

Sorting Out the Courts

Benchmark: SS.7.C.3.11 Diagram the levels, functions, and powers of courts at the state and federal levels.

Also assesses: SS.7.C.2.6 Simulate the trial process and the role of juries in the administration of justice.

Clarifications/Objectives:

- Students will distinguish between the levels, functions, and powers of courts at the state and federal levels.
- Students will recognize that the powers and jurisdiction of the state and federal courts are derived from their respective constitutions.
- Students will compare appellate and trial processes.
- Students will examine the significance of the role of juries in the American legal system.

Content Focus: appeal, appellate court, circuit courts, county courts, District Court of Appeals, Florida Supreme Court, judge, judicial review, jurisdiction, justice, U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, U.S. District Courts, U.S. Supreme Court, and trial court

Time: One class period

Materials:

- Sorting Out the Courts PowerPoint
- Handout A – Puzzled: Federal and State Courts (1 per small group)
- Handout B – Sorting Out the Courts (two sided; one per student)
- Handout C – Case Files for Florida v. J.L. and Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier (one set per small group)
- Computer
- Projector

Lesson Preparation

- Review all handouts and PowerPoints
- Print and review the PowerPoint in “notes view”. The PowerPoint includes notes to guide the lesson.
- Make copies of all materials

Lesson Overview

Warm Up: Distribute pre-cut puzzle pieces for a warm up. Students should assemble the triangles using word cues on the puzzle pieces. When assembled there should be two triangles: Florida courts (bottom to top: county courts, circuit courts, District Courts of Appeal, and Florida Supreme Court) and federal courts (bottom to top: U.S. District Courts, U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeal, and U.S. Supreme Court). Discuss how students used the language on the pieces to correctly assemble the triangles. A diagram is provided within the PowerPoint to debrief this activity.

Discuss the role of the judicial branch. The PowerPoint will provide an overview of the three branches of government, the role of the judicial branch, and the role of judges/justices. The presentation will then go on to distinguish between federal and state courts and identify the Florida Constitution and the U.S. Constitution as the source of power and jurisdiction for the courts.

Students will then compare trial and appellate courts. Slides are provided to discuss the role of the jury in a trial and what the justice system in the United States would look like without jury trials. Discuss the “Think About It” slide with students, emphasizing that it is the jury that prevents government oppression of the accused. Discuss

the role of appellate courts and have students diagram appellate courts on their handout. There are multiple diagrams provided in order to familiarize students with different methods of visually representing the courts.

Divide the class into small groups (3-5 students). Distribute the Case File Handouts. Explain to students that we are now going to look at two appellate scenarios where cases moved through the appellate court system. Using chart paper or an online platform (infographic, PowerPoint, Glogster, etc.), have students diagram the courts named in the Case File handouts. Students should name the trial court, intermediate appellate court, and the high court for both the state and federal courts.

Note: Florida v. J.L. is a Florida case and the diagram should show the state courts. Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier was a federal case and should show the federal courts. See teacher handout 1. Student diagrams will vary, but should reflect the same levels of courts provided in the diagram.

Debrief the activity using the PowerPoint. Discuss each case and have the students answer the question before the court in a whole group discussion.

Lesson Extensions *Will address Benchmark SS.7.C.2.6: Simulate the trial process and the role of juries in the administration of justice.*

