The current building where the justices of the Supreme Court operate was completed in 1935. Acquiring a home had symbolic and practical importance for the Court, signalling its role as the head of a coequal branch of government. ‘The Court at work (2)’ takes a more visual look at how the Court operates, considering the layout of the Court buildings and the day to day running of the Court by looking at the ‘day call’ which is the calendar for the day’s arguments. In recent years, the Internet has brought the Court closer to the public. Briefs filed in granted cases as well as a complete procedural history of each petition, whether granted or denied, are available online.

The U.S. Supreme Court: A Very Short Introduction

The U.S. Supreme Court: A Very Short Introduction tells the Court's story by drawing on its history and its written and unwritten rules to show how it really works. The Supreme Court today, housed in a majestic building on Capitol Hill, bears little resemblance to the ill-defined institution the Constitution's Framers launched. Their expectation was that it would be the weakest of the three branches of government. The Court put the independence the Framers gave it to use, and in many ways has continued to define itself. How do cases get to the Supreme Court? What special role does the chief justice play? How does the Court relate to the other branches?

The Court and the world

Linda Greenhouse
American attitudes towards foreign law was initially ambivalent. The same can be said about foreign opinions towards American law. ‘The Court and the world’ looks at the extent the American experience with the operation of the Supreme Court has influenced other countries’ and supranational developing political and legal structures and vice versa. No other country has chosen to bestow life tenure on its judges. Another difference is that European courts, for example, tend to observe a norm of unanimity. What is clear, however, is that even though most people know little about the Supreme Court, it occupies a place in the public imagination.

5. The Supreme Court
Richard M. Valelly

Why in a democracy do nine unelected men and women, serving for life on a high court, seem to function as a nation's final say? ‘The Supreme Court’ addresses this question and examines the role of the Court. Surveys show that citizens pay considerable attention to the Court. Its insulation from electoral politics, the recruitment of men and women with distinguished careers as government lawyers, and the life tenure of appointments are important features of the Court as an institution. They free its members to engage in good-faith jurisprudence without fear of retribution for making decisions that might displease the president, members of Congress, or angry citizens.

7. The Court and the public
Linda Greenhouse

What is the relationship between the Supreme Court and the public? Justices rely on public trust to put force behind their decisions. ‘The Court and the public’ considers the role of the public in the decisions of the Supreme Court. To what extent are justices influenced by public opinion? A judge's awareness of public opinion is regarded as necessary. Scholars regard the relationship between the Supreme Court and public opinion as elusive. Does the relationship run both ways? While the public may influence the Court, can the Court influence the public? Over time, the Court and the public seem to maintain a certain equilibrium. The public seem to approve of the institutions in general, rather than of particular actions.