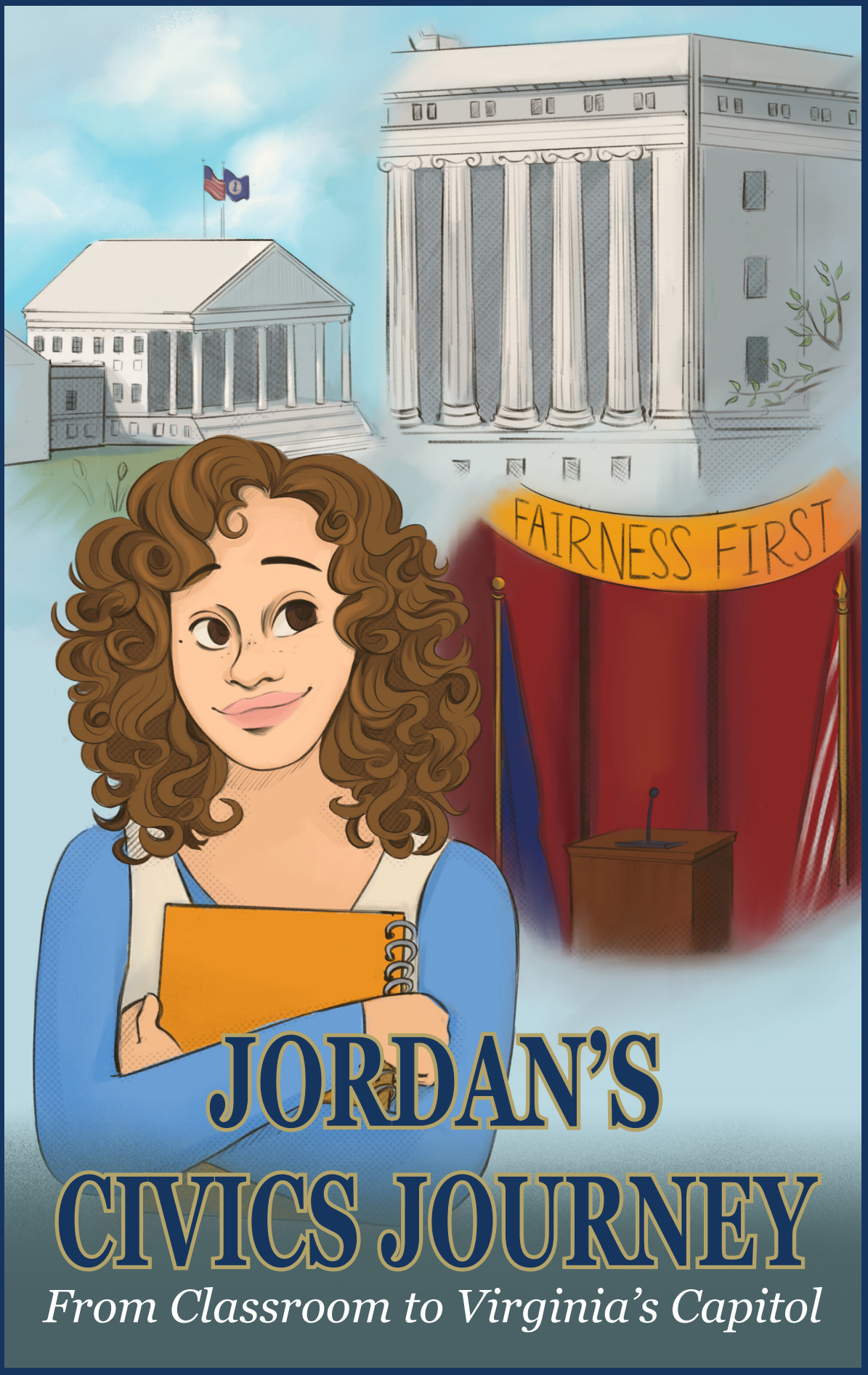


JORDAN'S CIVICS JOURNEY

From Classroom to Virginia's Capitol

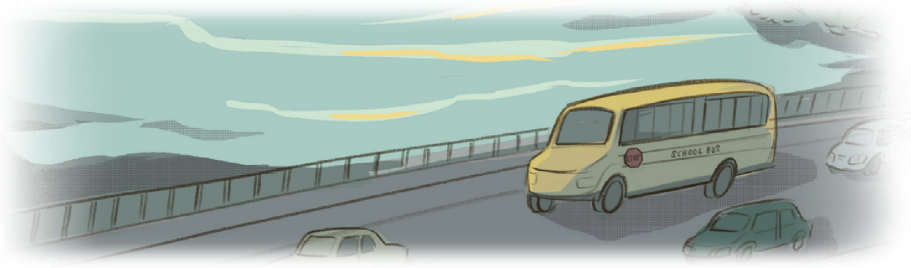
Welcome to *Jordan's Civics Journey: From Classroom to Virginia's Capitol*

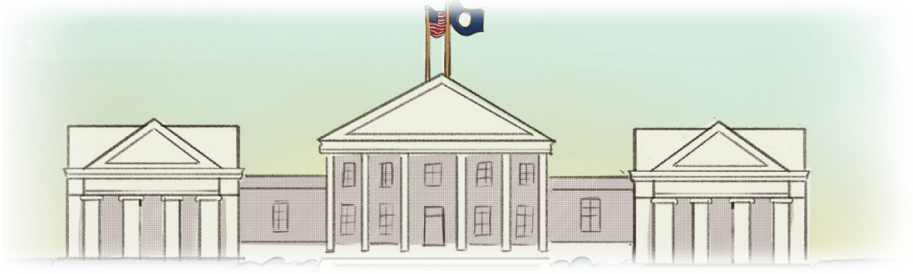
This graphic novel was created by the Virginia Judicial System to help readers explore the workings of government and the value of civic engagement through the eyes of a student visiting the heart of Virginia's democracy.

This project supports the judiciary's mission to promote civics education across the Commonwealth. We hope Jordan's story inspires students to stay informed, speak up, and get involved in their communities.

To explore more educational resources, visit the Virginia Judicial System at ***www.vacourts.gov.***







Judicial Services
Office of the Executive Secretary
Supreme Court of Virginia

100 North 9th Street, 2nd Floor
Richmond, Virginia 23219
www.vacourts.gov

JORDAN'S CIVICS JOURNEY

From Classroom to Virginia's Capitol



Written by
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Director
Department of Judicial Services
Office of the Executive Secretary
Supreme Court of Virginia



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Office of the Executive Secretary
Supreme Court of Virginia

Special thanks to the following individuals for their participation:

**Cleo E. Powell, Chief Justice;
Karl R. Hade, Executive Secretary; and Jordan Mullins-Hade**

Judge D. Gregory Carr, Alexis Fetzer Sharp, Pearl Friend,
Rhonda Gardner, Kathy Hade, Bruce Hatfield, Steve Roach,
Jaime Pierce, Winnie Rice, and Glenda Wollstein

About the Story

In *Jordan's Civics Journey: From Classroom to Virginia's Capitol*, Jordan and her classmates travel to Richmond, the capital of the Commonwealth of Virginia, to explore how government works and how individuals, especially students, can take part in civic life.

🏛 What You'll See on the Journey

- Visit the **Virginia State Capitol**, where laws are created
- Walk through **Capitol Square**, one of the oldest public spaces in the nation
- Meet a state delegate outside the **General Assembly Building**
- Explore the **Supreme Court of Virginia**, where laws are interpreted
- Speak with a **Supreme Court justice** in the courtroom
- Hear from a **judge** who visits the classroom to explain jury duty and civic responsibility

Learning Along the Way

As the students travel from the Capitol building, through Capitol Square, and on to the Supreme Court, they discover fun and surprising facts about Virginia's history and government, important landmarks and monuments, and the people who have shaped the Commonwealth. Readers can use history and social science skills to:

- Develop questions, enhance curiosity, and engage in critical thinking and analysis;
- Identify important landmarks and monuments;
- Practice civility, respect, hard work and responsible citizenship; and
- Evaluate sources for credibility and bias, and communicate conclusions clearly.

These experiences help Jordan understand how the **Executive**, **Legislative**, and **Judicial** branches work together to provide order, protect rights, and serve the public.

Civic Lessons from Jordan's Journey

Throughout the story, Jordan learns important lessons that connect civics to everyday life:

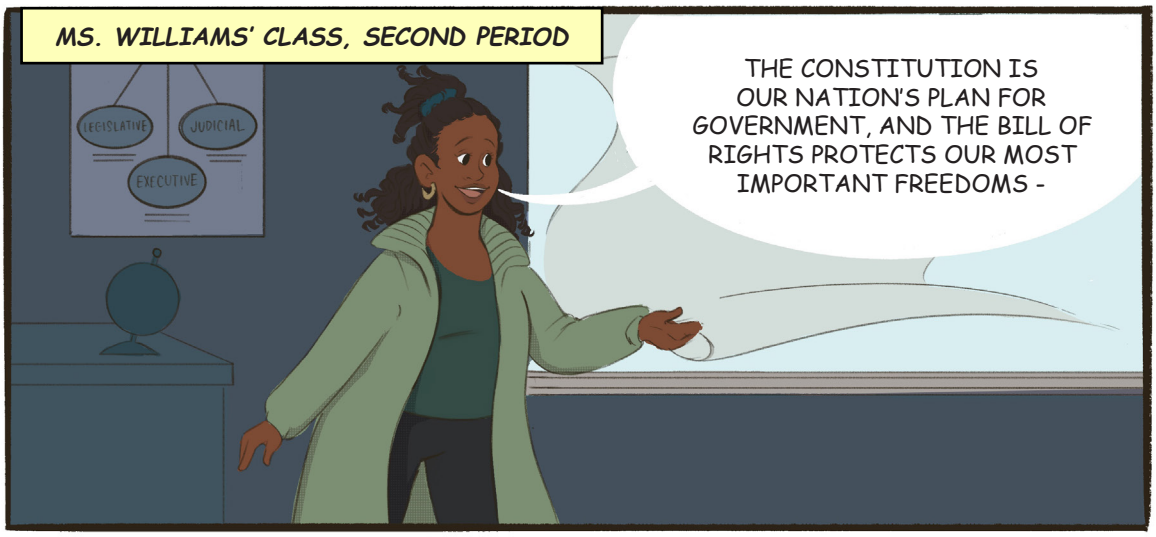
- **Civic Participation:** Your voice matters. Speaking up, asking questions, and getting involved are ways to make a difference.
- **Media Literacy:** Not everything you read or see is true. Check your sources and look for facts before forming opinions.
- **Listening and Fairness:** Being fair means listening to others, considering different perspectives, and following the facts.
- **Civic Responsibility:** From jury duty to helping others solve problems, being a good citizen starts with responsibility and respect.

