**Name:**

**Date:**

**School:**

**Facilitator:**

6.02 Notes Guide

**“The Federal Court System”**

Introduction:

Analyze the cartoon. Choose three characters or objects in the cartoon that stand out to you and describe the significance of each.

Who or what does the woman represent?

What point is the cartoonist trying to make concerning the law or system of justice?

The Federal Court System

If you are eighteen years of age and a citizen of the United States, you may be called to serve on a jury in a federal district court. Understanding its function is an important part of your responsibility as a citizen. The United States court system plays a vital role in protecting your civil rights and liberties.

“We the people” must follow certain procedures to have a case heard by the federal courts due to the structure and organization of the court system. As we learned in lesson one, our judicial branch is comprised of two court systems: federal and state. The      deals with the       of a law. The       can deal with anything from criminal cases to family law cases. In this lesson you will learn the responsibilities of each level of the federal courts.

Organization of the Federal Court System

The      created a three-tiered structure for the federal court system that includes:

* The       is the final level of appeal.
* , or Courts of Appeals, are the first level of appeal and include 12 Regional Circuit Courts of Appeals and one U.S. Court of Appeals.
* , or Trial Courts, include 94 judicial districts and other special courts

Read [Structure of the Federal Courts](http://www.catea.gatech.edu/grade/legal/structure.html) to learn more about the organization of the Federal Court System.

Structure of District Courts

The District Courts are the trial courts of the federal court system. They are also known as the       because they are the starting point for cases dealing with federal statutes or the Constitution. There are       federal judicial districts that include at least one in every state, one in Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico, and three more in U.S. territories.

District courts are the only federal courts that have       trials. Each district court also has at least one District Judge that is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. There are about 670 district court judges who serve in their positions for life. In addition, each district court has a       who issues court orders and hears evidence to determine if a case is brought to trial.

Read [Federal District Courts](http://www.catea.gatech.edu/grade/legal/district.html) to learn more about the structure of the Federal District Courts.

Structure of Federal Courts of Appeals

The Circuit Courts of Appeal are also known as the      because they are a tier above the district courts. The 94 judicial districts of the federal court system are organized into       regional circuits. Each of the twelve circuits has a Court of Appeals that hears appeals from district courts in its geographic circuit. There is also one Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit that hears specialized cases including cases involving international trade and patent laws. The Supreme Court is the final level of appeal.

Read [Federal Court of Appeals](http://www.catea.gatech.edu/grade/legal/circuits.html) to learn more about the structure of the Federal Court of Appeals.

Jurisdiction of Federal Courts

Federal courts have limited jurisdiction since they can only decide cases involving the Constitution, federal laws, and disputes between states or the U.S. and a foreign government.

District Courts have      , or the authority to be the first to hear a case, in both civil and criminal federal cases.       involve private rights of individuals or groups and often include disputes over money or property.       involve breaking the law and include income tax evasion, bank robbery, kidnapping, and mail fraud.

Circuit Courts only have      , or the authority to hear only cases appealed from lower district courts or federal agencies, since they were transformed by the      .