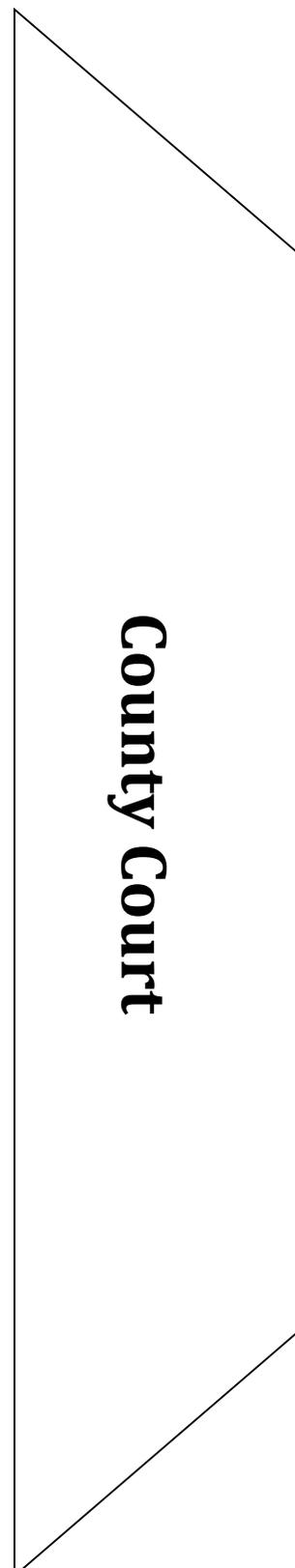
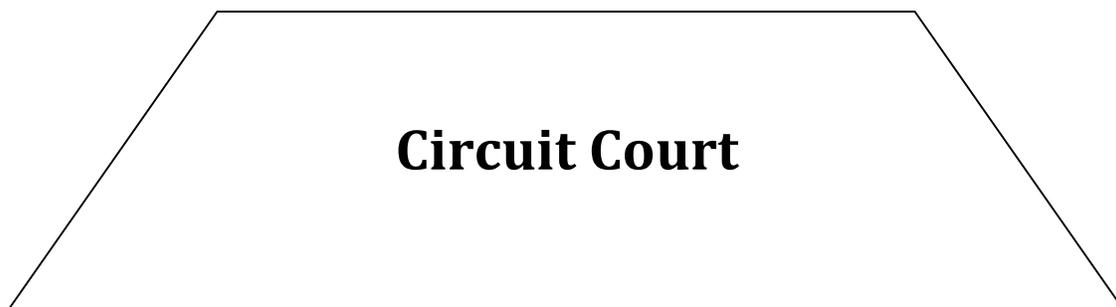
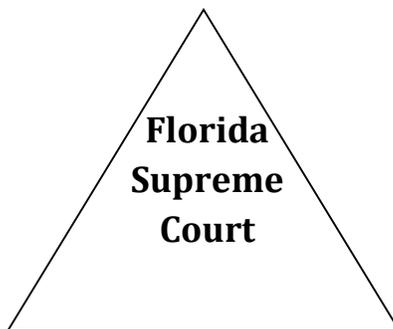
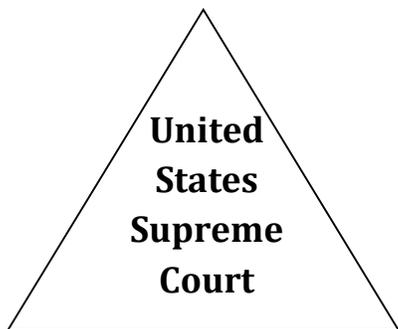
FLREA Lesson – The Role of Juries – Section 6 of FLREA Curriculum Wheel

iCivics Lesson – [James Bond in a Honda Trial Simulation](#)

iCivics Game – [We The Jury Game](#)

PUZZLED

Cut out the pieces below and assemble the two triangles (courts) into state and federal courts!



Sorting Out the Courts

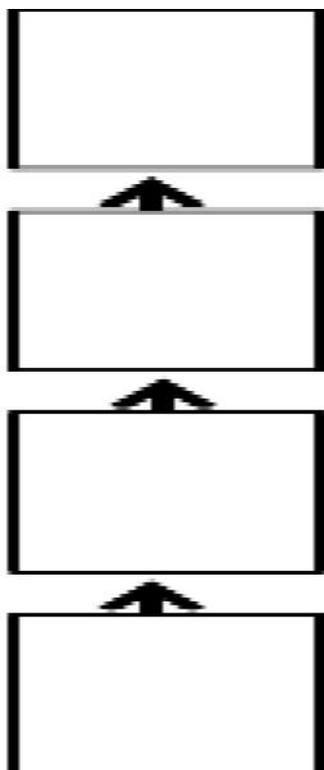
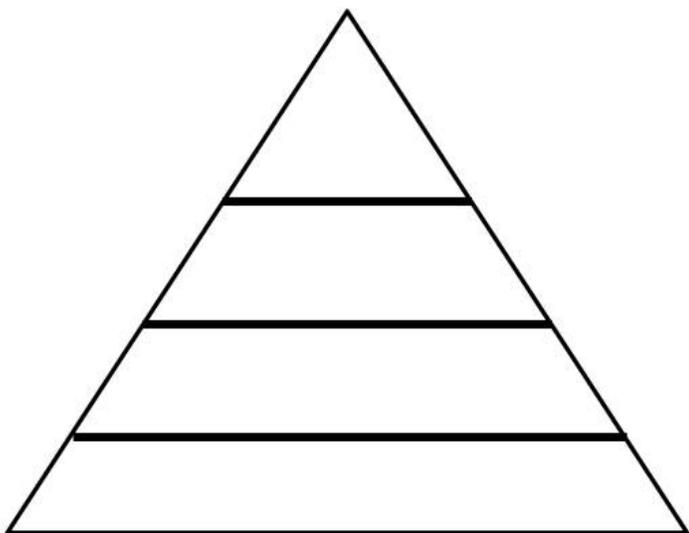
Comparing Courts