Jordan's Realization

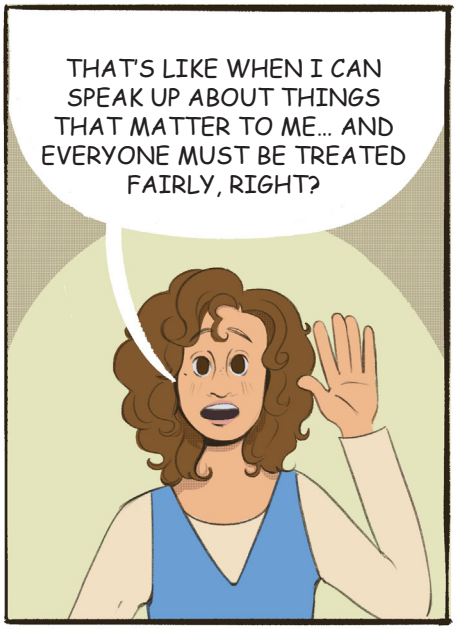
By the end of her journey, Jordan realizes that Capitol Square is not just a place in a book. It is a real and welcoming space where anyone can see government in action, explore Virginia's history, and imagine their own role as a citizen.

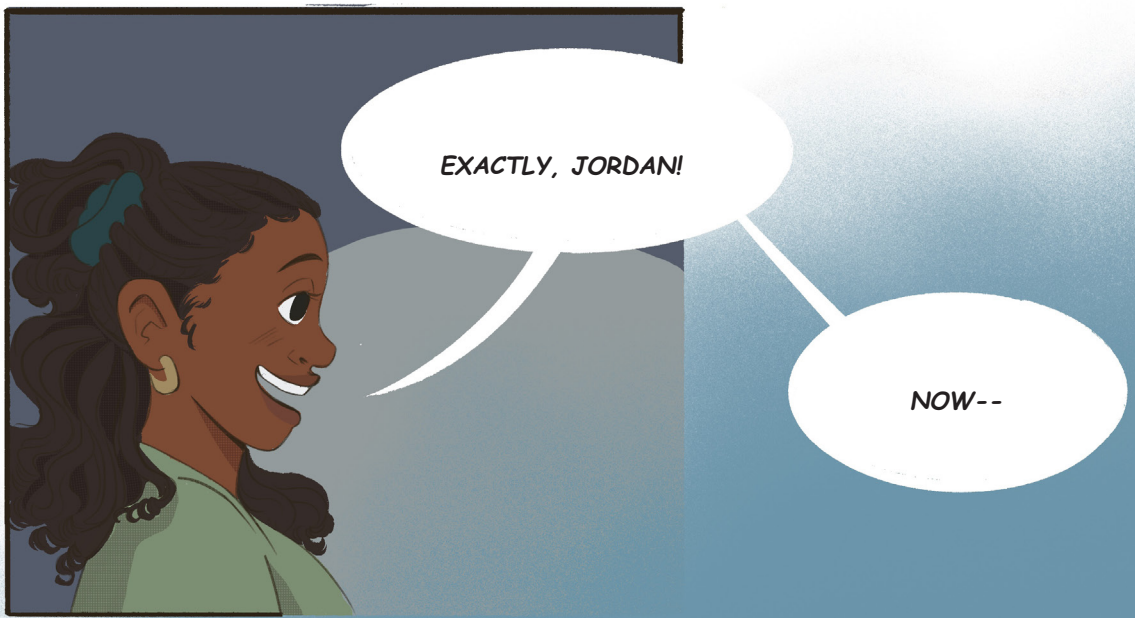
Whether you are a student, a family member, or a curious visitor, walking the same paths Jordan and her class traveled is a powerful way to connect what you learn about civics to the real buildings, people, and stories that shape our Commonwealth.

JORDAN'S CIVICS JOURNEY BEGINS...

