The Court's Pathways

Read Article III's rules for judicial service and Supreme Court cases.

9-12.GOV.38 "Analyze Article III of the Constitution as it relates to judicial power, including the length of terms and the jurisdiction of the U.S. Supreme Court."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the rules about how long federal judges serve and whether their pay can be reduced. Circle the cases that may begin in the Supreme Court, then write O beside original jurisdiction and A beside appellate jurisdiction.

Where Does a Case Begin?

1. Imagine a federal judge deciding whether a new federal law violates the Constitution. A phone call from an angry president cannot shorten that judge's term. Article III places the judicial power of the United States in one Supreme Court and in lower federal courts that Congress may create. Federal judges, including Supreme Court justices, hold office during good behavior, not for a set number of years. They can be removed through impeachment and conviction, but not simply because their decisions are unpopular. Article III also bars reducing their pay while they remain in office, limiting another way to pressure them.

2. Judicial power is not permission to hear every dispute. Article III lists types of federal cases, including those arising under the Constitution, federal laws, and treaties. It also covers cases involving ambassadors and disputes between states. Within this larger group, the Supreme Court has original jurisdiction, meaning a case may begin there, in cases affecting ambassadors, other public ministers, or consuls, and in cases in which a state is a party. For example, if two states disagree about a shared border, the dispute falls within a category of original jurisdiction. Original jurisdiction is about where a case starts, not how important it seems.

3. Most Supreme Court cases follow a different route. Article III gives the Court appellate jurisdiction in the other cases within the federal judicial power listed there, subject to exceptions and regulations Congress makes. In an appeal, the Court reviews a case already heard by another court instead of hearing it first. Suppose a lower federal court decides a dispute over the meaning of a federal law. A party might seek Supreme Court review under the appellate route, but the Court does not have to hear every request. Article III thus separates the kinds of disputes federal courts may decide from the path a dispute takes to the Supreme Court.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. A senator says Article III gives Supreme Court justices twelve-year terms. How does Article III's rule for service contradict that claim?

2. Two states disagree about who owns an island. Why may their case begin in the Supreme Court?

3. A lower federal court decides a person's constitutional challenge to a federal law. If the case reaches the Supreme Court, which jurisdictional route would it follow, and what would the Court do?

4. A member of Congress says Congress has no role in setting rules for the Supreme Court's appellate jurisdiction. What in Article III challenges that claim?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Two states ask the Supreme Court to settle a dispute over damage to a shared bridge. A governor says any justice who rules against her state should immediately lose the job. Write three or four sentences explaining why the case may start in the Supreme Court, how long justices may serve, and whether the governor can remove one for that ruling.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.GOV.38

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the rules about how long federal judges serve and whether their pay can be reduced. Circle the cases that may begin in the Supreme Court, then write O beside original jurisdiction and A beside appellate jurisdiction. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	A senator says Article III gives Supreme Court justices twelve-year terms. How does Article III's rule for service contradict that claim?	**Justices serve during good behavior, not for a fixed number of years.**
2	Two states disagree about who owns an island. Why may their case begin in the Supreme Court?	**Article III gives the Supreme Court original jurisdiction in cases in which a state is a party. A dispute between two states fits that category.**
3	A lower federal court decides a person's constitutional challenge to a federal law. If the case reaches the Supreme Court, which jurisdictional route would it follow, and what would the Court do?	**It would follow the appellate route. The Supreme Court would review a case already heard by another court.**
4	A member of Congress says Congress has no role in setting rules for the Supreme Court's appellate jurisdiction. What in Article III challenges that claim?	**Article III makes the Court's appellate jurisdiction subject to exceptions and regulations Congress makes.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Because both states are parties, Article III gives the Supreme Court original jurisdiction, so the bridge dispute may start there. Justices serve during good behavior rather than for fixed terms. A governor cannot remove a justice for an unpopular ruling.

Accept answers that connect original jurisdiction to a state being a party and distinguish service during good behavior from a fixed term. Students need not describe the impeachment process in Part 3.