

# THE COURT SYSTEM



## LESSON SUMMARY

BENCHMARK
<b>SS.5.CG.3.3</b> Explain the role of the court system in interpreting law and settling conflicts.
BENCHMARK CLARIFICATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Students will explain why the U.S. Supreme Court is the highest court in the system.</li><li>■ Students will explain why both the United States and Florida have a Supreme Court.</li></ul>
CORRELATED FLORIDA STANDARDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>ELA.5.C.2.1:</b> <i>Present information orally, in a logical sequence, using nonverbal cues, appropriate volume, clear pronunciation, and appropriate pacing.</i></li><li>■ <b>ELA.5.C.3.1:</b> <i>Follow the rules of standard English grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling appropriate to grade level.</i></li><li>■ <b>ELA.5.V.1.1:</b> <i>Use grade-level academic vocabulary appropriately in speaking and writing.</i></li><li>■ <b>SS.5.A.5.1:</b> <i>Identify and explain significant events leading up to the American Revolution.</i></li></ul>
ESSENTIAL QUESTION
What is the role of the court system?
VOCABULARY
Supreme Court, Florida Supreme Court, judicial branch, court
MATERIALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The Court System slides</li><li>■ Son of Liberty: Man of Law video (external link)</li><li>■ Florida Supreme Court Virtual Tour (external link)</li><li>■ Supreme Court Virtual Tour (external link)</li></ul>

## ACTIVITY SEQUENCE

### INTRODUCTION/HOOK

1. Open “The Court System” slides and project the Boston Massacre image (slide 1) for students. Generate a discussion about the history and context of this image. Does anyone know what this image is from? What happened? Where was this? When was this?

**Teacher Note:** *If the Boston Massacre has not been taught through your U.S. History benchmarks yet, you may need to give a short historical review of the incident.*

2. Explain to students that after the events of the Boston Massacre, 8 British soldiers were put on trial in the colony of Massachusetts for murder.
3. Watch the [“Son of Liberty: Man of Law”](#) video about one surprising twist in the trial.
4. Remind students that John Adams, our eventual second president, was a Patriot who favored independence from British rule.
5. Project slide 2 and read what Adams said about his role in the trial. Ask students: Why would he say that? Why do you think he chose to represent hated British officers that hurt fellow colonists?
6. Lead students to an understanding that the way the courts and the legal system operated in the colonies was important to the Founders. Fair trials, trials by jury, rule of law, innocent until proven guilty were all things the colonists had not experienced consistently under British rule.
7. Ask students: What are the last 5 words of the Pledge of Allegiance? (liberty and justice for all)
8. Explain to students that in this moment in history, John Adams proudly made sure that happened. And eventually, the Framers of the U.S. Constitution, and later the Florida Constitution, would ensure they set up a court system that would continue to do that.

### ACTIVITY

9. Ask students: What does the judicial branch/court system do?
10. Project slide 3 of “The Court System” slides and review/teach the roles of the judicial branch and court system.
11. Ask students: What is the highest court in the federal (U.S.) court system? The state (Florida) court system?
12. Use slides 4 and 5 to review the establishment of the judicial branch and specifically Supreme Courts in both our national and state governments. Remind students that both the national government and state government have three branches. Explain that while the general roles of all courts in the national and state court system are similar (interpret laws and settle conflicts), the type of cases they hear varies.
13. Project the infographic on slide 6.
14. Lead a brief discussion about the differences between the two courts. Pose the following questions: What is one major difference you notice about the two courts?

(answers will vary) Overall, which court is the highest court in our judicial system?  
(U.S. Supreme Court)

**Teacher Note:** If you would like to expand student knowledge regarding why the U.S. Supreme Court outranks the Florida Supreme Court, you may use slide 7 which contains the language of the Supremacy Clause in the U.S. Constitution.

### CLOSURE/FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

15. Complete an online virtual tour for one or both of the Supreme Courts. These tours explore the structures, purposes, and highlights of each court in more detail.

a. Florida Supreme Court Information:

<https://supremecourt.flcourts.gov/Visiting-the-Court/Tours-Educational-Programs>.

b. U.S. Supreme Court Information:

<https://constitutioncenter.org/calendar/virtual-tour-learning-more-about-the-supreme-court>

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[FJCC/LFI Website](#)

### ANSWER KEY

n/a

### SOURCES

Son of Liberty: Man of Law video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqh1Aug7780>

Florida Constitution: <https://www.flsenate.gov/laws/constitution#A11>

U.S. Constitution: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>