

Feb. 26 – March 4, 2006

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Samuel Alito is sworn in as the Supreme Court's 110th Justice.

► This Week's Focus:

Justice Alito and You

The Senate has confirmed Judge Samuel Alito to the U.S. Supreme Court. Why was this confirmation so controversial? In what direction will it lead the nation's highest court? And the country? Ask your students what they think. Elsewhere in this guide, we look at the upcoming Academy Awards ceremony to be held March 5. Ask your class to use the Skills Sheet on p. 5 to vote for their favorite actors, actresses and films. The final lesson plan in this week's guide focuses on government secrets. Are too many documents being classified? Why or why not? And how do you go about obtaining information that could be crucial to you and other Americans?

Everyday Newspaper Activity

Activity #26: Movie ads. Ask students to study the movie ads in the paper. If someone has seen a particular film, ask if the ad gives a good idea of what the movie is about. Does it emphasize the most important aspects? Does it exaggerate the importance of others? What might account for any distortions? If students designed realistic ads, how would they be different? If they wanted only to attract teen audiences, what would their ads be like?

Coming Up Next Week

- Women's History Month
- Newspaper-in-Education Week
- Greg Mortenson Returns to Pakistan

► In the News:
**The Oscars;
Justice Alito
and You p.2**

► In PARADE:
**Government
Secrets p.3**

► Skills Sheets:
**Writing Movie
Reviews p.4;
Picking Oscar
Winners p.5**

Big Changes in the Supreme Court

Curriculum links: Current events, social studies, civics, law

Briefing: At the end of January, the U.S. Senate confirmed President Bush's nominee, Judge Samuel Alito, as a Supreme Court Justice. The 58-42 vote followed party lines. All the Republicans, except one, voted for him. All but four Democrats opposed him. The nomination was particularly controversial. (By comparison, 22 Democrats voted for Chief Justice John Roberts last year.) Why the controversy? Alito, a conservative, is replacing the moderate Sandra Day O'Connor, often the swing vote on a sharply divided court. So this single lifetime appointment will probably move the court to the right. In particular, this may affect issues such as abortion, civil rights, gay rights, affirmative action, religion and workers' rights. Alito also may cast the deciding vote in cases involving capital punishment, voting rights, and the legal rights of terrorism suspects. Alito supports legal theories that give more power to the executive branch (e.g., the President) at the expense of the legislative and judicial branches.

Newspaper activity: Look through the paper and see if you can find any information about upcoming Supreme Court cases. What are the cases about? Which cases are most interesting to you? Why?

Resources: Books: Jamin Raskin's *We the Students: Supreme Court Decisions for and about Students* (CQ Press, 2003), Thomas Jacobs' *Teens on Trial: Young People Who Challenged the Law—and Changed Your Life* (Free Spirit, 2000), Michael Kronenwetter's *The Supreme Court of the United States* (Enslow, 1996). Web sites: Check out the Supreme Court, or learn more about Justice Alito.*

Classroom Debates

• **What role does the Supreme Court play in the American justice system?** Have any Supreme Court cases ever affected your own rights? How does the President affect the composition of the Supreme Court? How does the Senate? Should a Senator consider a candidate's views as well as professional qualifications when voting whether to confirm a Supreme Court appointment? How will Alito's confirmation affect the direction of the court? The direction of the country? Be specific. How do you think he will affect the outcome of upcoming Supreme Court cases?

It's Oscar Time!

Curriculum links: Current events, language arts, popular culture

Briefing: Comedian Jon Stewart will host the 78th Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles on March 5. ABC will televise it at 8 p.m. ET. This year, *Brokeback Mountain*, a love story between two cowboys, leads the field with 8 nominations. Three films—*Crash*, *Good Night, and Good Luck*, and *Memoirs of a Geisha*—had six nominations each. Competing for Best Picture are *Brokeback Mountain*, *Capote*, *Crash*, *Good Night, and Good Luck*, and *Munich*. George Clooney received three nominations—one for Best Supporting Actor in *Syriana*, and one for directing and one for co-writing *Good Night, and Good Luck*. *Star Wars: Episode III*, the biggest box-office draw in 2005, received only one nomination, for make-up. (See the Skills Sheet on p.5.)

