

JUDGE CHATS

Lesson Plan



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NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER



Independence Mall • 525 Arch Street • Philadelphia, PA 19106

Judge Chats Lesson Plan

Grade Levels: 6th, 8th, 12th

Number of class periods: 1 (approximately 55-minutes)

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About This Lesson

This lesson enhances the student experience during the *Judge Chats* program at the National Constitution Center. It is an anticipatory activity that helps students explore the requisite skills necessary to become a judge. Through this lesson, students will create a list of questions, based on what they learned in class, to share with the visiting judge during the Judge Chat program.

Lesson Objectives

- ★ Develop a basic knowledge and ability to identify the qualifications and duties of judges.
- ★ Understand the different court systems that make up the Judicial Branch.
- ★ Increase awareness, understanding, and interest in the Judicial Branch.

Lesson Overview

The students will access their personal experiences to connect with the content of this lesson. They will examine and analyze primary source documents, in order to understand how the U.S. Constitution and state constitutions established the qualifications and duties of judges.

Initial Questions

- ★ What are the qualifications to become a Supreme Court Justice set out in the U.S. Constitution?
- ★ What are the different types of judges throughout the court system at the state and local levels?
- ★ Are the qualifications the same for all judges? Why or why not?

Essential Questions

- ★ How do you become a judge? What do judges do?
- ★ How does Article III of the U.S. Constitution create the Judicial Branch?
- ★ What are the qualifications and duties established by the Judicial Branch?
- ★ What are the different types of courts? Why are they different?
- ★ How do state constitutions define the role of judges?



Common Core Standards

COMMON CORE STANDARDS (GRADES 6 TO 8)

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.5

Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally). Integration of Knowledge and Ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS (GRADE 12)

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

Introduction

Everyone knows how to judge. As human beings we make judgments everyday in many different aspects of our lives. However, the skills necessary to become a judge in federal, state, and local courts go far beyond just listening to a few facts and coming to your own opinion about something. Judges need to be experts in reading, interpreting, and executing the law. It takes a well-trained individual to do that efficiently and effectively.

In this lesson, students will access their prior knowledge about moments in their lives when they have acted like a judge and made an important decision that affected others. Then they will create a list of qualities and duties they think are necessary to be a good judge. After, they will examine excerpts from primary sources including the U.S. Constitution and several state constitutions to discover the qualifications and duties of a judge.

A comparison of the lists will allow students to affirm what they already know and create new meaning based on their interpretations of the documents. It will also help them to understand the role of federalism in the U.S. government through an analysis of the federal and state constitutions. Finally, the students will create a list of questions based on what they've learned in class. These questions will be shared with the visiting judge who will act as an expert in the classroom.

Materials

- ★ Smart board / Projector
- ★ Internet Access

Procedure

1. Preview / Hook Activity: Think-Pair-Share

Think of a time when you had to make a judgment about something. It may have been a very important decision. Or it may have been a time when you had a strong opinion about a matter. Write. In your notebook, describe the situation and your thought process involved in your judgment, decision, or opinion. Were you happy with the decision? Why or why not? Write a minimum of 10 lines. Be prepared to share your response with a partner and possibly the whole class.

2. Share

Turn to your neighbor. Exchange journals / notebooks / written reflections. Read the reflection care two times. Once for your head to understand what your partner was thinking. Once for your heart to understand how your partner was feeling. Give your partner one sentences of written feedback on their paper. You can tell them what you like about their reflection. You can tell them how their ideas connect with something you may have experienced. Or you can tell them any new ideas you have as a result of reading their reflection. Be prepared to share your written feedback with your partner and possibly with the class.

3. Whole class share

The teacher can call on individual students to share what they wrote for their reflection or the feedback they gave to their partner. At this point, all students should have received some feedback from a partner and the teacher can call on individuals to share out with the class and practice their public speaking skills. After three to five students have shared, ask the class, “What do these experiences have in common?” Ideally, the students will see connections in how they made decisions by examining circumstances and evidence, weighing options based on this evidence, making a decision, and reflecting on the outcome. Then ask, “How does this relate to our government? Who in government has to do what you did on a daily basis? Why?” Ideally, students will identify the president, members of Congress, and judges.

4. Teacher Introduction of today’s focus

In today’s class we will explore the inquiry question: What does it take to be a judge? The teacher asks the students to generate a list of qualifications they think are necessary to become a judge. For example, students may say college education, law school, lawyers, internship in a court, experience as a judge’s law clerk, fair-minded, good listener, understanding of the law and past court cases. Students can create their lists on their own. Volunteers can share their responses on the board and where there are similar answers they can place a star next to the response.



5. Whole Class Work (Federal Government)

The teacher will read to the students excerpts from the U.S. Constitution that describe the duties and qualifications for Supreme Court Judges. Students will write text from the documents into a graphic organizer to help them visualize the evidence under the column titles: What it says and What it means. They then will create a new list of qualifications. The teacher can ask: What do you notice about this list compared to the one we created as a class? What are the similarities? How are they different? Why? What does this tell us about our government? What does this tell us about the roles of the President and Congress in selecting Supreme Court Justices?

6. Independent Work (State Governments)

Students will read excerpts from three different state constitutions and create new columns listing the qualifications to become a judge according to the different states.

