

Chapter 18: The Federal Court System
Opener
Lecture Notes

AMERICAN
GOVERNMENT

PEARSON

It is emphatically the province and the duty of the judicial department to say what the law is...If two laws conflict with each other, the courts must decide on the operation of each.

*-Chief Justice John Marshall, Marbury v. Madison
(1803)*



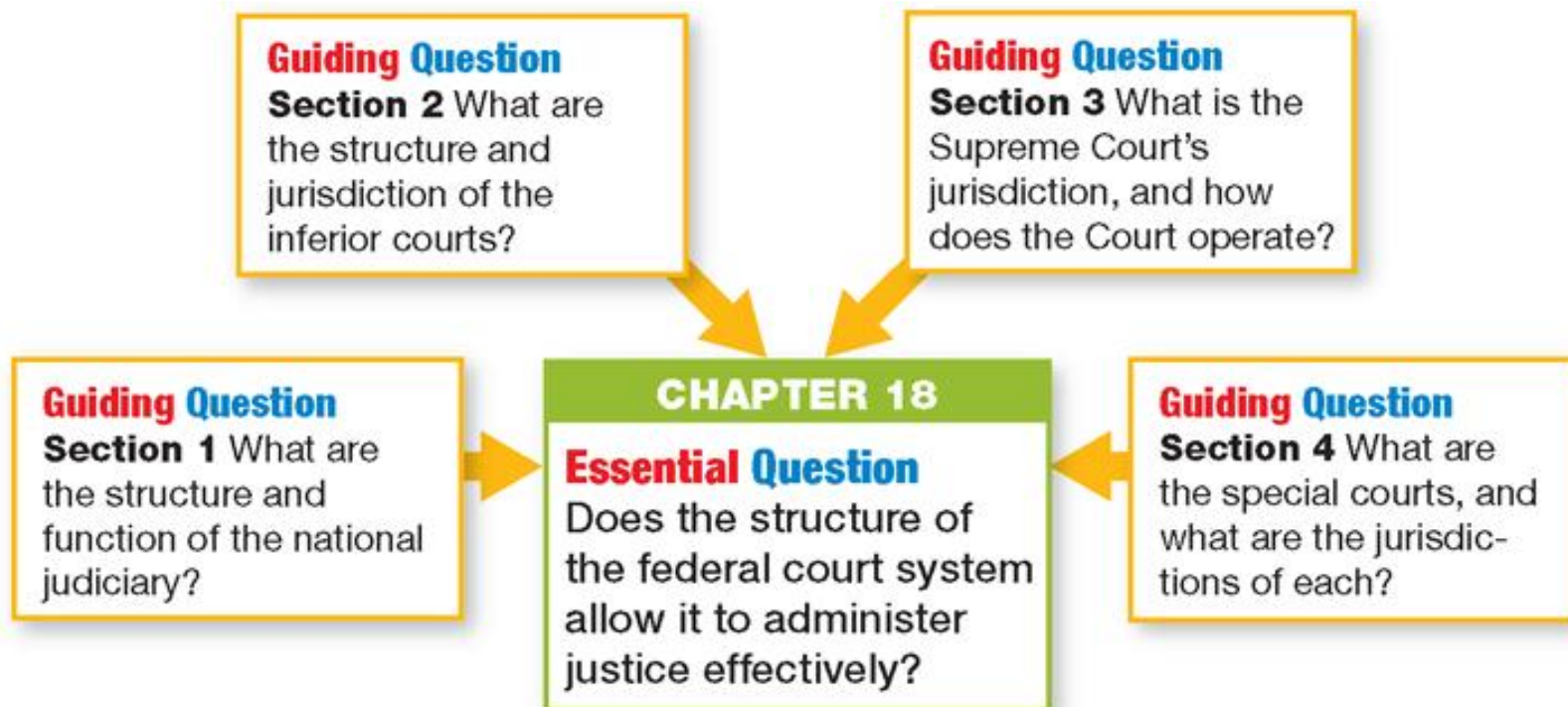
“It is **emphatically** the province and the duty of the judicial department to **say what the law is**. . . .If two **laws conflict** with each other, the courts must **decide** on the operation of each.

—Chief Justice John Marshall, *Marbury v. Madison*, 1803

Photo: Attorney Frank Dunham holds a news conference in front of the U.S. Supreme Court building.

► Essential Question

- Does the structure of the federal court system allow it to administer justice effectively?



▶ Guiding Questions

- Section 1: The National Judiciary
 - What are the structure and function of the national judiciary?
 - The national judiciary is made up of the district courts, the courts of appeal, and the Supreme Court and hears cases including those involving federal laws, the U.S. government, interstate disputes, international disputes, and interpretation of the Constitution.

▶ Guiding Questions

- Section 2: The Inferior Courts
 - What are the structure and jurisdiction of the inferior courts?
 - The states and territories are divided into district courts, which act as federal trial courts, and the courts of appeals, which hear appeals from district courts and special courts

▶ Guiding Questions

- Section 3: The Supreme Court
 - What is the Supreme Court’s jurisdiction, and how does the Court operate?
 - The Court chooses what cases it will hear on appeal from lower federal and state courts, then views written briefs and hears oral arguments before it renders a majority opinion.

▶ Guiding Questions

- Section 4: The Special Courts
 - What are the special courts, and what are the jurisdiction of each?
 - The special courts help Congress carry out its powers, with each special court dealing with a narrow area of jurisdiction, such as the armed forces or civil tax cases.