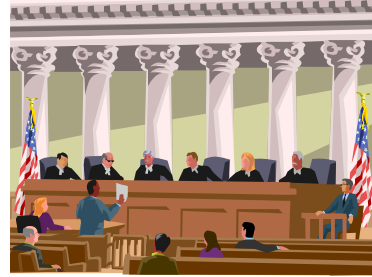


New Supreme Court Justice
NewsDepth May 7, 2009
Classroom Activities
Additional Resources



Overview:

U.S. Supreme Court Justice David Souter announced on Friday he will resign, and President Barack Obama said he wanted someone with a sharp, independent mind for his first appointment to the nation's highest court. Since he has the sole authority to appoint the next justice, he promises to get advice from all sides as he prepares to replace Justice Souter. Souter, 69, who has been on the court since 1990, said in a brief letter to the White House that he intended to retire when the justices go on their summer recess at the end of next month.

Grade Level: 5

Subject: Social Studies

Standards:

Students will be able to explain the major responsibilities of the judicial branch of the United States government, headed by the Supreme Court, which interprets and applies the laws.

Students will be able to explain the essential characteristics of American democracy including:

The powers of government are limited by law.

Basic rights of individuals are guaranteed by the Constitution.

Classroom Activities:

1. **Activity #1 Comprehension Quiz on the U.S. Supreme Court Resignation** (10 minutes)

True or false:

- Supreme Court Justice David Souter has resigned: **t**
- Before he became a justice, Souter was a high school social studies teacher: **f**
- There are fifty justices on the U.S. Supreme Court, one for each state: **f**
- The new justice position will be appointed by President Obama: **t**
- There are presently 6 men and 3 women on the U.S. Supreme Court: **f**
- One of the most important issues the U.S. Supreme Court is dealing with is abortion: **t**

Additional vocabulary words to be discussed or researched: liberal, short list, confirm, flash point, filibuster

2. Activity #2 Importance of Appointed Supreme Court Justice

(Since the U.S. Supreme Court is an integral part of the Grade 5 curriculum, you may have already covered it by now, but since the appointment of a new justice may not have been imminent when you did, a discussion may be in order to stress the importance of this nomination.)

- What is so important about the Supreme Court?
 - The Supreme Court is the highest court in the US and has the authority to strike down any state or federal law it deems unconstitutional.
 - It is regularly called upon to rule on issues of individual freedom - such as civil rights and free speech - or life-and-death matters like abortion.
 - Its landmark cases have shaped modern America, such as Brown v Board of Education in 1954, which signaled the end of legal segregation, Roe v Wade in 1973, which secured the right to abortion, or the 1976 decision allowing states and federal legislators to impose the death penalty.
 - So the decisions made by the nine justices on the Supreme Court can have a huge impact on American life.
 - Cases are decided by majority vote of the justices.
 - Once appointed, justices can - if they want to - serve on the court for the rest of their lives.
 - They are allowed to retire or resign, and can be forced out of office by congressional impeachment.

- How will the new Supreme Court justice be appointed?
 - The Constitution gives the president sole authority to appoint Supreme Court justices.
 - However, any appointment he makes must be approved by a majority vote in the Senate.
 - President Obama will nominate someone to fill Justice Souter's seat, and the nomination will then go before the Senate for approval.
 - Before facing a vote, President Obama's nominee will be called before the Senate Judiciary Committee where he or she will be asked to testify about his or her judicial philosophy.

3. Activity #3 Justice Puzzles

- Use the included handout for activities about the present U.S. Supreme Court Justices.
- The following website can be used for reference:
<http://usgovinfo.about.com/blctjustices.htm>
 - Which president appointed each justice?
 - Who is the chief justice?
 - What is the salary of the justices?
 - Who is the only woman?
 - Who is the oldest and youngest member of the court?



Additional Resources:

http://www.congressforkids.net/Judicialbranch_supremecourt.htm

Congress for Kids

<http://www.supremecourtus.gov/>

U.S. Supreme Court website (educational materials available in the About the Supreme Court section)

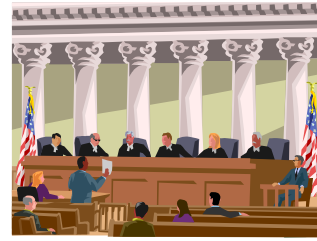
<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/9-12/government/national/scourt.html>

Ben's Guide to the U.S. Government for kids

http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/newsforyou/newsforyou008.shtml

A lesson plan by education world that provides useful additional information, a math activity, and follow up lessons.

