THE SUPREME COURT AT WORK

CH 12 SEC 1

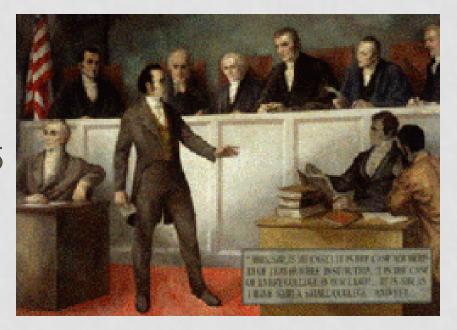
A. During two-week sessions, justices hear oral arguments on cases from Mondays through Wednesdays, and then meet in secret to make decisions.



B. The justices consider arguments in cases they have heard and petitions from plaintiffs who want the Court to hear their cases, and then write opinions for cases they have decided



- C. Justices' written opinions interpret the law and help shape public policy.
- D. Recently, more than 8000 cases were appealed to the Supreme Court. Only 5 percent of those cases were heard.



E. The Court may decide several hundred cases, but not have a full hearing or a written opinion on each case.



- A. The majority of referred Court cases concern appeals from lower courts.
- B. Most appeals concern cases in which a lower state or federal court has ruled laws unconstitutional. Cases the Court chooses not to hear are dismissed, and the ruling of the lower court becomes final.



- C. Most cases reach the Court by writ of certiorari, in which either side petitions that a lower court's decision involved an error raising a serious constitutional issue.
- D. But even that is no guarantee that the Court will hear the case.

The Deople of the State of New York, by the Grace of Sed Free and Independent: David Dakin Esquire one of our Justices of our Peace in our county of Columbias to keep, and also divers felonies, tresspasses, and other misdemeanors in our county aforesaid perpetrated, to hear and determine, assign, GREETING We being willing to be certified of a certaint plaint in our court before you, without our writ, against folm Go don .-CERTIORARI. at the suit of Melliaha bontein in a plea of hespos on the case _ as is said, lately levied, and of the pleadings, judgment, execution, process and proceedings of the same plaint, with all things touching the same, as fully and amply as the same before you may remain, by whatsoever names the parties aforesaid in the same are named, before our Justices of our Supreme Court of Judicature at the Capital in the city of Allary on the first Mon day of January next, we command you to send openly and distinctly, under your seal, together with this writ, that we may do therein what of right and according to the custom of our said court ought to be done. Witness Smirn Thomrson, Equire, Chief Justice, at the city of this liverity fifth day of October - one thousand eight lundred and swenteen. -Fairlie, Bloodgood & Breese, Clerks.

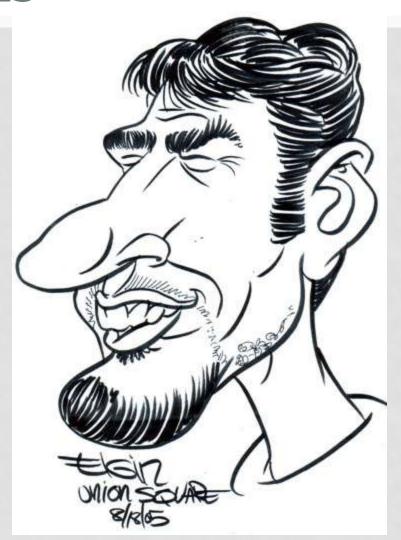
The chief justice puts worthy certiorari cases on a list for discussion: two-thirds of all certiorari cases never make the list. If four of the nine justices agree, a case is accepted.



F. More than half of the cases are decided by a brief, unsigned per curiam opinion; the rest are given the Court's full consideration.



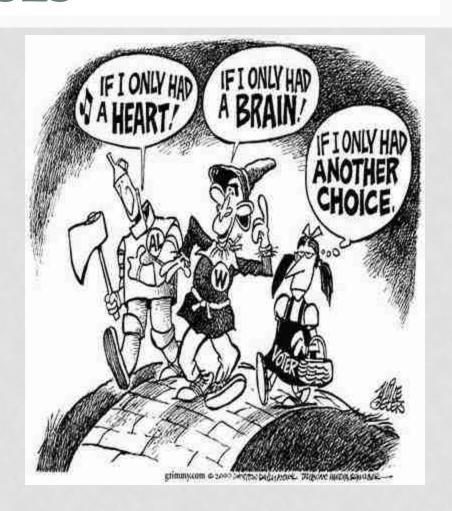
A. Each side submits a brief detailing legal arguments, facts, and precedents. Parties not directly involved but with an interest in the case may submit amicus curiae briefs.



- B. Lawyers for each side make oral arguments during which justices may ask questions.
- C. On Fridays the chief justice presides over a secret conference, in which each single case is summarized and recommendations for handling it are made.



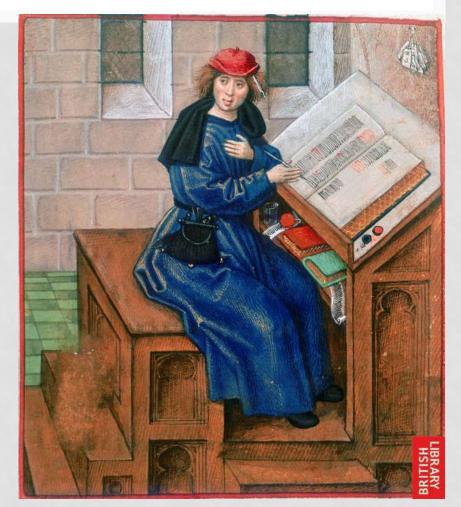
D. Justices spend about 30 minutes debating each case. Each justice has one vote; a majority vote is needed to decide a case.



The justices may issue four kinds of opinions: a unanimous decision, a majority opinion, a concurring opinion, or a dissenting opinion.



If the chief justice votes with the majority, he or she assigns a justice in the majority to write the Court's opinion. If not, the most senior justice with the majority assigns a justice to write the opinion.



IN YOUR NOTEBOOK

 In what way has a Supreme Court decision affected you, your family, or your community directly?