Courtroom A	Courtroom B
Type of Court:	Type of Court:
About:	About:

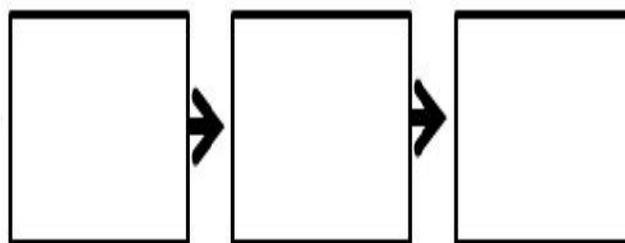
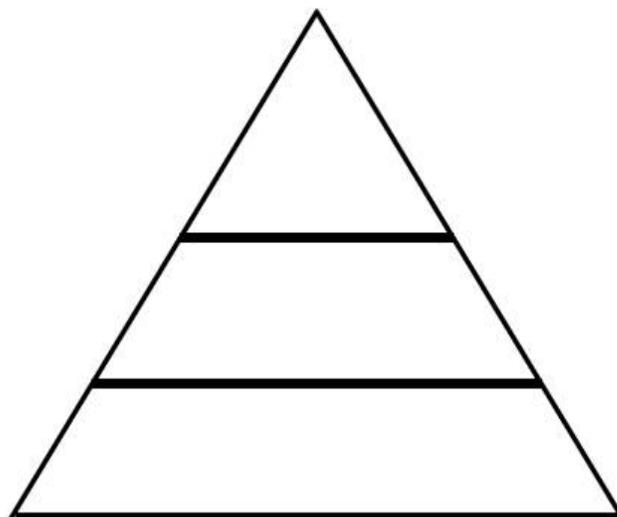
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Instructions: These charts diagram the levels of courts on the federal and state level. Using the chart in the PowerPoint, complete the charts below for both the federal and state courts.

State Courts



Federal Courts



Case File:

Florida v. J.L.

The Anonymous Tip

One day, an anonymous person called the Miami-Dade Police Department with a tip. The caller said that a young black man wearing a plaid shirt was standing at a specific bus stop by a pawn shop. The caller also said that the young man was carrying a gun. The caller described the young man as well as two other young men that were with him. Officer Anderson, a fourteen-year veteran and her partner went to check out the anonymous tip. When they got to the bus stop six minutes later, the officers saw three young black men. Just like the caller said, one of the young men was wearing a plaid shirt.

The officers did not see a gun. While the three young men were hanging out by the bus stop, Officer Anderson and her partner approached them and frisked all three men. The young man in the plaid shirt, J.L., had a gun in his pocket. The other young men were not carrying any weapons. The police arrested J.L. J.L. was charged with carrying a concealed weapon without a license. He was also charged with possessing a firearm while under the age of 18.

J.L.'s trial took place in the Eleventh Circuit Court. There, his attorney argued that the search of J.L. was unreasonable and that it violated the Fourth Amendment because it was based on an anonymous tip. The circuit court agreed with J.L.'s attorney. The State of Florida appealed the circuit court's decision to the Third District Court of Appeal. The district court disagreed with the circuit court. The district court ruled that the search of J.L. was reasonable and that the gun could be used as evidence against J.L.

J.L. appealed the district court's decision to the Florida Supreme Court.

Diagram the case progressing through the courts!

- Identify if it is a state or federal court.
- Identify the level of court.
- Briefly state the ruling of each court (unless it is not provided).

Case File:

Hazelwood Sch. Dist. v. Kuhlmeier

The Case of the School Newspaper

The Spectrum, a school-sponsored newspaper at Hazelwood East High School, was written and edited by students. It was part of a Journalism class on campus. In May 1983, Robert E. Reynolds, the school principal, received the page proofs for the May 13 issue. The principal found two of the articles in the issue to be inappropriate, and ordered that the pages on which the articles appeared be removed from the publication. The articles dealt with teen pregnancy and the impact of divorce. Both articles also included interviews with students on campus. The principal was concerned that the pregnant girls might be identified by other students on campus and cause problems. Also the principal was concerned that the newspaper article did not seek comments from the parent of the student who was interviewed about divorce. Students challenged the principal's actions and brought the case to court.

The U.S. District Court concluded that the deletion of the students' articles was not a violation of their rights under the First Amendment. The students appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, which reversed the ruling, stating that the students' rights had been violated. The school appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Diagram the case progressing through the courts!

- Identify if it is a state or federal court.
- Identify the level of court.
- Briefly state the ruling of each court (unless it is not provided).