laws.

In this drawing, cartoonist Joseph Mirachi is making a statement about the U.S. Supreme Court.

1. What is the setting for this cartoon, and what figures are depicted?
2. What is the Supreme Court’s role in determining the constitutionality of a law?
3. What happens if the Supreme Court rules that a law is unconstitutional?

“Do you ever have one of those days when everything seems un-Constitutional?”

Joseph Mirachi/The Cartoon Bank
The power of judicial review is an important check on the legislative and executive branches of government. It prevents them from straying too far from the Constitution when they make and carry out laws.

**Limits on the Supreme Court**

Under the system of checks and balances, there are limits on the power of the federal courts, including the Supreme Court. The Court depends on the executive branch as well as state and local officials, such as governors or police officers, to enforce its decisions.

The executive branch usually follows Court rulings, but there have been exceptions. President Andrew Jackson refused to obey a Court ruling in the case of *Worcester v. Georgia*, in which Chief Justice John Marshall ordered the state of Georgia to stop violating federal land treaties with the Cherokee Nation in 1832. Because most citizens agreed with President Jackson, there was no public pressure to force him to uphold the Court’s decision.

Congress can get around a Court ruling by passing a new law or changing a law ruled unconstitutional by the Court. Congress and state legislatures can also try to undo Court rulings by adopting a new amendment to the Constitution.

Another limit is the fact that the Court can only hear and make rulings on the cases that come to it. All cases submitted to the Court must be actual legal disputes. A person cannot simply ask the Court to decide whether a law is constitutional. The Court will not rule on a law or action that has not been challenged on appeal. The Court also accepts only cases that involve a federal question.

Traditionally, the Court has refused to deal with political questions because it believes that these are issues the executive or legislative branch of the government should resolve. However, in the 2000 presidential election, the Supreme Court for the first time heard two cases involving the recounting of votes in the state of Florida.

**Vocabulary**

1. **Write** a true statement and a false statement for the terms: judicial review, constitutional. Beside each false statement explain why it is false.

**Main Ideas**

2. **Describe** the selection process for Supreme Court justices.

3. **Analyzing** What is the significance of the case of *Marbury v. Madison* and how it relates to Congress?

**Critical Thinking**

4. **Interpreting** Former Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes once said, “The Constitution is what the judges say it is.” Explain the meaning of this statement.

5. **BIG Ideas** On a graphic organizer like the one below, list the kinds of laws that can be reviewed in judicial review and what they are reviewed for.

   ![Graphic Organizer]

   - Laws Reviewed

**Activity**

6. **Expository Writing** Select one Supreme Court Justice, either past or current. Research more about and write a report on the justice.

**Study Central™** To review this section, go to glencoe.com.
Guide to Reading

Big Idea
The judicial branch is charged with interpreting the law.

Content Vocabulary
- docket (p. 255)
- brief (p. 256)
- majority opinion (p. 256)
- unanimous opinion (p. 256)
- concurring opinion (p. 256)
- dissenting opinion (p. 256)
- stare decisis (p. 257)

Academic Vocabulary
- communicate (p. 256)
- attitude (p. 257)

Reading Strategy
Contrasting As you read, use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to take notes on the differences between dissenting opinions and concurring opinions.

Real World Civics At times, the Supreme Court has changed its mind due to changing social conditions. In the 1890s, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation in America was legal. But in the 1950s, nine African American students won a lower court case to desegregate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. In 1958, Thurgood Marshall, a lawyer for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), helped convince the Supreme Court that Little Rock had to proceed with integration.

Thurgood Marshall with Little Rock students on the steps of the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C., in 1958

NORTH CAROLINA STANDARDS
Civics and Economics

2.05 Analyze court cases that illustrate that the United States Constitution is the supreme law of the land.
2.06 Analyze court cases that demonstrate how the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights protect the rights of individuals.
Court Procedures

Main Idea The Supreme Court is not required to hear all cases presented before it and carefully chooses the cases it will consider.

Civics & You In a dispute, why might it be helpful to have an impartial third party decide who is right and who is wrong? Read to find out the process the Supreme Court uses to make an unbiased decision.

The Supreme Court meets for about nine months each year. Each term begins the first Monday in October and runs as long as the business before the Court requires. A term is named after the year in which it begins. The 2005 term, for example, began in October 2005 and ended in July 2006. Special sessions may be called to deal with urgent matters that cannot wait until the next term. Between terms the justices study new cases and catch up on other Court work.