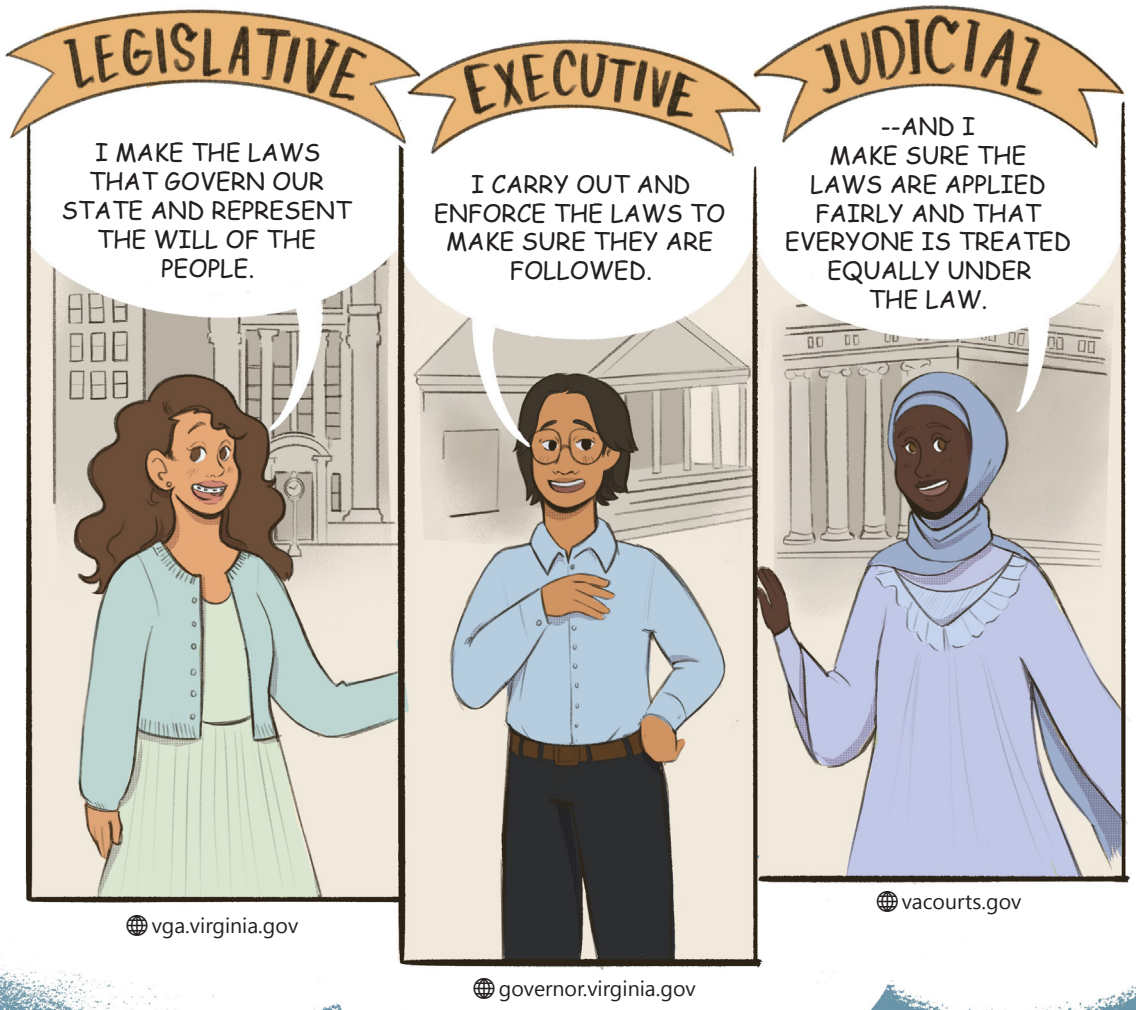






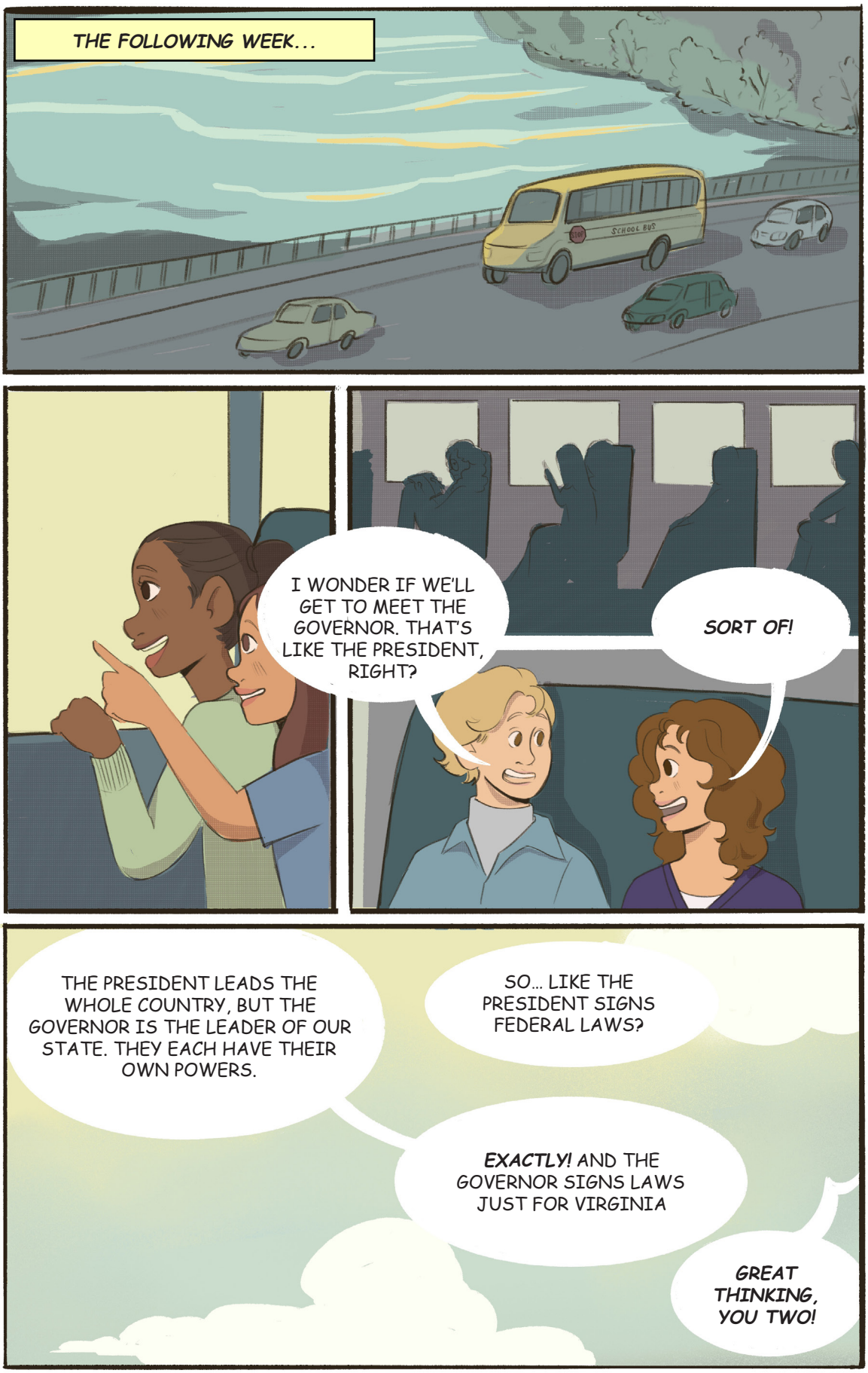


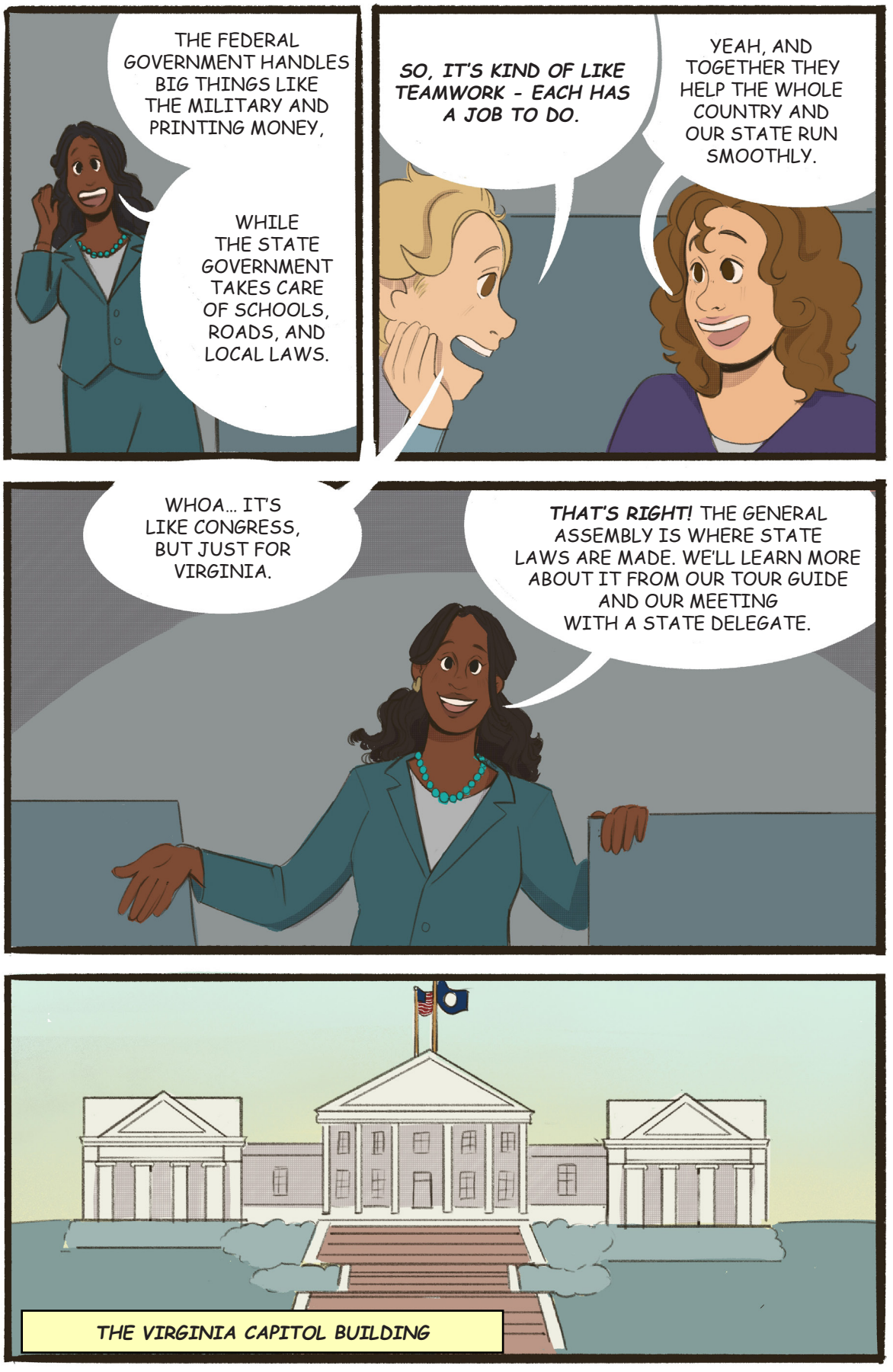

LET'S THINK ABOUT HOW OUR GOVERNMENT WORKS THROUGH THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT...

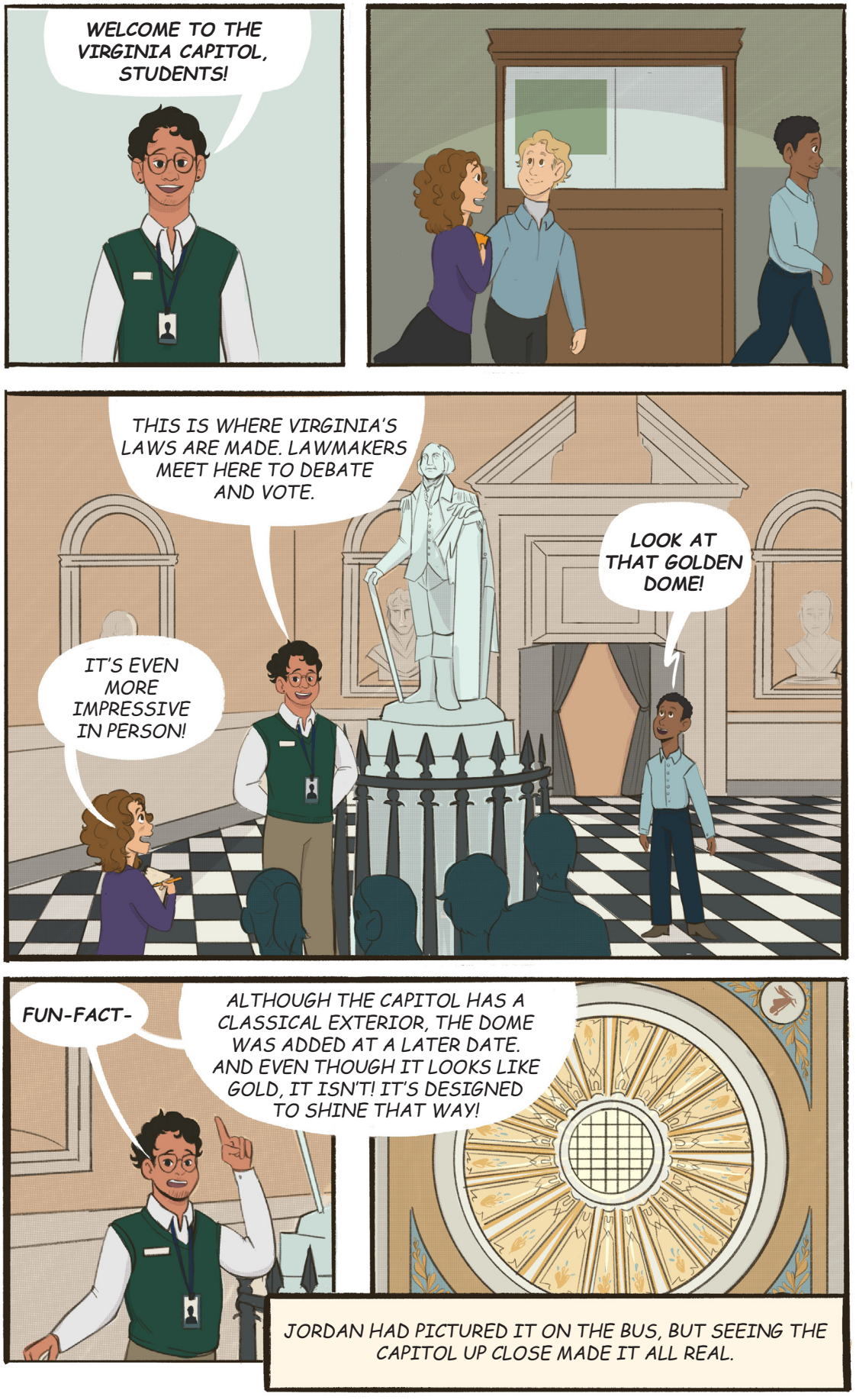

LEGISLATIVE
I MAKE THE LAWS THAT GOVERN OUR STATE AND REPRESENT THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE.
vga.virginia.gov
EXECUTIVE
I CARRY OUT AND ENFORCE THE LAWS TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE FOLLOWED.
governor.virginia.gov
JUDICIAL
--AND I MAKE SURE THE LAWS ARE APPLIED FAIRLY AND THAT EVERYONE IS TREATED EQUALLY UNDER THE LAW.
vacourts.gov