Activities for U.S. Supreme Court Justices



Justices Scrambled

NOJH STOBRRER _____

NJHO VETSENS _____

MSALUE TOLIA _____

NATOHNY NYENEDK _____

NNOINAT LAASIC _____

VDDIA UROTES _____

CNCRELAE MTOAHS _____

NEEPHST YEBERR _____

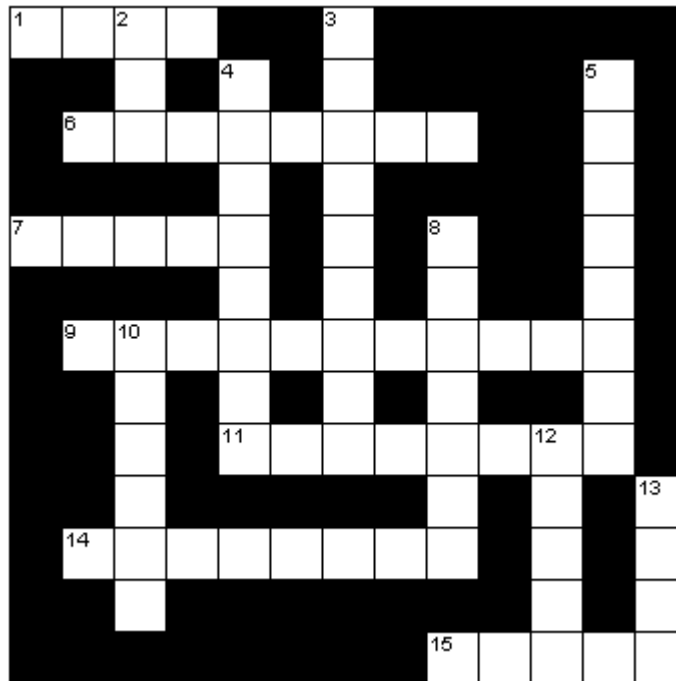
URHT BGSINRU _____

Search for the Justices

C V F X A O O V K J Q
R E Y E R B S T M H W
G R U B S N I G I I W
R E A C D D G E D L N
O T S S K U X A M O A
B U A K N E U X P D I
E O M P F E N R J P L
R S O F W E V N I E A
T B H T E O T E E N C
S K T U Y K G Q T D S
W J W Z W B B E U S Y

Alito	Kennedy	Souter
Breyer	Roberts	Stevens
Ginsburg	Scalia	Thomas

Supreme Court Justice Crossword Puzzle



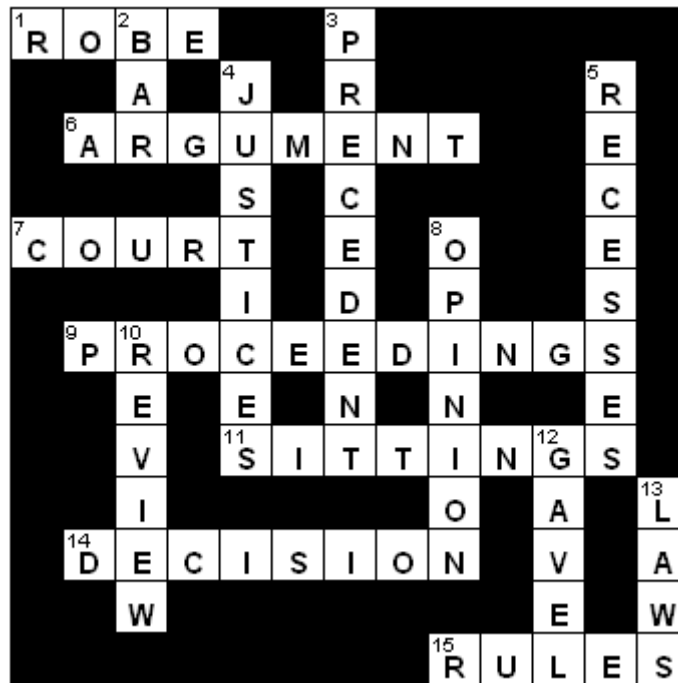
Across

1. Clothing the Supreme Court Justices wear in court
6. Lawyers stating their position before the court
7. The building or room in which legal cases are heard
9. Sequence of legal steps
11. Sessions of a legislature or court
14. Verdict or judgment
15. Court orders limited to a specific case

Down

2. The law profession
3. Judicial decision which serves as a model for future decisions
4. Judges in the Supreme Court
5. Temporary breaks taken during a court case
8. Formal court statement describing a decision
10. Reexamine a court case
12. Small mallet used by a judge
13. Body of governing rules enforced by the courts

Answer Key



This crossword puzzle is also available as an online interactive activity

<http://www.surfnetkids.com/games/supremecourt-cw.htm>