How Cases Reach the Court

An important task of Supreme Court justices is to decide whether to hear a case. The justices review a list of possible cases and consider their merits. The Court will accept a case if four of the nine justices agree to do so. Accepted cases go on the Court docket, or calendar.

Caseload The number of cases handled in a given period is called the caseload. Thousands of cases are filed with the Supreme Court each year. Nearly 7,500 cases were appealed to the Supreme Court in 2004. The Court may decide several hundred cases, but, for example, it gave full hearings and written opinions in only 74 cases in 2004.

In the opinions that accompany this small number of cases, the Court sets out general principles that apply to the nation as well as to the specific parties in the case. It is mainly through these cases that the Court interprets the law and shapes public policy.

Supreme Court Caseload

Analyzing Graphs

1. Identifying In which year were the most cases appealed?
2. Computing How many more cases were appealed in 2004 than in 1985?

Source: www.supremecourtus.gov
Selecting Cases

Supreme Court justices decide to hear only certain kinds of cases. They usually decide to hear a case if it involves a significant constitutional question. In most instances, such questions center around the Bill of Rights and other amendments and deal with issues such as freedom of speech, equal protection of the laws, and fair trial.

The justices always choose cases that involve a real dispute between two adversaries, or opposing sides. In other words, the cases must deal with real people and events.

Supreme Court justices also tend to select cases that involve legal, rather than political issues, as well as those that affect the entire country rather than isolated individuals or groups.

You have already learned that nearly all cases come to the Supreme Court on appeal from a lower court. Most of the appeals reach the Court by a request for a writ of certiorari (Latin for “to make more certain”).

Writ of Certiorari A writ of certiorari directs a lower court to send its records on a case to the Supreme Court for review. This happens if one of the parties involved in a case claims that the lower court made an error in the case. Sometimes a lower court will ask the Supreme Court to make a ruling in a case because it is not sure how to apply the law to the case.

Steps in Decision Making

Every case the Supreme Court accepts goes through a series of steps: written arguments, oral arguments, conference, opinion writing, and announcement.

Written Arguments Once the Court takes a case, the lawyers for each side prepare a brief. A brief is a written document that explains one side’s position on the case. The justices then study the briefs.

Oral Arguments Next, lawyers for each side present oral arguments. Each side gets only 30 minutes to summarize its case. The justices often ask the lawyers very tough questions about the case.

Conference On Fridays the justices get together to make their first decisions about the cases they have been studying. These meetings take place in secret; no audience is present and no meeting minutes are kept. The chief justice presides over the discussion of the case. A majority—at least five votes when all nine justices are participating—decides a case. At least six justices must be present for a decision.

Opinion Writing Once the Court has reached a decision on a case, one justice gets the job of writing the majority opinion. A majority opinion presents the views of the majority of the justices on a case. The opinion states the facts of the case, announces the ruling, and explains the Court’s reasoning in reaching the decision. Written opinions are important. They set a precedent for lower courts to follow, and they also communicate, or announce, the Court’s view to Congress, to the president, to interest groups, and to the public. The justice who agrees with the majority decision but has different reasons writes a concurring opinion. Justices who oppose the majority decision issue a dissenting opinion. The Court may also issue a unanimous opinion in which all the justices vote the same way.

Announcement When the opinion writing is completed, the Court announces its decision. The Supreme Court and other courts around the country use the written opinions to guide their decisions regarding new cases.

Explaining Why are the Court’s written opinions important?
Reasons for Decisions

Main Idea  The law, social conditions, and legal and personal views are among the factors that influence the decisions of the Supreme Court.

Civics & You  The Supreme Court hears cases appealed to it by everyone from prisoners in jail to presidents. What influences the justices’ decisions?

Many factors, such as precedents, the social atmosphere in the country, and the justices’ own legal and personal views, influence justices when they decide a case that comes before the Court.

The Law  Law is the foundation for deciding cases that come before the Supreme Court. A guiding principle for all judges is called stare decisis, a Latin term that means “let the decision stand.” By following precedent, courts make the law predictable.

At the same time, the law needs to be flexible to adapt to changing times. Social conditions, public ideas and attitudes, or feelings, and technology change over the years. As the highest court in the land, the Supreme Court is in a position to overrule outdated precedents.

