CLASSROOM GUIDE · GRADES 9–12 AND COLLEGE

UMPIRES NO MORE?

Two ready-to-teach plans built on the book and its free website · by Bryan Kaufman

The big question: Is the Supreme Court still an umpire calling balls and strikes, or has it become a third political branch? Students examine the evidence on both sides and reach their own verdict.

STANDARDS (C3 FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL STUDIES)

- **D2.Civ.4.9-12** Explain how the U.S. Constitution establishes a system of government that has powers, responsibilities, and limits that have changed over time and that are still contested.
- **D2.Civ.9.9-12** Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings.
- **D2.Civ.12.9-12** Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues.
- **D3.2.9-12** Evaluate the credibility of a source (pair with the book's online Cite-Check Report).

Check your state's standards; most align with these C3 indicators.

PLAN A · ONE CLASS PERIOD (50 MINUTES)

Time	Activity
5 min	**Warm-up: Myth or Fact.** Project the website's eight claims. Students vote by show of hands; reveal each answer.
15 min	**Quick Round quiz.** Students take the eight-case Quick Round individually and write down which current justice they matched.
15 min	**Promise vs. Vote.** In pairs, students flip the seven cards and sort each into Kept, Broken, or In Between, writing one sentence of evidence per card.
10 min	**Discussion.** Did anyone match a justice nominated by the other party from the one they expected? What does that suggest?
5 min	**Exit ticket.** In one sentence: Is the Court an umpire? Cite one case.

PLAN B · THREE CLASS PERIODS

Day	Activities
Day 1 How the Court works	Read the book's primer (or the free sample). Play Guess the Vote. Use "Read a ruling with me" on the website, then complete the Reading a Ruling handout. Homework: the Full Journey quiz.
	Small groups each take two of the ten Party Test cases on the website, record which party took which side and how each justice voted, and report back. Class

Day 2 The Party Test	computes how often each justice matched the nominating party, then discusses the counter-case: the four mixed majorities and Chapter 9's defense of the Court.
Day 3 Mock hearing and verdict	Run the book's mock confirmation hearing (Talk It Over). Students then write a one-paragraph verdict using at least two pieces of evidence and the strongest argument for the other side.

ASSESSMENT

Verdict paragraph scored on: a clear claim (2), two pieces of accurate evidence (4), a fair statement of the opposing view (2), and clarity (2).

MATERIALS

The website (quiz, games, Party Test, "Read a ruling with me") at [YOUR SITE URL]; the book or its free sample; the handouts on the next page.

STUDENT HANDOUT 1

READING A RULING

Case: _____ Year: _____ Vote: _____

Part of the ruling	What it says, in your own words
The question the Court answered	
The holding (the answer)	
Who wrote the majority, and who joined	
Any concurrence, and why the justice wrote separately	
The dissent's best argument	
Did the vote split by appointing party? (Yes / No / Partly)	

STUDENT HANDOUT 2

MY VERDICT

My claim: The Supreme Court today is mostly ☐ an umpire ☐ a third political branch ☐ somewhere in between, because…

Evidence 1 (case, year, what happened):

Evidence 2:

The other side's strongest argument, and my answer to it:

Teachers may copy these handouts for classroom use.