Newspaper activity: Ask students to check the paper for Oscar predictions before the Academy Awards air next Sunday. How accurate do the predictions turn out to be? Then have them read stories about the Oscars after the gala. Do they gain any insights that they did not get from watching the show?

Resources: Books: Mature students can read some of the books that inspired the nominated films: Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (Vintage, 1994), Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* (Vintage, 1999), John Le Carré's *The Constant Gardener* (Pocket Star, 2005), Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. Annie Proulx's short story "Brokeback Mountain" appears in *Still Wild: Short Fiction of the American West 1950 to the Present* (Simon & Schuster, 2001). For younger readers: C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*. Web site: Visit the official Oscar Web site. *

Classroom Debates

• **Which nominee should win Best Picture?** Are there other movies that you would nominate? The Razzies, on the day before the Oscars, choose the worst performers of the year. Tom Cruise is a front-runner. Who would you choose for worst actor and actress? (Visit razzies.com on the Web.)

*Visit www.paradeclassroom.com/links for links to all mentioned Web sites.

Too Many Government Secrets?

Curriculum links: Social studies, civics, history, current events, critical thinking

Briefing: While you read this, writes Lyric Wallwork Winik in the Feb. 26, 2006, issue of PARADE, someone in our government is marking a document “Confidential” or “Top Secret.” That document will disappear from public view until it is declassified—or leaked. More than 4,000 people in the federal government have the power to classify documents, not only in the Pentagon, CIA and Office of Homeland Security but also in places such as the Agriculture Department and the EPA. In 2004 alone, a record 15.6 million documents—or about 125 per minute—were classified. This cost taxpayers \$7 billion a year. While some material should be kept secret in the interests of national security, experts say, anywhere from 10% to 90% of classified material does not need to be secret. “Do you know what your government is up to?” asks Steve Aftergood, director of the Project on Government Secrecy at the Federation of American Scientists. “Without openness, government will be skewed by greed or ideology, and we all pay a price for that.” Documents that are now classified vary from the Pentagon phonebook to the CIA’s 1950 budget. There are even problems over confidentiality between different government agencies. For example, the Department of Defense can’t automatically share information it gets from the CIA with Homeland Security, even though it could help prevent terrorist attacks.

Classroom Debates

- **Should documents be classified only if they threaten national security?** Should documents that hide embarrassing information or reveal disagreements within a government department be classified? Why does the public have a right to know? What could happen if the government could hide every secret that it wanted to? As a citizen, should you have the right to see your own FBI file? Why or why not? How can you go about finding information on a particular topic that you think the government should *not* keep secret?

Newspaper activity: Look through the paper. Can you find examples of the government keeping secrets from the American people (e.g., Abu Ghraib, warrantless spying, etc.)? Do the secrets threaten U.S. security? Was *The New York Times* right to reveal the wiretapping program?

Resources: Books: Alasdair Roberts’ *Blacked Out: Government Secrecy in the Information Age* (Cambridge University Press, 2006). Web sites: Visit the Federation of American Scientists’ Project on Government Security and related sites. Learn about making Freedom of Information Act requests.*

ASK MARILYN

Brainteaser

Question: A bag contains 100 marbles: 30 red, 30 blue, 30 green, plus a mix of 10 yellow and orange marbles. To be sure that you have 10 marbles of the same color, what is the least you would need to remove (without looking) from the bag?

Answer: Consider the unluckiest case: In whatever order, you remove nine red marbles, nine blue ones, nine green and all 10 of the yellow and orange mix. So far, you’ve removed 37 of the marbles ($9+9+9+10=37$), yet you don’t have 10 of any single color. If you take just one more marble, it will be red, blue or green, and you will have 10 of the same color. So the answer is 38 marbles.