The Supreme Court sometimes reviews a case to clarify the meaning of the Constitution for an important issue. This happened with disputes over manually recounting the Florida ballots in the presidential election of 2000. The dispute led the Court to address a question involving the Fourteenth Amendment: did all recounted votes have to be treated equally? In Bush v. Gore (2000), the Court ordered the recount to stop. This decision ensured that George W. Bush would receive Florida’s electoral votes and win the election.

Changing Social Conditions  Although the Supreme Court is somewhat protected from public and political pressures, the social situation can also influence Court decisions. When social conditions change, the Court may make new interpretations of the law.

Constitutional Question  Demonstrators gathered outside the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C., while justices considered the recount question of the 2000 presidential election.

Analyzing  Why did the Supreme Court rule on the issue rather than a state court?
In the 1890s, many restaurants, schools, and trains were separate for whites or for African Americans. In Louisiana, Homer Plessy, an African American, decided to sit in a section of a train marked “For Whites Only.” When he refused to move, Plessy was arrested.

Plessy was convicted of violating Louisiana’s segregation law. The Supreme Court upheld the Louisiana law as constitutional in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. “Legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts or to abolish distinctions,” the Court concluded. The Court ruled that the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment permitted “separate but equal” facilities for whites and for African Americans. The “separate but equal” doctrine was used to justify segregation in many areas of American life for the next 50 years.
Reversing Plessy  However, by the 1950s, society’s views on racial segregation were beginning to change. World War II made it harder to support segregation openly because many African Americans had fought and died for American ideals. In addition, civil rights groups were demanding an end to racial discrimination. In 1954, in the case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, the Court overturned the precedent of “separate but equal.”

On May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren read the decision of the unanimous Court:

“We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”

The justices ruled that racially separate schools are unequal simply because they are separate. The Court found that segregation was a violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Differing Legal Views  Justices have varying views of the law and the proper role of the courts in our society. Some justices, for example, believe that the Court should be very active and hear many different kinds of cases. Others believe that the Court should hesitate to use the power of judicial review to promote new ideas or policies. Political checks limit the extent to which courts can exercise judicial review.

Personal Beliefs  Finally, justices are human beings. Each sees the world based on his or her own life experiences. Justice Benjamin Cardozo once said,

“We may try to see things as objectively as we please. Nonetheless, we can never see them with any eyes except our own.”

—Benjamin Cardozo, The Nature of the Judicial Process (1921)

Vocabulary
1. Define  the following terms and use them in sentences that relate to the Supreme Court: docket, brief, majority opinion, concurring opinion, dissenting opinion, unanimous opinion, stare decisis.

Main Ideas
2. Describing  What are the steps of a writ of certiorari?
3. Explaining  Why does the Supreme Court sometimes reverse its earlier decisions?

Critical Thinking
4. Concluding  Do you think it is a good idea that Supreme Court justices are appointed for life? Explain your answer.

5. BIG Ideas  On a web diagram like the one below, identify the factors that must be part of a majority decision made by the Supreme Court.

6. Analyzing Visuals  Review the chart on page 258. Which ruling guarantees you the right to be informed of your rights if you are arrested?

7. Expository Writing  Read more about Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. Summarize the facts in the case.

Study Central™  To review this section, go to glencoe.com.
Marshall wrote: 

“*It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is. Those who apply the rule to particular cases, must of necessity expound and interpret the rule.*”

—Chief Justice John Marshall

**Background of the Case**

As President John Adams’ term expired in 1801, Congress passed a bill—the Judiciary Act of 1789—giving the president a chance to appoint 42 new justices of the peace in the District of Columbia. The Senate approved the new appointees, and the Secretary of State, James Madison, delivered the paperwork to all but four of the new judges before the next president—Thomas Jefferson—was sworn in. Because Jefferson wanted to stop any action by the previous officeholder, his first act as president was to stop delivery of those last four appointments. William Marbury was one of those who did not receive his appointment in time. He filed a suit in the Supreme Court under the Judiciary Act against the person who was to deliver the paperwork—James Madison. Marbury claimed he should have received his appointment as declared by Congress.

**The Decision**

The Supreme Court heard the case in 1803. Chief Justice John Marshall announced the ruling. He stated that Marbury’s rights had been violated under the Judiciary Act. The Court further ruled, however, that the act gave the Supreme Court rights it should not have, according to the Constitution. Thus, they ruled that the law itself—the one that gave Marbury his appointment—was unconstitutional. Even though Marbury was ruled the winner, the Court could not force the president to give him the appointment because the law allowing the whole appointment was constitutionally false.

