

Cases That Changed

Read how Court rulings changed law, liberty, and constitutional meaning.

SS.7.CG.3.11 "Analyze the effects of landmark Supreme Court decisions on law, liberty, and the interpretation of the U.S. Constitution."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline exactly three sentences: the sentence beginning "Federal courts could," the sentence beginning "Brown changed," and the sentence beginning "This decision changed criminal procedure." Number them 1, 2, and 3 to show one major effect of each decision.

Three Decisions, Lasting Effects

- ① In 1803, *Marbury v. Madison* established judicial review. Chief Justice John Marshall wrote that when a law conflicts with the Constitution, courts must follow the Constitution. The decision did not give William Marbury the office he wanted. Instead, it changed the balance of power. Federal courts could declare a law unconstitutional, limiting Congress and the president. This interpretation made the Supreme Court a powerful guardian of the Constitution, even though judicial review is not stated in one exact sentence of the document there.
- ② In *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. Earlier laws had allowed separate schools for Black and white students. The Court rejected the idea that separate facilities could be equal in public education. Brown changed the Constitution's meaning in school cases and strengthened students' liberty to attend public schools without state-required racial separation. The ruling required governments to end school segregation, although resistance slowed change in many places.
- ③ In *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963), Clarence Gideon had been denied a lawyer during his Florida felony trial because he could not afford one. The Court ruled that the Sixth Amendment requires states to provide attorneys for defendants charged with serious crimes who cannot pay. This decision changed criminal procedure, the rules governments must follow in court. It expanded liberty by helping accused people defend themselves fairly. The Court interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment as applying this Sixth Amendment right to state courts, not only federal courts.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did Marbury v. Madison change the balance of power in the federal government?

2 What constitutional provision did Brown use, and what did the Court say about segregated public schools?

3 Compare the liberty effects of Brown v. Board of Education and Gideon v. Wainwright.

4 How did Gideon v. Wainwright change the Court's interpretation of constitutional rights in state courts?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose a landmark Supreme Court decision not named in the passage. In four or five sentences, identify the case and a constitutional provision, explain what law or government practice the ruling changed, and analyze its effect on liberty or the meaning of the Constitution.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline exactly three sentences: the sentence beginning “Federal courts could,” the sentence beginning “Brown changed,” and the sentence beginning “This decision changed criminal procedure.” Number them 1, 2, and 3 to show one major effect of each decision. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Marbury v. Madison change the balance of power in the federal government?	It established judicial review, allowing federal courts to declare unconstitutional laws invalid and limiting Congress and the president.
2	What constitutional provision did Brown use, and what did the Court say about segregated public schools?	Brown used the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause. The Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools violated that clause and rejected separate but equal in public education.
3	Compare the liberty effects of Brown v. Board of Education and Gideon v. Wainwright.	Brown strengthened students’ liberty to attend public schools without state-required racial separation. Gideon expanded liberty by helping people accused of serious crimes defend themselves fairly with an attorney.
4	How did Gideon v. Wainwright change the Court’s interpretation of constitutional rights in state courts?	The Court interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment as applying the Sixth Amendment right to an attorney to state courts, not only federal courts.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Tinker v. Des Moines (1969) involved students suspended for wearing black armbands to protest the Vietnam War. The Court held that students do not lose First Amendment free-speech rights at school, as long as their speech does not substantially disrupt learning. The ruling limited school officials’ power to punish peaceful student expression. It expanded students’ liberty and interpreted the Constitution as protecting speech in public schools.

Accept equivalent explanations that connect each ruling to a changed law or government practice, liberty, or constitutional interpretation. For the open response, accept any accurate landmark case not used in the passage if all required parts are present.