Interact: Have students send questions or comments to Ask Marilyn, 711 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017, or e-mail marilyn@parade.com.

Answer Key:

Reading and Writing Movie Reviews (p. 4): Answers will vary.
Your Oscar Picks (p. 5): Answers will vary.

Reading and Writing Movie Reviews

What can you learn from a movie review? Find one in your newspaper, and then answer the questions below. Later, ask yourself the same questions about a movie you've seen recently and write your answers on a separate sheet of paper. Use them to help write a review of your own.

1. What is the name of the movie?

2. Who directed it? Has the director made other notable movies?

3. When and where does the movie take place? Describe the setting.

4. Who are the main characters? Describe them.

5. Which actors play the main characters? Do they give convincing performances? Explain.

6. What is the movie about? What are its major themes? What is the basic plot? (Don't give away the ending!)

7. How is the story told? Are there lots of short scenes? Long dreamlike ones? What role does the soundtrack play? What else do you notice about the storytelling?

8. What does the reviewer like about the movie? What do you like about it? What are its good points?

9. What are its bad points?

10. Would you (or the reviewer) recommend the movie to someone else? Why or why not?

Your Oscar Picks

People involved in the movie industry choose which film, actors and actresses will get Academy Awards. How close are their opinions to yours? To find out, make your own Oscar picks. Tally the class response as well. After the awards, see how your choices—and those of your classmates—compare with the Academy's. What might account for any differences?

Circle your personal choice in each category below. Or write in your own candidates!

1. Best Picture

- a. *Brokeback Mountain*
- b. *Capote*
- c. *Crash*
- d. *Good Night, and Good Luck*
- e. *Munich*

2. Best Director

- a. George Clooney for *Good Night, and Good Luck*
- b. Paul Haggis for *Crash*
- c. Ang Lee for *Brokeback Mountain*
- d. Bennett Miller for *Capote*
- e. Steven Spielberg for *Munich*

3. Best Actor

- a. Philip Seymour Hoffman for *Capote*
- b. Terrence Howard for *Hustle & Flow*
- c. Heath Ledger for *Brokeback Mountain*
- d. Joaquin Phoenix for *Walk the Line*
- e. David Strathairn for *Good Night, and Good Luck*

4. Best Actress

- a. Judi Dench for *Mrs. Henderson Presents*
- b. Felicity Huffman for *Transamerica*
- c. Keira Knightley for *Pride and Prejudice*
- d. Charlize Theron for *North Country*
- e. Reese Witherspoon for *Walk the Line*

5. Best Supporting Actor

- a. George Clooney for *Syriana*
- b. Matt Dillon for *Crash*
- c. Paul Giamatti for *Cinderella Man*
- d. Jake Gyllenhaal for *Brokeback Mountain*
- e. William Hurt for *A History of Violence*

6. Best Supporting Actress

- a. Amy Adams for *Junebug*
- b. Catherine Keener for *Capote*
- c. Frances McDormand for *North Country*
- d. Rachel Weisz for *The Constant Gardener*
- e. Michelle Williams for *Brokeback Mountain*

7. Best Adapted Screenplay

- a. *Brokeback Mountain*
- b. *Capote*
- c. *The Constant Gardener*
- d. *A History of Violence*
- e. *Munich*

8. Best Original Screenplay

- a. *Crash*
- b. *Good Night, and Good Luck*
- c. *Match Point*
- d. *The Squid and the Whale*
- e. *Syriana*

9. Best Animated Feature

- a. *Howl's Moving Castle*
- b. *Tim Burton's Corpse Bride*
- c. *Wallace & Gromit in the Curse of the Were-Rabbit*

10. Best Visual Effects

- a. *Chronicles of Narnia*
- b. *King Kong*
- c. *War of the Worlds*