THESE BRANCHES BALANCE EACH OTHER SO THAT NO ONE PART HAS TOO MUCH POWER

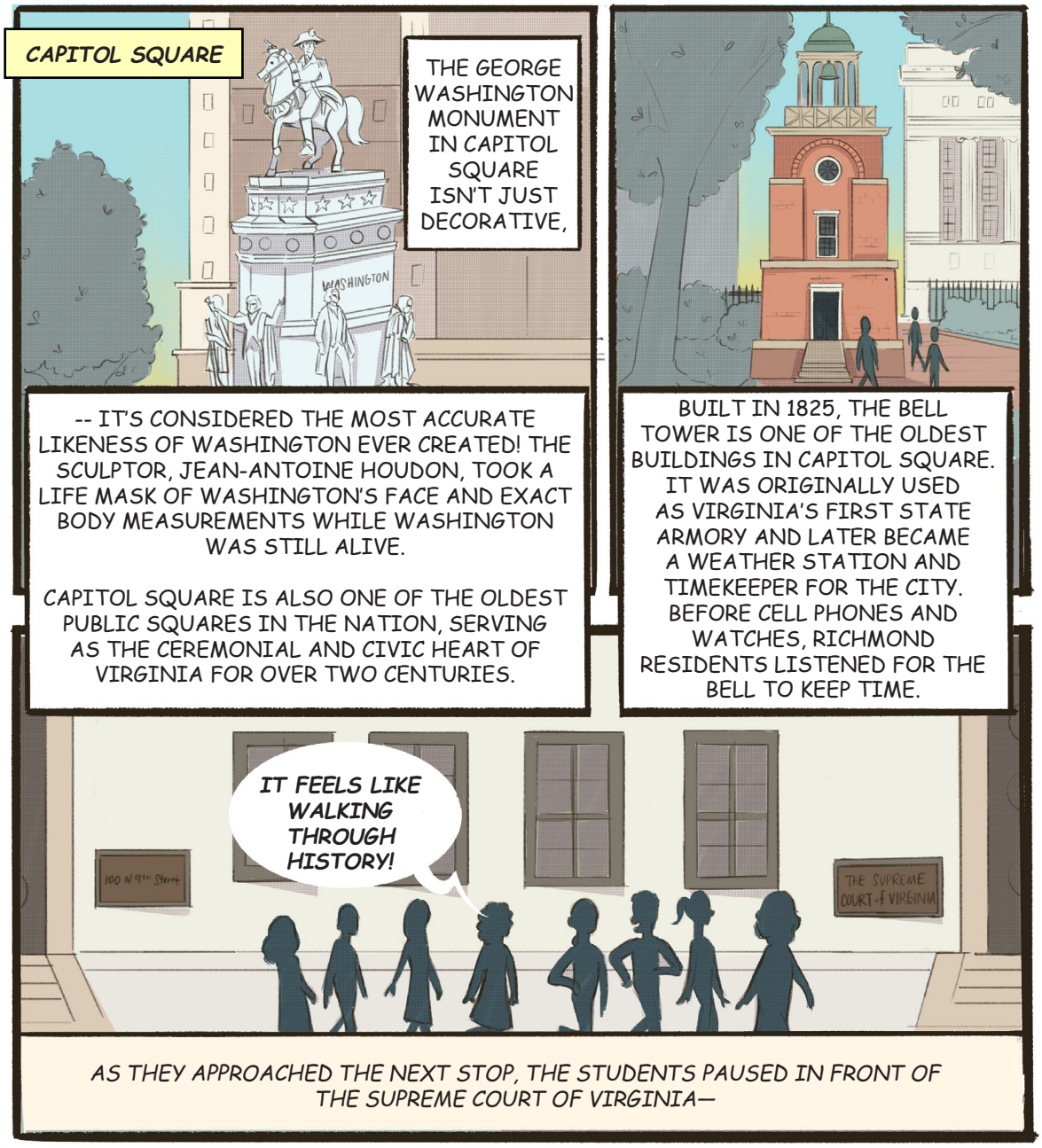

THAT'S WHAT KEEPS OUR SYSTEM WORKING *FOR EVERYONE*.
NEXT WEEK,
WE'LL SEE HOW THIS ALL WORKS IN REAL LIFE—
ON OUR FIELD TRIP TO THE CAPITOL AND SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA!
RIIIIING!
I CAN'T WAIT!

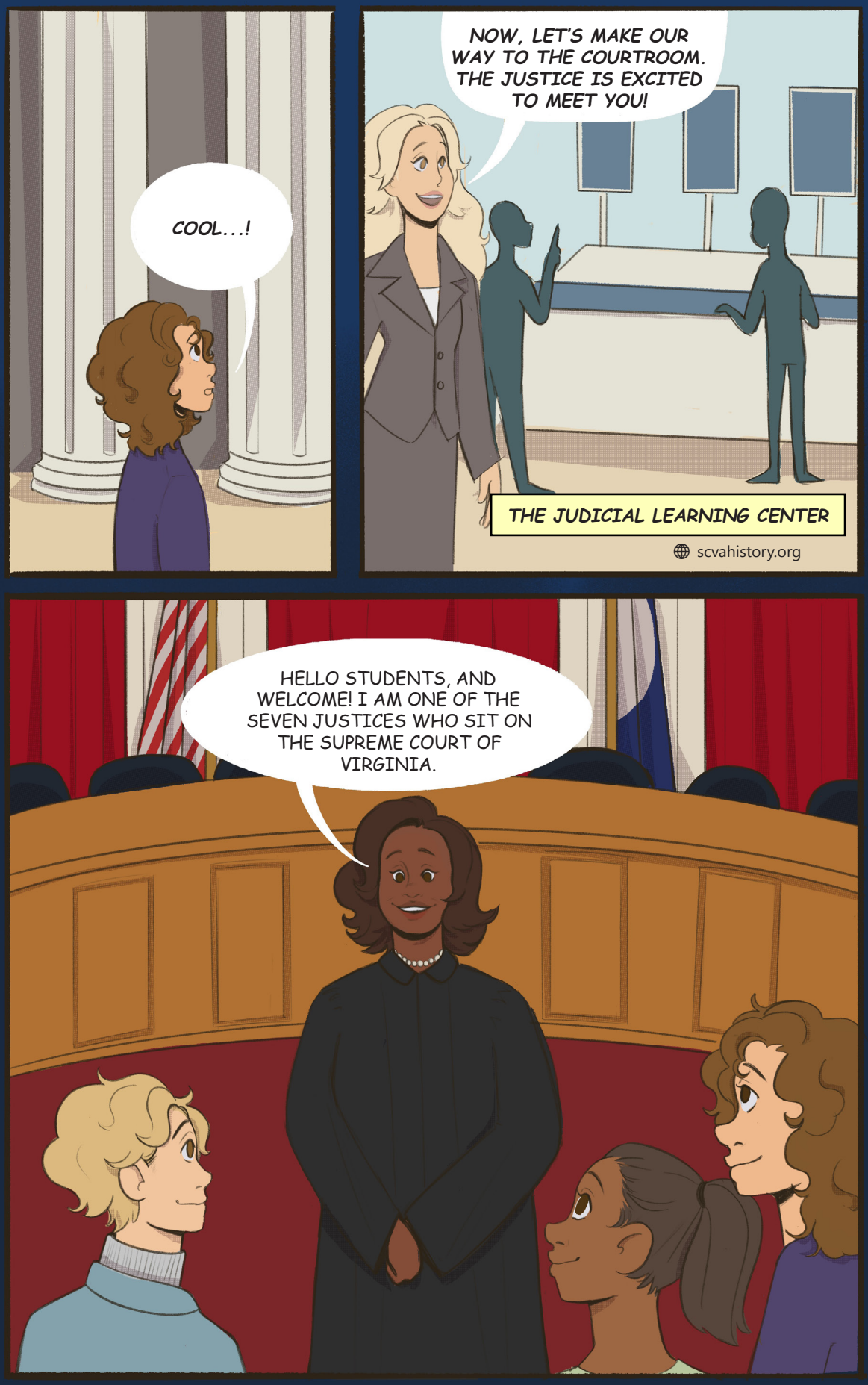

THE FOLLOWING WEEK...
SCHOOL BUS
I WONDER IF WE'LL GET TO MEET THE GOVERNOR. THAT'S LIKE THE PRESIDENT, RIGHT?
SORT OF!
THE PRESIDENT LEADS THE WHOLE COUNTRY, BUT THE GOVERNOR IS THE LEADER OF OUR STATE. THEY EACH HAVE THEIR OWN POWERS.
SO... LIKE THE PRESIDENT SIGNS FEDERAL LAWS?
EXACTLY! AND THE GOVERNOR SIGNS LAWS JUST FOR VIRGINIA
GREAT THINKING, YOU TWO!

