

The Federal Court System

Judicial Branch

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Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	Social Studies	**Duration**	150 minutes
Course	U.S. Government		

Essential Question

How does the federal court system or judicial branch work?

Summary

The lesson examines the structure and jurisdiction of the federal court system as explained through Article III of the Constitution. Through playing a Jeopardy game and watching a video, students learn more about the structures, powers, and responsibilities of the Supreme Court and the lower federal courts.

Snapshot

Engage

Students estimate their prior knowledge of the federal court system.

Explore

Students participate in groups and play a Jeopardy game based upon information they already know about the federal court system.

Explain

Students watch a video and fill in information from the video to use as a study guide. Students quiz each other and then play the Jeopardy game again with the new information gained.

Extend

There is a choice of extension activities. They include: understanding Article III, Supreme Court cases that affect Teens, and creating a Mind Map.

Evaluate

The video study guide and the extension activities can serve as assessments for the lesson.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: United States Government (9th through 12th grade))

USG.4: The student will examine the Constitution of the United States by comparing the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government as they address the needs of the public.
USG.4.2: Examine the structure, functions,and authority exercised by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.
USG.4.2E: Examine how government exercises its authority in real world situations including current issues and events.

Attachments

- Article III of the Constitution - Spanish.docx
- Article III of the Constitution - Spanish.pdf
- Article III of the Constitution.docx
- Article III of the Constitution.pdf
- Jeopardy Teacher Answer Key - Copy.docx
- Jeopardy Teacher Answer Key - Copy.pdf
- Judicial Branch Video Study Guide Answer Key.docx
- Judicial Branch Video Study Guide Answer Key.pdf
- Lesson Slides—The Federal Court System.ppt
- Note-taking Handout for 10 Supreme Court Cases Every Teen Should Know - Spanish.docx
- Note-taking Handout for 10 Supreme Court Cases Every Teen Should Know - Spanish.pdf
- Note-taking Handout for 10 Supreme Court Cases Every Teen Should Know.docx
- Note-taking Handout for 10 Supreme Court Cases Every Teen Should Know.pdf
- The US Government Judicial Branch Video Study Guide - Spanish.docx
- The US Government Judicial Branch Video Study Guide - Spanish.pdf
- The US Government Judicial Branch Video Study Guide.docx
- The US Government Judicial Branch Video Study Guide.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- US Government: Judicial Branch video study guide (attached)
- Chart tablet paper and markers
- Article III to the Constitution handout (attached)
- 10 Supreme Court Cases Every Teen Should Know article

Engage

Show the essential question **slide 1**. Tell students that today they are going to estimate what they might already know about the judicial branch of government, which houses the federal court system.

Show **slide 2**. Students will now engage in a Circle Maps activity. For more information about this instructional strategy, follow the link or look for the URL in the Resources section. Have students get out a sheet of notebook paper and draw a circle in the middle of it. They are to write the words from PowerPoint slide two inside the circle. Outside of the circle, have students write down ANYTHING they know about those words. Allow 3 to 5 minutes for students to think. Walk around the room to see if students are writing down anything.

Once they've had enough time to write, have students share their circle maps with a partner and discuss what they wrote down. Ask student-pairs to share what they know with the class.

After the discussion, ask students to rate their knowledge of how much they already know about the concepts on slide 2 by holding up their fingers to match their level of understanding.

1. One finger: I don't know much about this yet.
2. Two fingers: I know some of this information.
3. Three fingers: I seem to know a lot about these topics.

Using this rating system, assign students to groups that have a variety of both more knowledgeable and less knowledgeable students. Group size should range from 3 to 5, depending on how large your class is and also how well students work together in larger groups.

Teacher's Note: Easy Grouping

One way of making this kind of grouping easier is to use the Fold the Line instructional strategy by having students line up according to the rating they gave their level of understanding. Once they're in order, fold the line in half, facing those who believe they have the least amount of understanding with those who believe they have the most. Then, of these two lines together, separate every four students or so into a group. This should leave you with groups that each have a good, quick average understanding between the four of them.

Explore

Print off the attached **Teacher Jeopardy Answer Key** before engaging in this section. This will be a practice round of the Jeopardy game, designed to give students an idea of what they may or may not know about the judicial branch. At this time, the game should only be played until all groups have had a chance to answer one or two questions and not through to final Jeopardy. In the next part of the lesson, students will learn more about the federal court system so they can play the game in its entirety at the end of the lesson.

Once students are grouped, show the Jeopardy rules on **slide 3**. Tell students that they are going to see exactly how much they might already know about the judicial branch of government by playing the Jeopardy game. In this round, allow each group to come up with answers together, discussing them beforehand.

The following are helpful teacher hints in playing Jeopardy with the class:

- Tell students this is a practice round. In the practice round, groups should not keep score. Students will have the opportunity to play Jeopardy again at the end of this lesson.
- The teacher randomly calls upon a group to pick a question anywhere on the board. Groups work together to figure out the answer and then answer in the form of a question.
- The group continues to control the board until they miss an answer, then the teacher calls upon another group. If your class is 30 or more students, only allow groups to answer one question at a time anywhere on the board. Then call upon another group to answer the next question, rather than allowing any one group to control the board. This allows all groups to have a turn and keeps the class better engaged. (NOTE: If a group misses an answer, DO NOT click the mouse or arrows to progress to the next slide, as this will reveal the answer. Instead, click the home button in the lower right-hand corner to return to the Jeopardy screen. A teacher answer key is provided with all the answers to the game.)

