

# LESSON 4

Grade Level and Subject: Middle School History

Lesson: The “Big Four”

## State Standard and Benchmark

Social Studies. Strand 1 Historical Perspective. Standard 1.2 Comprehending the Past. Students will understand narratives about major eras of American and world history by identifying setting and sequencing the events. Benchmark 1.2.9. Students will use narratives and graphic data to describe the settings of significant events that shaped the development of Michigan as a state and the United States as a nation during the eras prior to Reconstruction. Standard 3.4 American Government and Politics. Students will explain how American governmental institutions, at the local, state, and federal levels, provide for the limitations and sharing of power and how the nation’s political system provides for the exercise of power.

## Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the four individuals who were identified as the “Big Four”
- Understand the similarities and differences between these men
- List the years when these men were on the bench together
- Give an example of the cases that the influence of the Big Four was and still is felt

## Rationale/Purpose for Lesson

The justices that are referred to as the Big Four, Justice Campbell, Justice Christiancy, Justice Cooley, and Justice Graves, had a profound influence on the Michigan judicial system. Students need to know who these individuals were and their background in order to appreciate the scope of influence those that sit on the highest bench in the state have on its citizens.

## Resources/Materials Needed

- Teacher lecture notes
- Big Four graphic organizer
- You may wish to display a picture of each individual justice as you talk about them (available at [www.micourthistory.org](http://www.micourthistory.org) under Historical Bios and Portraits)

## Introduction

Let students know the important role these four men played in Michigan’s judicial system. All of these men came from humble beginnings and became respected jurists throughout the state and the country.

## Procedures

1. Before beginning today's lesson, correct the homework from Lesson 3. Discuss and clarify any misunderstandings students may have. Stress the importance the changes in the Constitutions have been in shaping the Supreme Court we have in Michigan today.
2. Hand out the graphic organizer. Explain that you will be giving information about each individual.
3. Present the lecture.
4. Have students highlight information that is the same for all four men.

### Closure

Remind students these four men came from very common beginnings and became very influential in the Michigan judicial system. They, like others who came later, worked to create a court that was fair and equitable. Let them know the information in this lesson will be used to play a game tomorrow.

### Guided Study/Homework

1. Have students create a Ven Diagram that demonstrates their knowledge of the similarities and differences among these gentlemen.

### ANSWERS

- \* came from New York*
- \*served as chief justices*
- \*three worked as teachers (Campbell, Christiancy, Cooley)*
- \*high degree of fair mindedness*
- \*two were editors of newspapers (Christiancy and Cooley)*