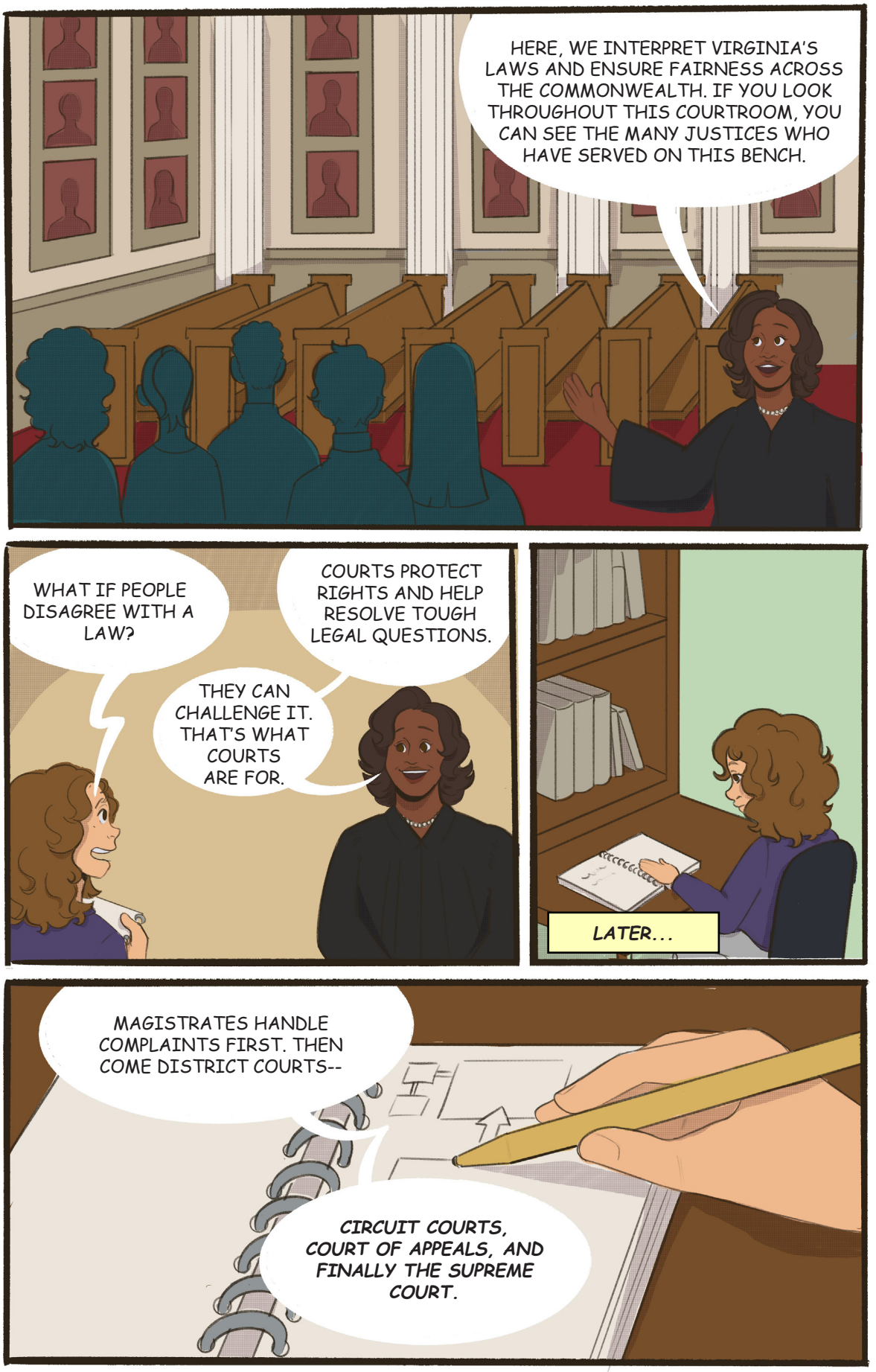

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HANDLES BIG THINGS LIKE THE MILITARY AND PRINTING MONEY,
WHILE THE STATE GOVERNMENT TAKES CARE OF SCHOOLS, ROADS, AND LOCAL LAWS.
SO, IT'S KIND OF LIKE TEAMWORK - EACH HAS A JOB TO DO.
YEAH, AND TOGETHER THEY HELP THE WHOLE COUNTRY AND OUR STATE RUN SMOOTHLY.
WHOA... IT'S LIKE CONGRESS, BUT JUST FOR VIRGINIA.
THAT'S RIGHT! THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS WHERE STATE LAWS ARE MADE. WE'LL LEARN MORE ABOUT IT FROM OUR TOUR GUIDE AND OUR MEETING WITH A STATE DELEGATE.
THE VIRGINIA CAPITOL BUILDING

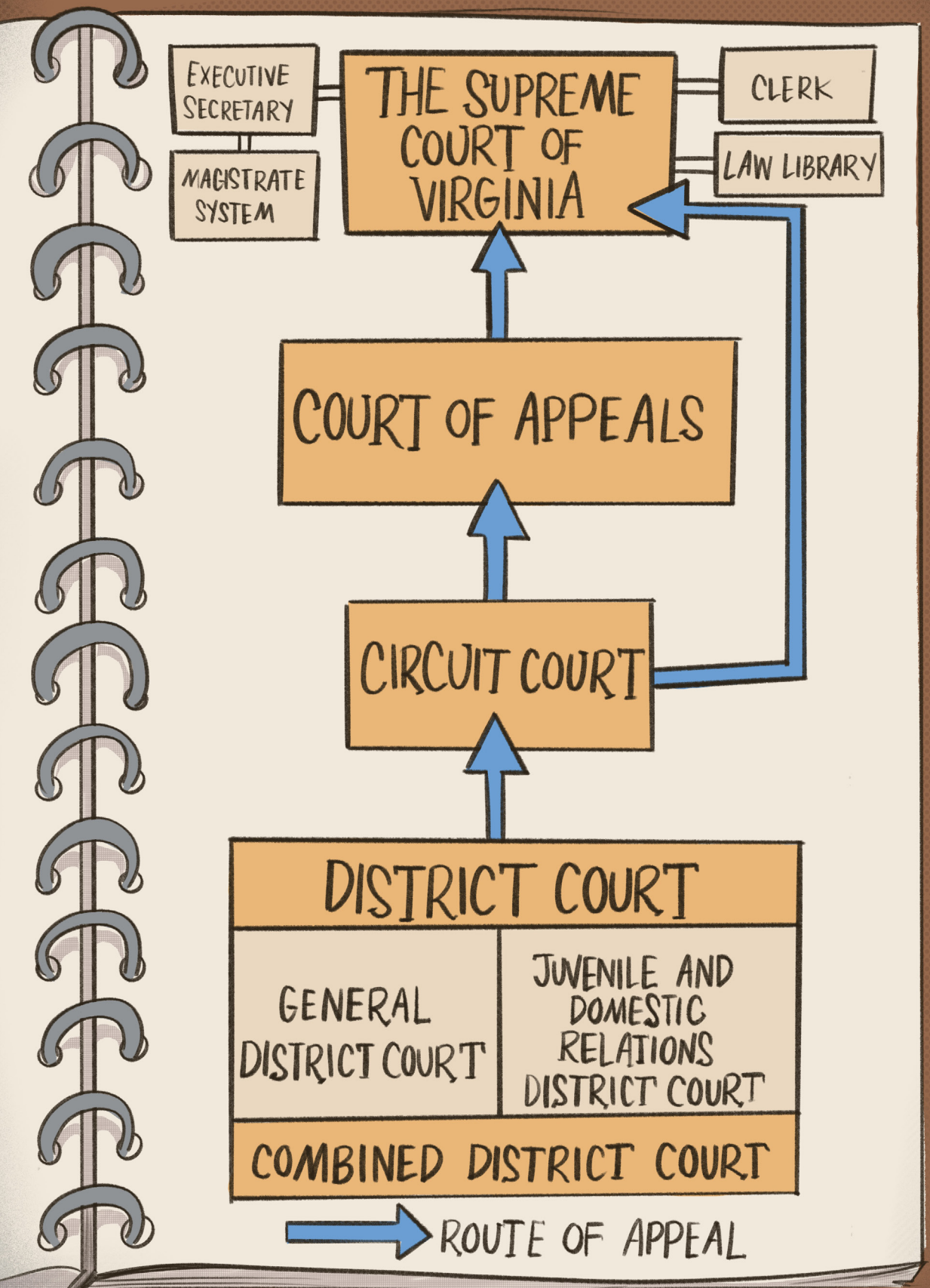

WELCOME TO THE VIRGINIA CAPITOL, STUDENTS!
THIS IS WHERE VIRGINIA'S LAWS ARE MADE. LAWMAKERS MEET HERE TO DEBATE AND VOTE.
LOOK AT THAT GOLDEN DOME!
IT'S EVEN MORE IMPRESSIVE IN PERSON!
FUN-FACT-
ALTHOUGH THE CAPITOL HAS A CLASSICAL EXTERIOR, THE DOME WAS ADDED AT A LATER DATE. AND EVEN THOUGH IT LOOKS LIKE GOLD, IT ISN'T! IT'S DESIGNED TO SHINE THAT WAY!
JORDAN HAD PICTURED IT ON THE BUS, BUT SEEING THE CAPITOL UP CLOSE MADE IT ALL REAL.


