

The U.S. Supreme Court: Hallmark Cases

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Lesson Plan Summary

This lesson plan is designed for students to summarize and examine hallmark U.S. Supreme Court cases and to determine their relative historical and social impact. The lesson emphasis is to determine to what extent, if any, the case represented a “turning point” in American history.

Objectives

Florida Sunshine State Standards as follows:

High School: SS.A.5.4.7, SS.A.5.4.8, SS.C.2.4.6
(New Generation: SS.912.C.3.9, SS.912, C.3.10)

Curriculum Map: American Government: Judicial Branch
Civil Rights and Liberties

Grade Levels:

High School American History or American Government

Historical Time Period: 20th century

Materials Needed:

Internet access to website: www.supcourt.ntis.gov
list of hallmark U.S. Supreme Court cases (attached)
any county adopted textbooks with U.S. Supreme Court cases
case worksheet (attached)

Lesson Time: allocate approximately 2 class periods

Procedures:

1. Launch activity: ask students to respond to the following question, “What impact has U.S. Supreme Court decisions had on American history? On society? On our current lives?”
2. Divide class into small groups. Emphasize that groups will be evaluating some hallmark decisions, some of which are highly controversial. Instructor may wish to lay debate/discussion ground rules, if necessary.
3. Distribute lists of court decisions (attached)
Note: instructor may choose other cases or eliminate some on provided list.
4. Allow students to review their assigned cases on the internet and complete their worksheets.
5. Each group should choose a representative who will present their case to the class.
6. The class as a whole will attempt to determine if any of the court decisions represent a turning point in American history and, if so, in what ways.

U.S. Supreme Court Hallmark cases

<u><i>Schenck v. United States</i> (1919)</u>	free expression
<u><i>Powell v. Alabama</i> (1932)</u>	right to counsel
<u><i>Korematsu v. United States</i> (1944)</u>	forcible relocation of Japanese Americans
<u><i>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka</i> (1954)</u>	public school integration
<u><i>NAACP v. Alabama</i> (1958)</u>	freedom to assemble
<u><i>Engel v. Vitale</i> (1962)</u>	separation of church and state
<u><i>Island Trees School District v. Pico</i> (1982)</u>	Censorship Case
<u><i>Abington School District v. Schempp</i> (1963)</u>	Prayer in classrooms
<u><i>Gideon v. Wainwright</i> (1963)</u>	legal representation
<u><i>Heart of Atlanta Motel v United States</i> (1964)</u>	segregation of private facilities
<u><i>Griswold v. Connecticut</i> (1965)</u>	protection of marital privacy
<u><i>Harper v. Virginia Board of Elections</i> (1966)</u>	voting rights
<u><i>Miranda v. Arizona</i> (1966)</u>	rights of the accused
<u><i>In Re Gault</i> (1967)</u>	rights of juveniles in criminal cases
<u><i>Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community District</i> (1969)</u>	freedom of expression in public schools
<u><i>New York Times Co. v. United States</i> (1971)</u>	freedom of the press
<u><i>Roe v. Wade</i> (1973)</u>	abortion.
<u><i>United States v. Nixon</i> (1974)</u>	powers of the President
<u><i>Regents of the University of California at Davis v. Bakke</i> (1978)</u>	affirmative action
<u><i>New Jersey v. T.L.O</i> (1985)</u>	juvenile search and seizure
<u><i>Bethel School District v Fraser</i> (1986)</u>	freedom of speech in public schools
<u><i>Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier</i> (1988)</u>	Students Rights
<u><i>Epperson v. Arkansas</i> (1968)</u>	teaching of human evolution
<u><i>Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Department of Health</i> (1990)</u>	right to die
<u><i>Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania et al. v Casey</i> (1992)</u>	abortion

Name of U.S. Supreme Court case and year:

What is the constitutional issue?

What was the case about and what was the majority decision?

What impact did this decision have then, and today?

Why can this case be called a “turning point” in American history?