**Why It Matters**

The Supreme Court claimed its right to declare acts of the legislative and executive branches unconstitutional for the first time in *Marbury v. Madison*. It defined its role as the final authority on what the Constitution means. By doing so, it established a model of judicial independence.

**Analyzing the Court Decision**

1. **Explaining** Why is *Marbury v. Madison* a landmark case?
2. **Describing** Why did the Supreme Court refuse to allow the appointment of the last judges?
The Judicial Branch

- The Constitution provided for a Supreme Court of the United States as part of a court system that would balance the powers of the other two branches of government.
- The United States judiciary consists of parallel systems of federal and state courts.

Federal Court System

- District Courts are the federal courts where trials are held and lawsuits are begun.
- Courts of Appeals review decisions made in lower district courts.
- Once appointed, federal judges may have their jobs for life.

The Supreme Court

- The Supreme Court is the final authority in the federal court system.
- Most of the Supreme Court cases come from appeals of lower court decisions.
- Judicial review gives the Supreme Court the authority to determine the constitutionality of government laws and actions.

Decisions of the Court

- The Court’s decisions are written in an opinion.
- When all justices unanimously agree on an opinion, it is written for the entire Court in a unanimous opinion.
- When there is not a unanimous opinion, a majority opinion is written.
- One or more dissenting opinions are usually written by those justices who do not agree with the majority.
Reviewing Vocabulary
Directions: Choose the word(s) that best completes the sentence.

1. A situation in which both federal and state courts have authority to hear a case is known as ________.
   A appellate jurisdiction
   B concurrent jurisdiction
   C original jurisdiction
   D exclusive jurisdiction

2. A past decision on which judges base their decisions in similar cases is a(n) ________.
   A circuit
   B opinion
   C docket
   D precedent

3. Judicial review gives the Supreme Court the power to ________.
   A declare a law unconstitutional
   B remand a case to a lower court
   C reject a brief
   D hear an appeal

4. When all the justices vote the same way, the Supreme Court issues a(n) ________.
   A majority opinion
   B concurring opinion
   C dissenting opinion
   D unanimous opinion

Reviewing Main Ideas
Directions: Choose the best answer for each question.

Section 1 (pp. 238–242)
5. According to the Constitution, what does every accused person have a right to?
   A a lawyer
   B a civil trial
   C the best legal help
   D a Supreme Court hearing

6. Which of the following cases would be tried in a federal court?
   A a state suits another state over water rights
   B a Houstonian kills a person in Los Angeles
   C an Illinois state worker is accused of forgery
   D the U.S. ambassador to Russia breaks a Russian law

Section 2 (pp. 243–247)
7. In which federal courts do juries try cases?
   A district courts
   B appellate courts
   C the Supreme Court
   D all levels of federal courts

8. How might a president limit the powers of the Supreme Court?
   A submit an appeal to the Court
   B revise a law ruled unconstitutional
   C pass an amendment to override a ruling
   D refuse to enforce a Supreme Court decision

Section 4 (pp. 254–259)
9. What kind of case does the Supreme Court usually decide to hear?
   A a case that concerns political issues
   B a case that involves the Bill of Rights
   C a case that poses hypothetical questions
   D a case that affects only a few individuals

10. What major factor influenced the Court to overturn the “separate but equal” precedent?
    A stare decisis
    B conservatism
    C racial prejudice
    D societal changes
Critical Thinking

Directions: Base your answers to questions 11 and 12 on the chart below and your knowledge of Chapter 8.

11. Which decision might lead you to infer that the Constitution protects your right to protest war by wearing a black armband?
   A. Engle v. Vitale
   B. DeJonge v. Oregon
   C. Brandenburg v. Ohio
   D. United States v. Eichman

**First Amendment Rights**

*Brandenburg v. Ohio (1969)* expanded scope of political speech by protecting all political speech unless it is linked to immediate lawless behavior.

*Near v. Minnesota (1931)* ruled against censorship of information, defining “prior restraint” of written material as unconstitutional.

*DeJonge v. Oregon (1937)* reinforced peaceable assembly and association protection of the First Amendment.

*Engle v. Vitale (1962)* held that a public school district’s practice of starting the day with prayer violates the establishment clause.

*United States v. Eichman (1990)* struck down Federal Flag Protection Act; held that flag burning is expressive speech.