NEXT, WE'RE GOING TO MEET A DELEGATE OUTSIDE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING.
HELLO, STUDENTS!
YOUR VOICE MATTERS. WE REPRESENT YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY. AS PART OF THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH, MY JOB IS TO HELP CREATE THE LAWS THAT AFFECT OUR STATE.
I MEET WITH PEOPLE LIKE YOU, LISTEN TO YOUR CONCERNS, AND BRING THOSE IDEAS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. WE DEBATE, VOTE, AND WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE LAWS THAT IMPROVE OUR SCHOOLS, ROADS, AND COMMUNITIES.
HOW CAN STUDENTS HELP SHAPE LAWS?
WRITE LETTERS, SPEAK UP, ORGANIZE PROJECTS, AND SHARE YOUR IDEAS. WE LISTEN, AND YOUR IDEAS CAN REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE. WHEN YOU'RE OLD ENOUGH, YOU CAN EVEN RUN FOR OFFICE YOURSELF!

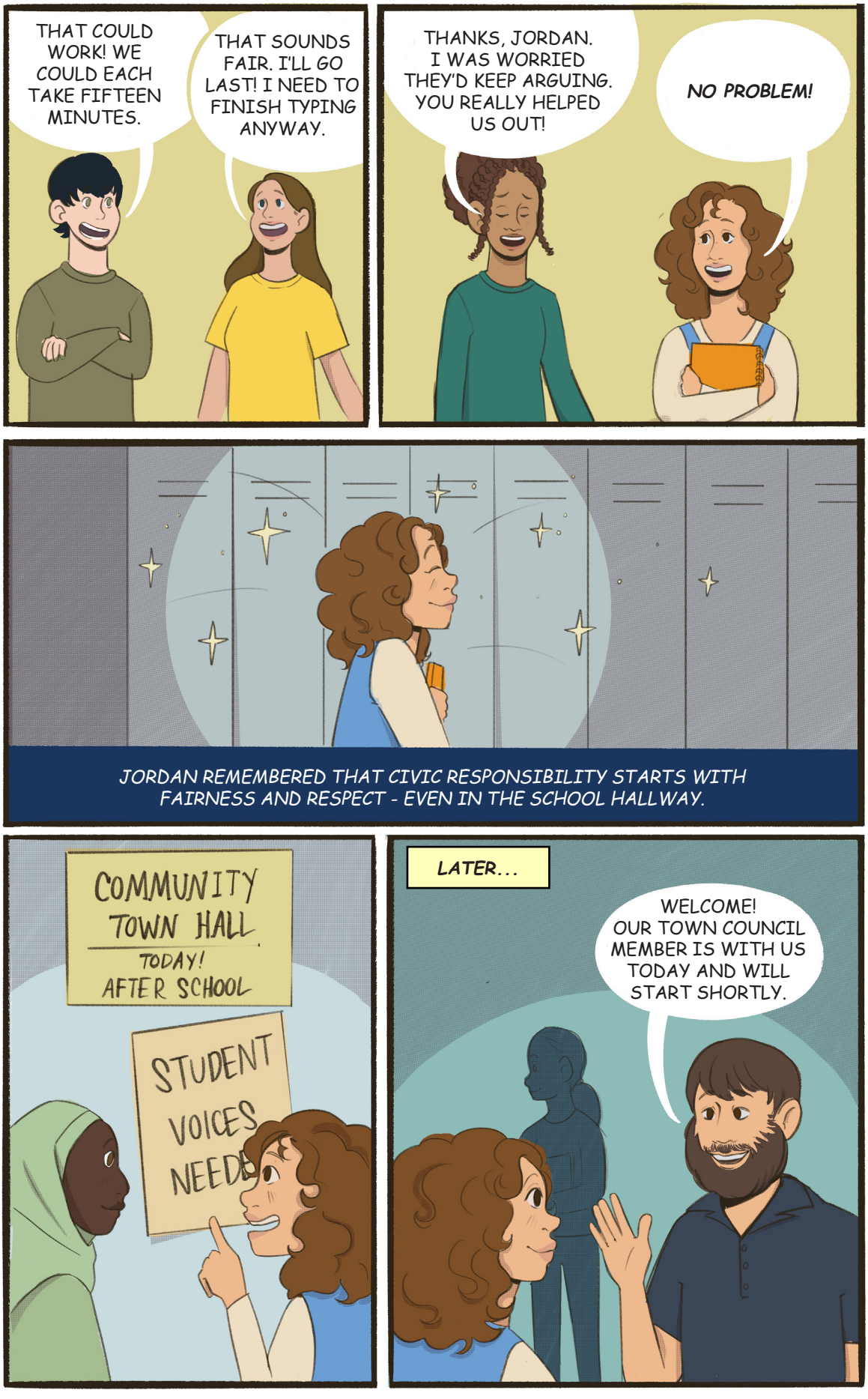

CAPITOL SQUARE
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON MONUMENT IN CAPITOL SQUARE ISN'T JUST DECORATIVE,
WASHINGTON
-- IT'S CONSIDERED THE MOST ACCURATE LIKENESS OF WASHINGTON EVER CREATED! THE SCULPTOR, JEAN-ANTOINE HOUDON, TOOK A LIFE MASK OF WASHINGTON'S FACE AND EXACT BODY MEASUREMENTS WHILE WASHINGTON WAS STILL ALIVE.
CAPITOL SQUARE IS ALSO ONE OF THE OLDEST PUBLIC SQUARES IN THE NATION, SERVING AS THE CEREMONIAL AND CIVIC HEART OF VIRGINIA FOR OVER TWO CENTURIES.
BUILT IN 1825, THE BELL TOWER IS ONE OF THE OLDEST BUILDINGS IN CAPITOL SQUARE. IT WAS ORIGINALLY USED AS VIRGINIA'S FIRST STATE ARMORY AND LATER BECAME A WEATHER STATION AND TIMEKEEPER FOR THE CITY. BEFORE CELL PHONES AND WATCHES, RICHMOND RESIDENTS LISTENED FOR THE BELL TO KEEP TIME.
IT FEELS LIKE WALKING THROUGH HISTORY!
100 N 9th Street
THE SUPREME COURT of VIRGINIA
AS THEY APPROACHED THE NEXT STOP, THE STUDENTS PAUSED IN FRONT OF THE SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA—
THE HIGHEST COURT IN THE STATE.
WELCOME TO THE SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA. PLEASE FOLLOW ME TO THE JUDICIAL LEARNING CENTER.

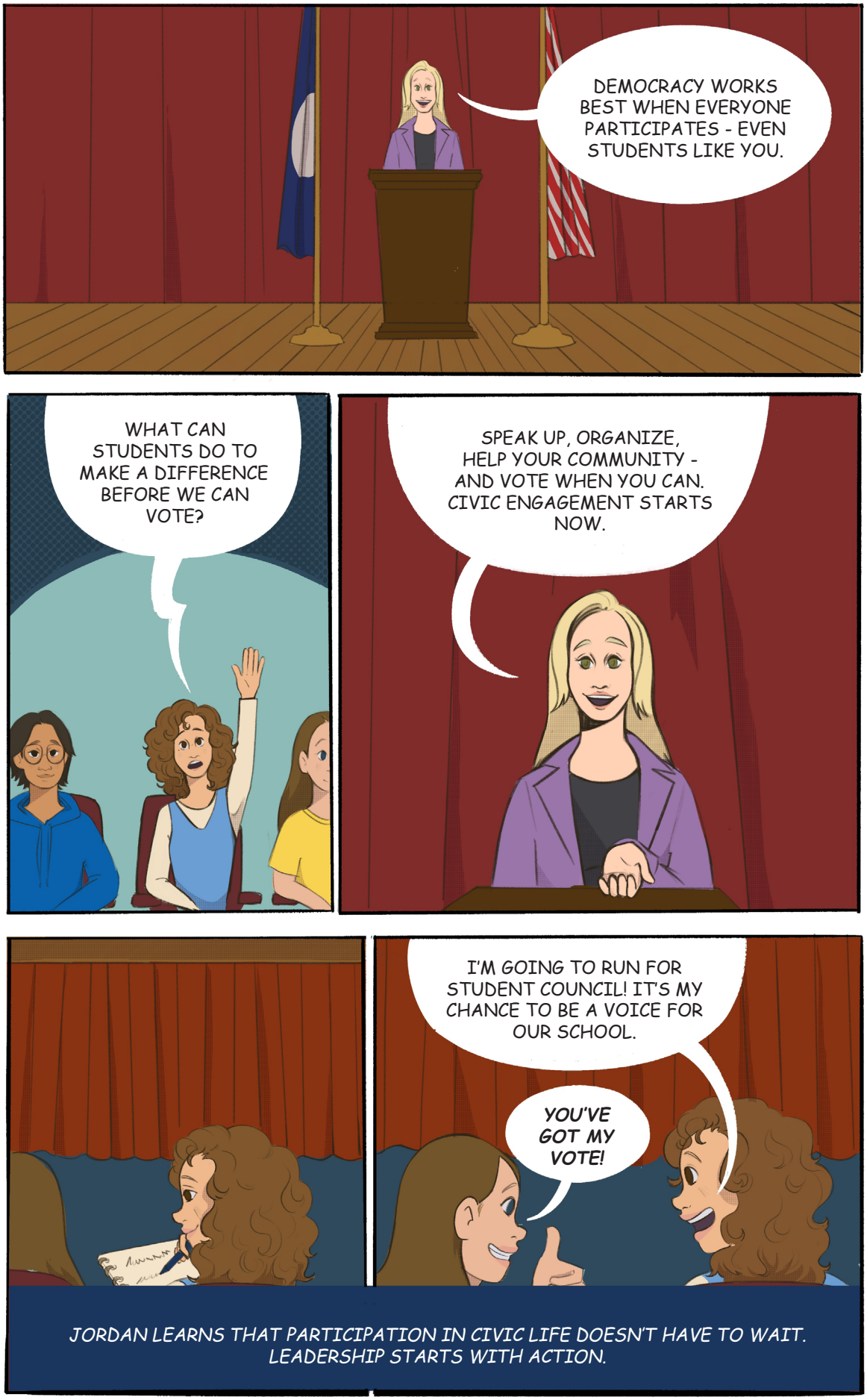

COOL...!
NOW, LET'S MAKE OUR WAY TO THE COURTROOM. THE JUSTICE IS EXCITED TO MEET YOU!
THE JUDICIAL LEARNING CENTER
scvahistory.org
HELLO STUDENTS, AND WELCOME! I AM ONE OF THE SEVEN JUSTICES WHO SIT ON THE SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA.


