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We the People

Chapter 25 – What is the Role of the Supreme Court in the American Constitutional System?

We the People Textbook

Lesson for struggling Readers

Day 1: Defining the Supreme Courts Role

SWKABAT: explain and identify the role of the Supreme Court in America’s constitutional system. They will investigate the ideas of checks and balances and define the important role the Supreme Court plays in upholding the nation’s founding document.

Objective: to define, explain and identify the role of the Supreme Court in the American constitutional system

Essential Question(s):

1. How has the existence of the Supreme Court led to new interpretations of the Constitution?
2. How have Supreme Court decisions changed the American system of government over time?
 - a. How has it changed politics in the United States?
 - b. How has it changed individual freedoms?

Standard: USG – 2.5

Agenda:

1. Pre-questioning Strategy: students will be given handout 1 “Activating Prior Knowledge” and question 1 below:
 - What is a landmark?
 - a. Why do they exist?
 - b. What do they represent?
 - After completing Handout 1 – students will answer the questions below and discuss their answers as a class
 - a. What does it mean when you make a decision?
 - b. What types of decisions have you made that have had a significant impact on your life so far?

- c. What do you think a landmark decision is? How did you come up with this definition?
 - a. We will be discussing the impact of landmark decisions from the Supreme Court in terms of interpreting the Constitution (showing what it means). How do you think the Supreme Court's landmark decisions have shaped our understanding of the Constitution?
2. Word Square Strategy:
 - Students will be given Handout 4 (a word square) using the various terms from chapter 25. (advisory opinion, appeal, appellate jurisdiction, litigant, methods of constitutional interpretation, original jurisdiction, writ of certiorari) (students will have already defined landmark decision) Each student will be given one or two terms.
 - a. The student will write their word in the top left-hand box and write the sentence where the word first appears in the text.
 - b. They will record the page number
 - c. Students will work in pairs or groups to create their own definition of their assigned term.
 - d. As groups share their definitions, identify the words they have in common.
 - e. If desired, consult the glossary or a dictionary to be sure that no critical characteristics have been left out.
 - f. Once a class definition has been created, record it in the bottom left-hand box of the handout.
 - g. The students will then share their definitions with the whole class, and a set of classroom definitions for the vocabulary words will be posted on the front wall "Word Wall"
3. The teacher will read aloud the information found on page 178 of the *We the People* textbook "What are the Constitutional Powers of the Supreme Court".
 - The teacher will facilitate a classroom "chalk talk" on the front board to help students interpret the information that they have learned from this section.
 - The teacher will pass out Handout 8 – and the class will work on filling in this information together.
4. Once students have defined all of the vocabulary words from chapter 25, and defined the Supreme Courts role in the United States government , the teacher will then create six groups and assign them a Supreme Court case from the list in the textbook (*McCulloch v. Maryland, Gibbons v. Ogden, Gideon v. Wainwright, Reynolds v. Sims, Nixon v. United States, United States v. Lopez*)
 - a. A teacher created summary on the court cases will be provided to students

- b. Students will then be broken up within their groupings into 1,2 & 3 – they will utilize the “Read, Recap & Request” strategy to break down the information given to them about the assigned case.
 - c. After they have completed the “Read, Recap & Request” strategy they will be asked the following questions:
 - What are the implications (outcomes) for the way American constitutional government should function?
 - How did the decision in this case clarify the meaning of the Constitution?
 - What additional constitutional challenges might arise due to this decision?
 - Should this case be considered a landmark decision?
 - Why or why not?
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Day 2: Limits Placed on the Supreme Courts Power (Checks & Balances)

SWKABAT: Define and identify the limits placed on the Supreme Court by the United States Constitution. They will explain the purpose for these limitations and evaluate their effectiveness.

Objective: The students will understand the concept of checks and balances as it applies to the US Supreme Court.

Standard: USG – 2.5

Agenda:

1. The teacher will split the class into five groups. The students will be assigned one of the bullet points from page 181 under the heading “What checks exist on the power of the Supreme Court”.
 - a. The students will be given a copy of handout 8 to fill in with their assigned bullet point.
 - b. At the bottom of this handout it asks students to make a generalized statement about the information they were asked to analyze – students in their groups will do this as it relates to their limitation on power.
 - c. Students will then switch assigned bullet points, so that every group has to analyze every bullet pointed power.
 - d. For each bullet point students will have to describe the checks on the power of the Supreme Court and provide an example of each.
2. The students will then individually write an essay on the following prompt:
Explain the importance of the Supreme Court in interpreting the United States Constitution: be sure to answer the following information in your essay
 - How have landmark cases helped shape the interpretation of this founding document?
 - Why has there been limitations placed on the judicial branches power in the United States?
3. Students essays will be graded based upon their understanding of the Supreme Courts role in the American Constitutional system – this would be a major or mid-level assessment activity.