12. What First Amendment freedom did *Near v. Minnesota* uphold?
   A. freedom to petition
   B. freedom of religion
   C. freedom of the press
   D. freedom to assemble

**Document-Based Questions**

Directions: Analyze the document and answer the short-answer questions that follow.

The following document is a summation of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Reed v. Reed* (1971).

**Facts of the Case**

The Idaho Probate Code specified that “males must be preferred to females” in naming administrators of estates. After the death of their adopted son, both Sally and Cecil Reed sought to be named the administrator of their son’s estate. According to the Probate Code, Cecil was appointed administrator and Sally challenged the law in court.

**Question Presented**

Did the Idaho Probate Code violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment?

**Conclusion**

In a unanimous decision, the Court held that the law’s dissimilar treatment of men and women was unconstitutional. The Court argued that “[t]o give a mandatory preference to members of either sex over members of the other . . . is to make the very kind of arbitrary legislative choice forbidden by the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. . .[T]he choice in this context may not lawfully be mandated solely on the basis of sex.”

—Reed v. Reed

13. How many Supreme Court justices agreed with the decision in *Reed v. Reed*?
14. What is the main idea of the Court’s conclusion?

**Informational Writing**

15. Write a brief essay describing the procedure that Supreme Court justices follow in hearing important cases.
The Role of Congress

Senator Margaret Chase Smith of Maine was a senator who believed in the idea of true Americanism—those who believe in the freedom of America. Robert Byrd, who has served longer than any other U.S. senator, argues that the American people need statespeople in Congress, not politicians.

Those of us who shout the loudest about Americanism in making character assassinations are all too frequently those who, by our own words and acts, ignore some of the basic principles of Americanism—

- The right to criticize
- The right to hold unpopular beliefs
- The right to protest
- The right of independent thought

The exercise of these rights should not cost one single American citizen his reputation or his right to a livelihood nor should he be in danger of losing his reputation or livelihood merely because he happens to know someone who holds unpopular beliefs. Who of us doesn’t? Otherwise none of us could call our souls our own. Otherwise thought control would have set in.

—from “Declaration of Conscience” by Margaret Chase Smith, June 1, 1950

In the real world, exemplary personal conduct can sometimes achieve much more than any political agenda. Comity, courtesy, charitable treatment of even our political opposites, combined with a concerted effort to not just occupy our offices, but to bring honor to them, will do more to inspire our people and restore their faith in us, their leaders, than millions of dollars of 30-second spots or glitzy puff-pieces concocted by spinmeisters.

—Address by Robert C. Byrd, September 15, 1998
The Role of the Executive Branch
Two presidents write about the power of the executive branch.

I have used every ounce of power there was in the office and I have not cared a rap for the criticisms of those who spoke of my ‘usurpation of power’; for I knew that the talk was all nonsense and that there was no usurpation . . . I have felt not merely that my action was right in itself, but that in showing the strength of, or in giving strength to, the executive, I was establishing a precedent of value.

—Theodore Roosevelt, letter to George Otto Trevelyan

[T]he government of the United States has become too big, too complex, and too pervasive in its influence on all our lives for one individual to pretend to direct the details of its important and critical programming. Competent assistants are mandatory; without them the Executive Branch would bog down.

—Dwight Eisenhower, letter to Henry Robinson Luce

The Role of the Supreme Court
Two justices write about the role of the Court.

A dissent in a court of last resort is an appeal to the brooding spirit of the law, to the intelligence of a future day, when a later decision may possibly correct the error into which the dissenting judge believes to court to have been betrayed.

—Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes

[The Supreme Court is] somewhat of an umpire. It considers what the Congress proposes, or what the executive proposes, or what some individual claims, and rules upon these laws . . . by comparing them with the law as laid down by the Constitution . . . and then calls the strikes and the balls.

—Associate Justice Tom Clark

Photographs as Primary Sources
President Lyndon Johnson (right) discusses strategy with adviser Abe Fortas. What does this photograph tell you about Johnson’s leadership style? Do you think his style was effective or not?

DBQ: Document-Based Questions

1. **Explaining** Do you think Smith’s stand was courageous? Explain.

2. **Comparing and Contrasting** How are the views expressed by Roosevelt and Eisenhower alike and how are they different?

3. **Explaining** What purpose does the dissenting opinion in a Supreme Court decision play?

4. **Evaluate and Connect** Select one of the passages that expresses a view that you agree with and select one with which you disagree. Write two paragraphs explaining your position.