HERE, WE INTERPRET VIRGINIA'S LAWS AND ENSURE FAIRNESS ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH. IF YOU LOOK THROUGHOUT THIS COURTROOM, YOU CAN SEE THE MANY JUSTICES WHO HAVE SERVED ON THIS BENCH.
WHAT IF PEOPLE DISAGREE WITH A LAW?
COURTS PROTECT RIGHTS AND HELP RESOLVE TOUGH LEGAL QUESTIONS.
THEY CAN CHALLENGE IT. THAT'S WHAT COURTS ARE FOR.
LATER...
MAGISTRATES HANDLE COMPLAINTS FIRST. THEN COME DISTRICT COURTS--
CIRCUIT COURTS, COURT OF APPEALS, AND FINALLY THE SUPREME COURT.


EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
MAGISTRATE SYSTEM
THE SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA
CLERK
LAW LIBRARY
COURT OF APPEALS
CIRCUIT COURT
DISTRICT COURT
GENERAL DISTRICT COURT
JUVENILE AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS DISTRICT COURT
COMBINED DISTRICT COURT
ROUTE OF APPEAL

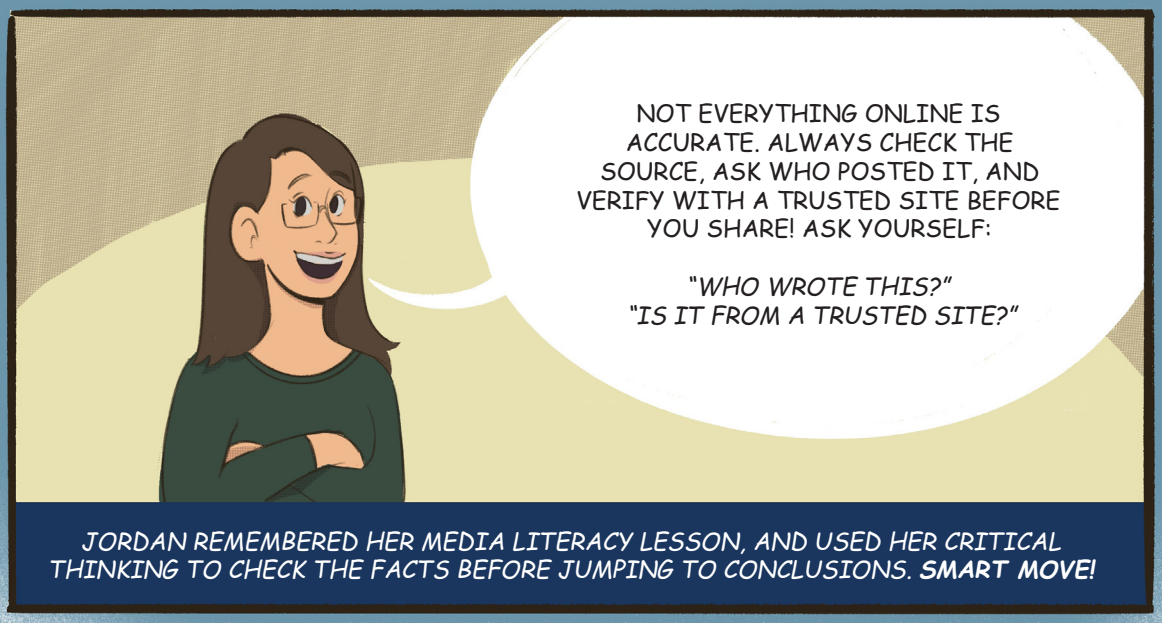

THE NEXT DAY
I WAS HERE FIRST! I ALREADY PUT MY BOOKS DOWN!
PLEASE STOP ARGUING! WE HAVE A PROJECT DUE!
THAT DOESN'T COUNT. YOU LEFT TO GET YOUR LAPTOP!
HOLD ON, GUYS! LET'S SETTLE THIS FAIRLY
WE ALL NEED TO WORK ON A PROJECT, BUT THERE ISN'T ENOUGH ROOM!
WHAT IF YOU EACH TOOK TURNS USING THE SPACE?


THAT COULD WORK! WE COULD EACH TAKE FIFTEEN MINUTES.
THAT SOUNDS FAIR. I'LL GO LAST! I NEED TO FINISH TYPING ANYWAY.
THANKS, JORDAN. I WAS WORRIED THEY'D KEEP ARGUING. YOU REALLY HELPED US OUT!
NO PROBLEM!
JORDAN REMEMBERED THAT CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY STARTS WITH FAIRNESS AND RESPECT - EVEN IN THE SCHOOL HALLWAY.
COMMUNITY TOWN HALL
TODAY! AFTER SCHOOL
STUDENT VOICES NEEDE
LATER...
WELCOME! OUR TOWN COUNCIL MEMBER IS WITH US TODAY AND WILL START SHORTLY.

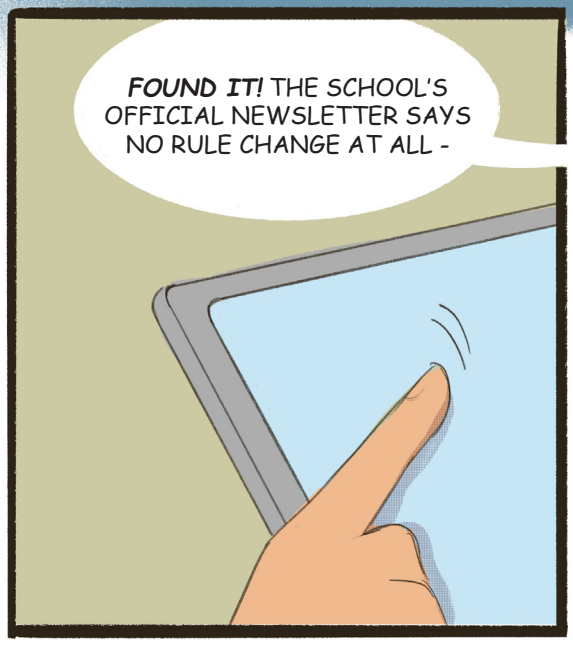


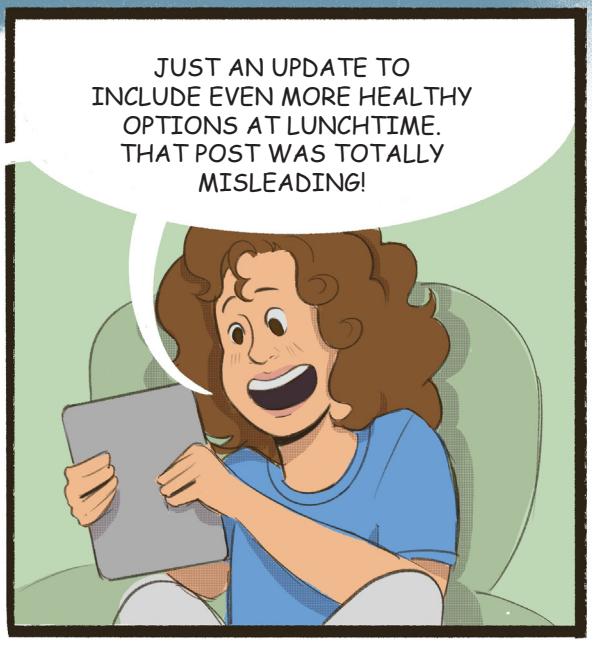
JORDAN LEARNS THAT PARTICIPATION IN CIVIC LIFE DOESN'T HAVE TO WAIT. LEADERSHIP STARTS WITH ACTION.


OVER THE WEEKEND
@SCHOOL_UPDATES
BREAKING NEWS!! NO MORE SWEET TREATS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY
COMMENTS
THIS CAN'T BE REAL!
THEY CAN'T DO THAT!!
WE DESERVE SWEETS!
WHOA... THAT CAN'T BE TRUE... CAN IT? WAIT, I REMEMBER A LESSON FROM THE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN!
BEFORE YOU BELIEVE IT OR SHARE IT, CHECK THE SOURCE. IS IT CREDIBLE? IS IT BIASED?
THAT'S RIGHT! LET ME LOOK FOR A RELIABLE SOURCE FIRST...



