



# NOTORIOUS RBG

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF  
RUTH BADER GINSBURG

## TEACHER GUIDE

### WELCOME

We're looking forward to welcoming you to the Skirball Cultural Center for this special school tour. Students will explore the life, career, and impact of Supreme Court Justice and pop culture icon Ruth Bader Ginsburg in the exhibition *Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg*, based on the *New York Times*–bestselling book. This guided tour focuses on RBG's contributions to the expansion of civil rights and on the role models who have inspired her and fueled her work.

### YOUR MUSEUM VISIT

This school tour includes an interactive program in the exhibition and a poster workshop in the Skirball art studio. All visits are guided by a team of Skirball educators.

**In the Museum galleries**—through gallery-based activities, students will:

- Learn about the life and work of Brooklyn-born, public school–educated Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a.k.a. RBG (b. 1933)—particularly the roles she has played in the US justice system and the role we can all play in the civic process, no matter our age, identity, or background.
- Explore RBG's lifelong focus on justice and public service, the values of respect, persistence, and courage, as well as the role she plays in popular culture. At the age of eighty, RBG was reborn as the “Notorious RBG.” She earned this admiring, humorous nickname because of five fiery dissents, or expressions of opposition, she made to Supreme Court decisions in 2013 that she felt were unjust.
- Recognize the importance of role models in shaping RBG's personal and professional life and reflect on the role models in students' own lives.

**In the Skirball art studio**—Inspired by RBG's commitment to championing equal protection under the law for all people, students will work in teams to create posters that capture grassroots movements they want to be a part of or ideas that are important in their communities.

Note to teachers:

- Before your visit, please prepare a readable nametag for each student.
- If your group is larger than 30 students, please divide them into two even groups.
- Please share the guidelines below and review the three branches of government as well as the tour vocabulary with students as you see fit.

- Please note: This exhibition presents landmark gender-based discrimination cases in the US. Terms like abortion, strip-searching, and reproductive rights are used in the exhibition text panels. While the tour instruction will be modified by grade level, we want teachers to be aware that these terms are on view.

## **PREPARING FOR YOUR TOUR**

Tell students that this is what they can expect to do:

- Explore Ruth’s childhood home in Brooklyn, New York, in the 1930s and 1940s.
- Sit at a recreation of her elementary school desk and learn about the important role education played in her life.
- “Ride” along with Ruth and her future husband Martin Ginsburg, a.k.a. “Marty,” on their first date.
- Learn about the role of the Supreme Court in the US justice system. You can even take a seat at an imaginative recreation of RBG’s desk, where the 2018–2019 Supreme Court calendar is on view.
- Make your own voice heard about an issue you care about by creating your own protest poster.

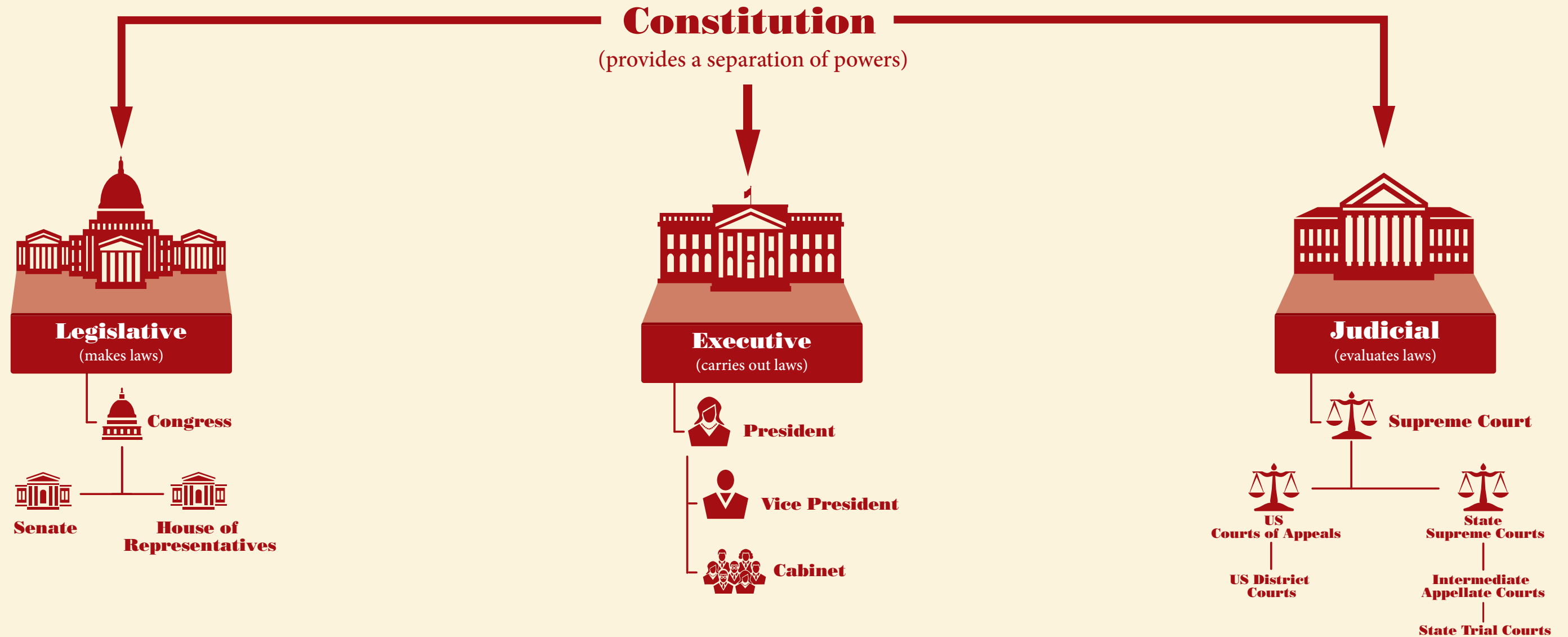
Please share these guidelines with your students:

