

Chief Justice John Marshall

Learn about “The Great Chief Justice”

LOOK: Chief Justice John Marshall is shown seated in a chair, his right palm upturned as if he is gesturing and referring to the opinion rolled up in his left hand. **What impressions of Chief Justice Marshall do you get from looking closely at this statue?**

DISCOVER: John Marshall was the fourth Chief Justice of the United States. He is often called “**The Great Chief Justice**,” not only for the 34 years he served as Chief Justice—the longest service of any Chief Justice to date—but also for his role in helping to make the Supreme Court a co-equal branch of the federal government. His opinion in *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) helped to establish the process of **judicial review**, which refers to the Supreme Court’s power to declare acts of Congress and the President unconstitutional. While the words “judicial review” are not written anywhere in the U.S. Constitution, many Founding Fathers believed this power would reside with the Supreme Court. Today, it is considered one of the “checks and balances” that ensures each branch of government can limit the powers of the others.

IMAGINE: John Marshall served as Chief Justice from 1801-1835. Imagine what it would have been like serving as a Justice during Marshall’s era. The Supreme Court met in DC, but the Justices spent a lot of time “**riding circuit**,” often traveling by horse and buggy to sit as judges and hear cases on lower courts around the country. **Do you think you would have enjoyed being a Justice in the 19th century? Why or why not?**



Chief Justice Marshall found in the Courtroom’s North Wall Frieze