Teacher's Note: Staying Relevant

Slide 18 (Jeopardy square 3 - $300) contains a question about Supreme Court vacancies that may need to be altered or replaced for use in your class to ensure the information is up-to-date.

Explain

Pass out the **US Government Judicial Branch Video Study Guide** to all students (to conserve paper, print this study guide out two-sided). Read through the video study guide aloud as students follow along silently. Tell students that they will be given more information about the federal court system by watching a video. As they watch the video, have them fill in the blanks of the study guide.

As the teacher, you will need to have prior access to the YouTube video, "United States Government: The Judicial Branch." This video can be accessed at the link, and the URL can also be found in the Resources section of this lesson.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=J9xw7LG-2zA

The video study guide and the Jeopardy game are based upon this video.

Teacher's Note: Filling Out the Video Study Guide

The video is approximately 22 minutes. Although it is several years old, the video discusses the federal court system in a very easy and understandable manner. Walk around the room and gauge how much students were able to complete on the study guide by watching the video the first time. If students have trouble filling out the blanks as they viewed the video, some teachers suggest playing the video again. Those who have done this believe that the information is valuable enough and that students benefit from practicing the skill of note-taking that it is worth it to take another 22 minutes to show the video again. However, this will take an entire class period if the video is shown twice. As an option, you can also have students partner and share notes. Neither is a necessity because students will also play the Jeopardy game again, which provides the answers to the video guide.

After the video guide is filled out as much as possible, have students (as partners or in small groups) quiz each other on the information in preparation for a second round of Jeopardy. It is not important to provide the correct answers at this point. Limit this activity to only 10 to 15 minutes and only if students remain on task.

Have students return to their former groups or form new groups for the second round of Jeopardy.

You will wish to keep score for this round so groups can play final Jeopardy. Ask each group to appoint a scorekeeper. Periodically, you should call on scorekeepers to report the current points of the group.

Once groups are formed, show the rules for round two of the Jeopardy game on slide four of the PowerPoint. The purpose of this round is to hold individual group members accountable for filling out the study guide information correctly. For students who may have left something blank or inadvertently written down an incorrect response, the Jeopardy game provides a way for them to get the correct answers to the video guide. Students can self-correct their study guides as they play the game simply by paying attention.

To address all of the video study guide, the game should be played in its entirety where all questions and answers are shown and final Jeopardy is played. Allow all groups to participate in the final Jeopardy question, betting whatever amount of points (some, all, or none) that they wish. Do not show the question until the groups first place their bets and have shared what they are risking aloud with the class. You may or may not wish to have a small prize (e.g., candy, late homework pass, etc.) for the group or groups who win the game.

After the Jeopardy game is over, students may turn in their video guide for a grade.

Extend

Several possible extensions exist for this lesson.

Option 1: Understanding Article III — A copy of Article III of the Constitution is provided that deals with the judicial branch. Read Article III aloud to students. As you read, ask students in a general discussion what the underlined words might mean. Clear up any misconceptions. Number students 1 through 4. Have students find a partner with the same number. Students will be assigned one of the sections: Section 1, Section 2A, Section 2B, and Section 3. They will summarize, in their own words, what these paragraphs mean. Students will write their new paragraph(s) and present the information to the class.

Option 2: Supreme Court Cases that affect Teens — Students may be interested in Supreme Court decisions that have affected students and schools. Two Supreme Court cases that affected schools and students (that were also discussed in this lesson) are Brown v. Board of Education and Tinker v. Des Moines School District.

Sort students into groups of three. Make a copies of the article "Ten Supreme Court Cases every Teen Should Know" (found either by using this link or the URL in the Resources section of this lesson) so each group has one or two copies. Assign each student group one of the 10 Supreme Court cases to read in the article. (The Supreme Court cases are numbered in the article.) One student in each group should explain the background of the group's assigned case, another student in the group should explain the Court's ruling, and the third student, the ruling's impact on laws or how this affects teens. Groups should present their information to the class. The rest of the class may wish to take notes on the information presented to help them with the next activity. A handout is provided for note-taking.

Ask students individually to choose one of the Supreme Court cases mentioned in the article and presented by class members that they believe has the most impact on students and one case that might seem unfair or could put students at a disadvantage. Students then write a Two-Minute Paper. **Slide 32** provides questions for this activity.

Option 3: Creating Mind Maps Assign students to groups of three. Show students the Mind Map example on **slide 33**. Explain that a mind map shows a visual relationship between key words or concepts. Students will then create a Mind Map that shows the relationship of the judicial branch to the key words listed on PowerPoint slide 34. The completed video study guides should be helpful to students in creating their mind maps. Students should create their "draft" mind map on notebook paper first. Then students will need a piece of chart tablet paper and markers for the final copy of their mind map. Have groups present their mind maps to the class and have students discuss the relationship among the key words as they present.

Evaluate

The self-corrected study guide will serve as an assessment. A teacher answer copy is provided. Any of the extension activities can also be assessed.

Resources

- Jacobs, T. (2007, September). Ten Supreme Court Cases Every Teen Should Know. New York Times Upfront. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/featured_articles/20080915monday.html
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Circle Maps. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5071a7c
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Fold the Line. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5079658
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Two-Minute Paper. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f506cf73
- The US Government: Cathleen Hayes. (2014, November 14). United States Government the Judicial Branch [video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9xw7LG-2zA
- U.S. Const. art. I. Retrieved from https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/articles/article-iii