- Participate! You’ll learn more by looking closely, reading the labels, and participating in large- and small-group discussion and activities. Listen to one another. Be respectful of each other and the museum artifacts. Please raise your hand when you have a question.
- We will be sharing the galleries with other groups, so please stay with your class and keep your voices down so we don’t disturb others.
- We are going to a museum gallery full of photos and objects that are on loan from RBG herself, the Supreme Court, and others. To help preserve these pieces of history, please do not touch the artworks or lean on the cases.
- Photography is not allowed in the exhibition.
- Text or call your friends AFTER the tour. During the tour, keep your phones on silent and in your backpacks, pockets, or purses. Better yet, leave them in a safe place on the bus!

## **BRANCHES OF US GOVERNMENT**

Before your visit, please review the three branches of the US government (on the following page) and help students understand the role of the Supreme Court in the judicial branch.

# BRANCHES OF US GOVERNMENT



## Federal Court System

- Article III Section 1 of the Constitution created the US Supreme Court and gives Congress the authority to create the lower federal courts.
- Congress has used this power to establish:
  - the 13 US Courts of Appeals
  - the 94 US District Courts
  - the US Court of International Trade
  - the US Bankruptcy Courts
- Parties dissatisfied with a decision of a lower federal court may appeal to a US Court of Appeals.
- Only certain cases are eligible for review by the US Supreme Court.

## State Court System

- The Constitution and laws of each state establish the state courts.
- A court of last resort, often known as a Supreme Court, is usually the highest state court.
- States usually have courts that handle specific legal matters, e.g., probate court (wills and estates); juvenile court; family court; etc.

## **TOUR VOCABULARY**

These are some of the terms that students may encounter on the tour. Please review any new vocabulary as you see fit.

**American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU):** An organization that defends Americans' basic rights by filing lawsuits in local, state, and federal courts and by lobbying local, state, and federal lawmakers to pass laws that defend civil liberties\*

**Appeal:** A request to a higher court to reverse a decision by a lower court

**Brief:** A written argument presented in court to argue for one side of a case

**Court of appeals/Appellate court:** A court that determines whether or not the law has been applied correctly in a lower court

**Discrimination:** The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, religion, age, or gender\*

**Dissent:** A formal disagreement with a ruling by the other judges, disputing the court's majority opinion

**Evidence:** Objects, documents, and facts used in a court of law to back up a legal argument\*

**Judge:** A government official who presides over a court of law—in some cases, acting as the overseer of a jury whose job is to make a decision, and in other cases, being the one (or one of a panel) to make that decision\*

**Opinion:** A judge's decision on a legal matter

**Plaintiffs:** Those who bring a case against others in court, starting a lawsuit

**Precedent:** An earlier decision by a court to be used as a guide in future decisions

**Supreme Court:** The highest court of law in the US, whose function is to interpret the laws set forth in the US Constitution, interpret the power of those laws, in relation to the laws of individual states, and decide important lawsuits. In so doing, the Supreme Court sets legal precedent for all the lower courts throughout America—determining what is and what isn't legal. Decisions are made by a majority of nine justices in any given case.\*

\*Reprinted from *Ruth Bader Ginsburg: The Case of RBG vs. Inequality* by Jonah Winter.

All other definitions reprinted with permission from *Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg*, Young Readers' Edition by Irin Carmon and Shana Knizhnik.

## POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

- Share photos of your posters on social media and tag them **#NotoriousRBG** and **@skirball\_la**. Then, take it a step further and watch this [TedEd video](#) to learn three strategies for peacefully turning awareness into action and protest into durable political power.
- Write a letter to your role model and send it!
- Continue exploring the role that individuals can play in helping build a more just, equal society.

## RESOURCES

Before or after your visit, check out these online resources and books to continue the conversations started on the tour.

### Online resources:

- [Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg at the Skirball Cultural Center](#)  
Learn more about the exhibition.
- [Notorious RBG Tumblr](#)  
This popular Tumblr page, started by attorney Shana Knizhnik, earned RBG internet fame. Knizhnik and journalist Irin Carmon, a senior correspondent at *New York* magazine, wrote the book *Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg*, which inspired the Skirball exhibition.
- [Teaching Tolerance](#)  
Teaching Tolerance provides free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. These supplemental materials inform teaching practices, and help create civil and inclusive school communities where children are respected, valued, and welcome participants.
- [Facing History and Ourselves](#)  
Facing History and Ourselves provides teaching ideas, activities, and strategies for middle and high school students focused on current events in the classroom, including issues related to voting, elections, and the health of the democracy.

### Books:

- Carmon, Irin and Shana Knizhnik. *Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg*.
- Carmon, Irin and Shana Knizhnik. *Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg*, Young Reader's Edition. For ages 8–12.
- Ginsburg, Ruth Bader. *My Own Words*.
- Krull, Kathleen and Nancy Zhang. *No Truth Without Ruth: The Life of Ruth Bader Ginsburg*. For ages 4–8.
- Levy, Debbie and Elizabeth Baddeley. *I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark*. For ages 4–10.
- Schatz, Kate and Miriam Klein Stahl. *Rad American Women A–Z: Rebels, Trailblazers, and Visionaries Who Shaped Our Past...And Our Future*.
- Winter, Jonah. *Ruth Bader Ginsburg: The Case of RBG vs. Inequality*. For ages 6–10.