7. Partner Work

After analyzing the documents, students will work with a partner to share / compare their evidence. They will answer the following questions: What do you notice about this list compared to the ones we've already created? What are the similarities? How are they different? Why? What does this tell us about our government? What does this tell us about the role of the state governments in the judicial branch?

8. Assessment

Using their graphic organizers, students will write a thesis statement or take a position on the inquiry question: What does it take to be a judge?

9. Whole Class – Share out

Students will share their thesis statements with the class and provide at least three examples of textual evidence from the documents they examined. After students share their examples, ask the students if they have any new questions about judges and the qualifications for becoming a judge.

10. Homework – Reflective writing piece

Students will write about what it takes to be a judge based on the analysis of the documents we examined in class. This writing piece should include their thesis statement and the evidence they discovered. It should also include new questions they have. This assignment will help students to organize today's work, their thoughts, ideas, and questions into a reflection they can share with the visiting judge in tomorrow's class.



The U.S. Constitution

Article III

Source: <http://constitutioncenter.org/constitution/full-text>

§ SECTION. 1. The judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish. The Judges, both of the supreme and inferior Courts, shall hold their Offices during good Behaviour, and shall, at stated Times, receive for their Services, a Compensation, which shall not be diminished during their Continuance in Office.

Pennsylvania State Constitution

Source: <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/LI/consCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&ttl=00&div=0&chpt=5>

§ 12. Qualifications of justices, judges and justices of the peace.

(a) Justices, judges and justices of the peace shall be citizens of the Commonwealth.

Justices and judges, except the judges of the traffic court in the City of Philadelphia, shall be members of the bar of the Supreme Court. Justices and judges of statewide courts, for a period of one year preceding their election or appointment and during their continuance in office, shall reside within the Commonwealth. Other judges and justices of the peace, for a period of one year preceding their election or appointment and during their continuance in office, shall reside within their

respective districts, except as provided in this article for temporary assignments.

(b) Judges of the traffic court in the City of Philadelphia and justices of the peace shall be members of the bar of the Supreme Court or shall complete a course of training and instruction in the duties of their respective offices and pass an examination prior to assuming office. Such courses and examinations shall be as provided by law.

New York State Constitution

Source: <https://www.dos.ny.gov/info/constitution.htm>

[Judges and justices; qualifications; eligibility for other office or service; restrictions]

§20. a. No person, other than one who holds such office at the effective date of this article, may assume the office of judge of the court of appeals, justice of the supreme court, or judge of the court of claims unless he or she has been admitted to practice law in this state at least ten years. No person, other than one who holds such office at the effective date of this article, may assume the office of judge of the county court, surrogate's court, family court, a court for the city of New York established pursuant to section fifteen of this article, district court or city court outside the city of New York unless he or she has been admitted to practice law in this state at least five years or such greater number of years as the legislature may determine.

Texas State Constitution

Source: <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/CN/htm/CN.5.htm>

Sec. 2. SUPREME COURT; JUSTICES; SECTIONS; ELIGIBILITY; ELECTION; VACANCIES.

(a) The Supreme Court shall consist of the Chief Justice and eight Justices, any five of whom shall constitute a quorum, and the concurrence of five shall be necessary to a decision of a case; provided, that when the business of the court may require, the court may sit in sections as designated by the court to hear argument of causes and to consider applications for writs of error or other

preliminary matters.

(b) No person shall be eligible to serve in the office of Chief Justice or Justice of the Supreme Court unless the person is licensed to practice law in this state and is, at the time of election, a citizen of the United States and of this state, and has attained the age of thirty-five years, and has been a practicing lawyer, or a lawyer and judge of a court of record together at least ten years.

California State Constitution Fact Sheet

Source: http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/Calif_Judicial_Branch.pdf

California State Supreme Court Membership, qualifications One Chief Justice and six associate justices are appointed by the Governor, confirmed by the Commission on Judicial Appointments, and confirmed by the public at the next general election. A justice also comes before the voters at the end of his or her 12-year term. To be eligible for appointment, a person must have been a member of the State Bar of California or a judge of a court in this state for at least 10 years.

Delaware State Constitution

Source: <http://delcode.delaware.gov/constitution/constitution-05.shtml>

§ 2. Justices of Supreme Court and other State Judges; qualifications; residence; precedence.

Section 2. There shall be five Justices of the Supreme Court who shall be citizens of the State and learned in the law. One of them shall be the Chief Justice who shall be designated as such by his or her appointment and who when present shall preside at all sittings of the Court. In the absence of the Chief Justice the Justice present who is senior in length of service shall preside. If it is otherwise impossible to determine seniority among the Justices, they shall determine it by lot and certify accordingly to the Governor.

New Jersey State Constitution

Source: <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/lawsconstitution/constitution.asp>

The justices of the Supreme Court and the judges of the Superior Court shall each prior to his appointment have been admitted to the practice of law in this State for at least 10 years.



Name:

Date:

INQUIRY QUESTION: What does it take to be a judge?

Class list of Qualifitcations	U.S. Constitution	State:	State:	State:
<i>My ideas:</i>	<i>What it says:</i>	<i>What it says:</i>	<i>What it says:</i>	<i>What it says:</i>
<i>Class list:</i>	<i>What it means:</i>	<i>What it means:</i>	<i>What it means:</i>	<i>What it means:</i>

Thesis Statement: _____

Evidence that supports thesis: _____

Additional question(s): _____