The Judicial Branch: Evidence, Equal Protection, and Review

First & Last Name: _____ Date: _____

CENTRAL QUESTION

How can courts protect rights, and why must their decisions still be examined critically?

Learning objective

Analyze four source sets, evaluate evidence and limitations, and defend a civic judgment through interdisciplinary inquiry.

Demonstration of learning

Complete the daily evidence tasks, earn a score on 15 multiple choice items, and write a source based RACE response using the 19 point rubric.

Standards and task alignment

NJSLS Social Studies: 6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.b; 6.3.8.CivicsPR.2; 6.3.8.CivicsPR.3. Applied in daily analysis and the final civic judgment. NJSLS ELA (2023): RI.CR.6.1 (evidence), RI.CI.6.2 (central ideas), W.AW.6.1 (argument), SL.PE.6.1 (discussion). National CCSS: RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.2, RH.6-8.7; WHST.6-8.1 and WHST.6-8.9. NJSLS / CCSS Math: 6.RP.A.3 (ratios and percent); Science, technology, arts, history, and civic participation are integrated through the named tasks; no additional science or arts code is claimed.

Five lesson sequence

Days 1 to 4: read, annotate, analyze, collaborate, and write. Day 5: 15 question assessment and extended RACE response. Each lesson is designed for 40 minutes; teacher notes provide timing and supports.

Academic vocabulary

judicial review: evaluating government action for constitutionality; precedent: earlier judicial decision guiding later cases; trial: proceeding that examines evidence; appeal: review of alleged legal error; civil case: dispute over legal rights or responsibilities; criminal case: prosecution alleging a crime

Source integrity

Readings are original Ma’at instructional syntheses. Exact historical excerpts are marked. Classroom datasets and scenarios are labeled; they are not historical records or actual government budgets. Source references appear on page 13.

Intellectual Property of Ma’at Cultural Curriculum Consultants © 2026

DAY 1

Source A | Courts and the questions they decide

Do Now

How is deciding whether a rule was followed different from deciding what the rule should be?

[1] Article III establishes one Supreme Court and allows Congress to establish lower federal courts. Federal and state court systems are distinct, though certain legal questions can connect them. Federal trial courts examine evidence and legal claims; appellate courts generally review alleged legal errors rather than conducting a new trial of all facts. Not every disappointed party receives Supreme Court review.

[2] A criminal case involves a government prosecution alleging violation of criminal law. A civil case concerns legal rights or responsibilities, such as a contract dispute or a constitutional claim seeking relief. Different proceedings use different rules and burdens of proof. Calling a dispute serious does not alone classify it as criminal.

[3] Judicial independence helps judges decide cases without simply obeying public pressure. Independence does not mean freedom from legal reasoning or constitutional limits. Judges must address questions properly before their courts. The judiciary’s role is distinct from writing every public policy or administering every program. Understanding those boundaries helps students evaluate what a court decision can actually accomplish.

Annotation task: underline a central claim; box one civic term; mark one detail as evidence; add a question where evidence or authority needs clarification.

Intellectual Property of Ma’at Cultural Curriculum Consultants © 2026