

Name _____

Woman of Justice

In an arena historically dominated by males, Sandra Day O'Connor had the honor of being the first woman nominated to serve on the Supreme Court. President Reagan nominated her in 1981, and she served until her retirement in 2006.

Justice O'Connor held a variety of positions as she gained legal and political experience. Early in her career, she served as Deputy Attorney General. O'Connor served as a civilian attorney in Germany and later as Assistant Attorney General for the state of Arizona. She served three terms as an Arizona state senator. From there, she continued to move up within the court system, serving as judge of a county Superior Court and then, a few years later, she was appointed to the Arizona Court of Appeals. Throughout her career, O'Connor remained active in civic and cultural organizations.

During her career, O'Connor earned a reputation as a moderate conservative. She often played an important role in key decisions affecting the justice system. She

believes that justices are limited to the duties of the judicial branch, without their authority extending to executive or legislative roles. That is, justices do not create laws, nor do they implement or enforce laws. The role of the judicial branch is to interpret the law and apply it to cases of dispute. Although the Supreme Court spends much time determining whether or not laws are in fact constitutional, that power and authority is not granted in the Constitution. Many of the duties set forth in the Constitution refer to cases and rights between states or between the federal government and other parties.

In retirement, O'Connor has expressed her opinion that judges should not be elected. Rather, they should be appointed based on merit. She believes this would lead to better-qualified judges. O'Connor developed an interactive website program to teach middle-school students about the court system. Sandra Day O'Connor continues to make a positive impact in the lives of Americans.

Text Questions

- Which is a synonym for the word *moderate* as it is used in the third paragraph?
 - tolerant
 - inexpensive
 - radical
 - average
- Which position provided Sandra Day O'Connor with political experience?
 - Deputy Attorney General
 - civilian attorney
 - Arizona State Senator
 - Arizona Court of Appeals
- Throughout her career, how did Justice O'Connor approach legal decisions?
 - as a conservative
 - as a moderate conservative
 - as a moderate liberal
 - as a liberal
- Based on this passage, why might Sandra Day O'Connor have been nominated to the position of Supreme Court Justice?
 - She knew the president.
 - She had experience as a civilian attorney overseas.
 - She was active in civic and cultural organizations.
 - She had a wide range of experience, both political and legal, and had risen up within the court system.
- Based on what you read and any background knowledge you have, do you agree or disagree with O'Connor's opinion regarding the role of a Supreme Court Justice? Give reasons to support your answer.
