***NY TIMES Upfront Magazine – The News Magazine for Teens***

“5 Things You Need to Know about the Supreme Court-Part 1”

(*Upfront,* 1/13/14, pp. 8-11)

“Debate: Should Supreme Court Justices Continue to Have a Life Tenure?”

(*Upfront*, 9/2/13, pg. 22)

A behind the scenes look at the Supreme Court explores why justices are appointed for life, how it chooses the cases on its docket, & what happens when the court changes its mind.

In the following current events activity, you are going to read, take notes, and apply your learning.

Step 1: Title your note page with the title of the article.

Step 2: Skim the article looking at the pictures & the captions, any charts or graphs.

Step 3: Begin reading the article, stopping at the end of each section to *JOTT* facts.

Step 4: Using your notes and the article, answer the following questions.

**Be sure to label the question, restate the question in your answer, & answer in a complete** sentence**(s).**

Critical Thinking & Discussion Questions:

1. Why does the general public know so little about the way the Supreme Court operates?
2. Why do you think today’s Court is so polarized (divided)? How might that affect Americans’ perceptions of the Court and its rulings?
3. Where do Supreme Court cases come from? Why is the court so selective when determining which cases to hear?
4. What factors does the Court consider when selecting cases for its docket? Why?
5. Describe the job of a Supreme Court law clerk. Does it surprise you that clerks wield so much influence? Explain.
6. What role does the precedent play in the decisions of the Court? Why might the Court decide to reverse precedent?
7. What is the purpose of a straw vote in the Supreme Court?
8. What ruling did the court overturn in the famous case of *Brown vs. Board of Education*? How did this reversal affect the nation?
9. What was the rationale for granting life tenure to Supreme Court justices? Is this precedent still applicable in the 21st century? (Be sure to include arguments from the *Upfront*, “Debate: Should Supreme Court Justices Continue to Have a Life Tenure?” (*Upfront*, 9/2/13, pg. 22)

**Fast Fact:** *Only one U.S. President William Howard Taft, also served on the Supreme Court. He became Chief Justice in 1921, eight years after leaving the White House.*