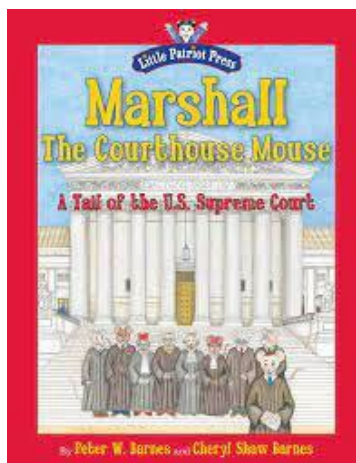


Marshall the Courthouse Mouse: A Tail of the U.S. Supreme Court



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Topics: Supreme Court, Constitution, Student voice, What it means to be a citizen

Genres: Animal anthropomorphic stories, Moral tales, Historical information picture book nonfiction

Marshall The Courthouse Mouse tells the story of Marshall, the Chief Justice of the Mouse Supreme Court. In this book we learn how the United States courts work, what the different judges do, and who helps the justices with their roles/jobs. While the characters may be anthropomorphized mice, their journey is still very applicable to our own world.

Before the Read Aloud:

What do you know about the Supreme Court system? What do you think a judge does? Are the only people who work in the Supreme Court system judges? What other jobs or roles are there?

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During the Read Aloud:

1. In the real U.S. Supreme Court, there are sculptures and engravings of turtles hidden around the building; the turtles are meant to represent the “slow and steady pace of justice.” Did you spot any turtles while you were reading the book? Why do you think it is important for justice to be slow and steady? Do you think really big decisions, like the kind a judge has to make, should be made fast or slow? Explain your answer.
2. Even though this story was about mice, everything we learned about the courts is true and applies to our human courts! Name one thing you learned about courts, justices, or the law that you didn't know before.
3. There is one group of laws that the Supreme Court needs to protect above all others. What are they? Try to list as many of these laws as you can remember, go back and look at the book if you need help! (The promise of liberty and freedom, the freedom to worship, the freedom to vote, the right to free speech, the right to decide how to live your own life and how to live it with pride).
4. If a law does not take away any of the freedoms given in the Constitution, it is a constitutional law. On the other hand, if a law takes away, or infringes upon, a freedom in the Constitution, that would be an unconstitutional law. In your own words, explain why the cheese law discussed in the book was unconstitutional. Which rights from the Constitution did it take away?

Take Action Project:

Can you think of any laws, real or made up, that you think would be unconstitutional? (If students are struggling, make up a silly law to use as an example.) Discuss why this law could be unconstitutional and how you could change it to make it constitutional.