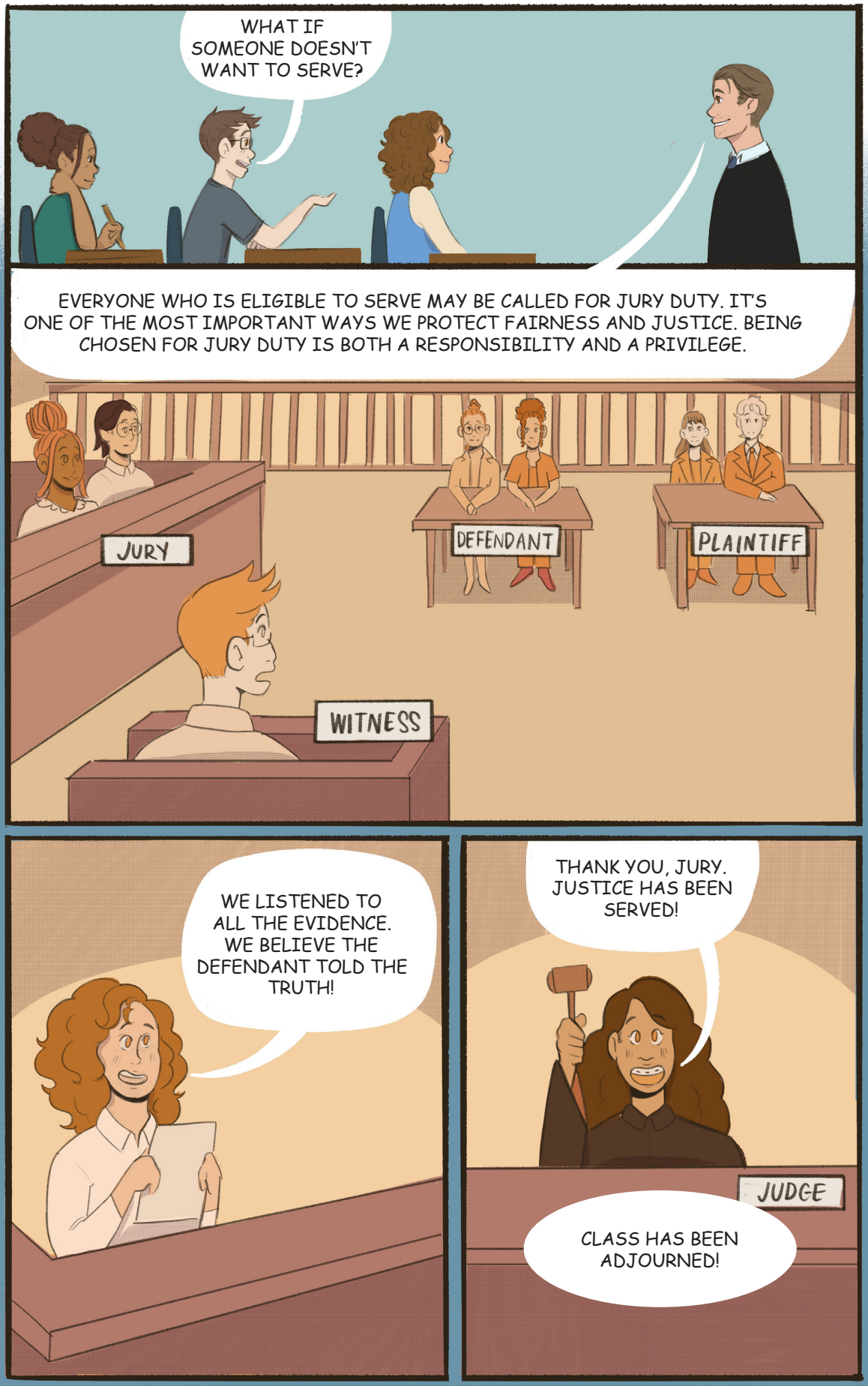
JORDAN REMEMBERED HER MEDIA LITERACY LESSON, AND USED HER CRITICAL THINKING TO CHECK THE FACTS BEFORE JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS. ***SMART MOVE!***

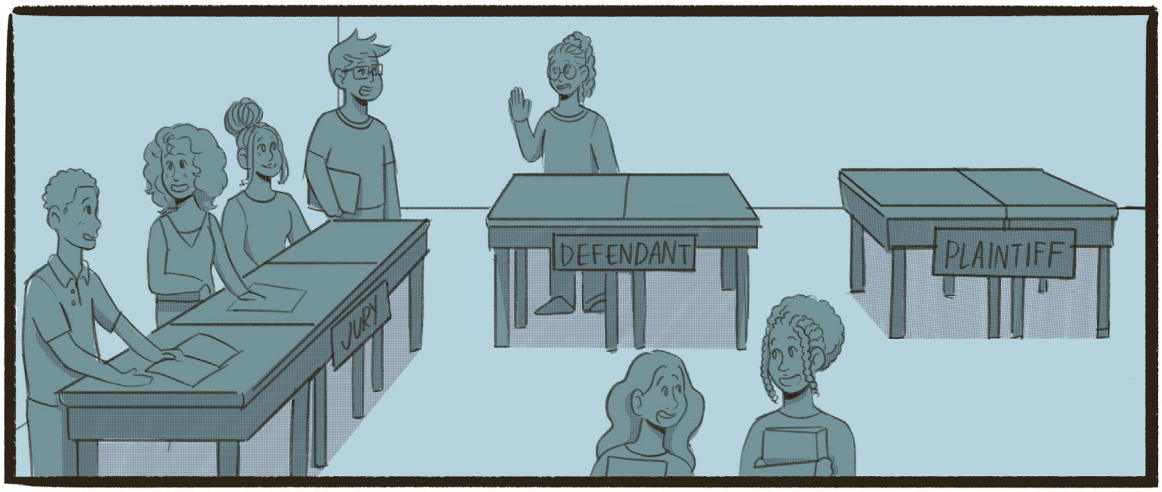


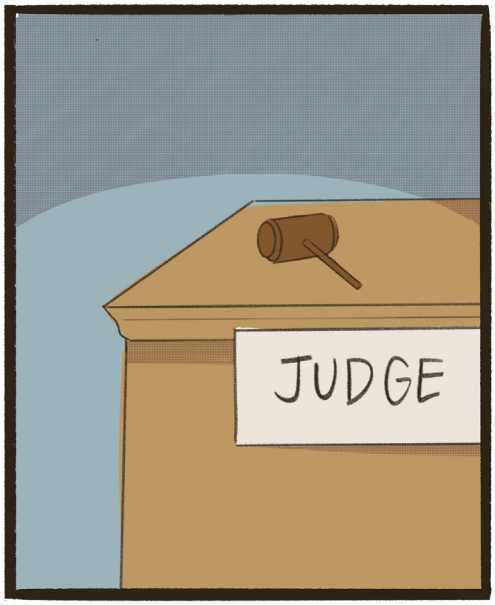





HELLO, EVERYONE!
IN OUR JUSTICE SYSTEM, PEOPLE FROM THE COMMUNITY PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN HELPING MAKE FAIR DECISIONS.
SO CITIZENS, NOT JUST JUDGES, CAN HELP DECIDE THE OUTCOME OF COURT CASES?
THAT'S RIGHT, JORDAN. IT'S ONE WAY CITIZENS TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND PARTICIPATE IN GOVERNMENT.
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT,
JURY DUTY!
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
JUROR ORIENTATION
vacourts.gov/courts/circuit/jov

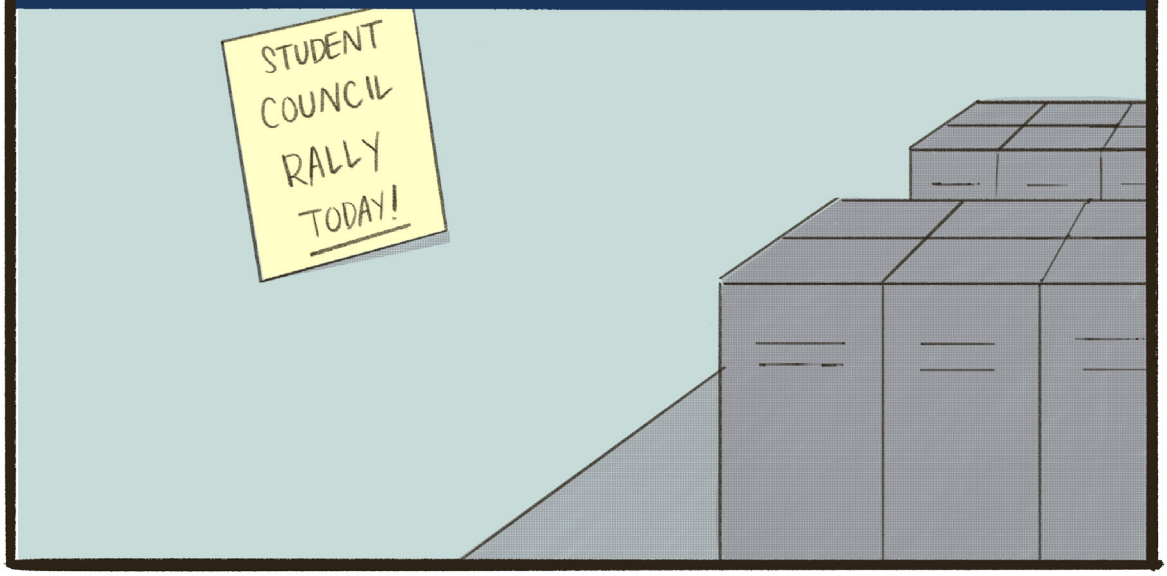

WHAT IF SOMEONE DOESN'T WANT TO SERVE?
EVERYONE WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO SERVE MAY BE CALLED FOR JURY DUTY. IT'S ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WAYS WE PROTECT FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE. BEING CHOSEN FOR JURY DUTY IS BOTH A RESPONSIBILITY AND A PRIVILEGE.
JURY
DEFENDANT
PLAINTIFF
WITNESS
WE LISTENED TO ALL THE EVIDENCE. WE BELIEVE THE DEFENDANT TOLD THE TRUTH!
THANK YOU, JURY. JUSTICE HAS BEEN SERVED!
JUDGE
CLASS HAS BEEN ADJOURNED!



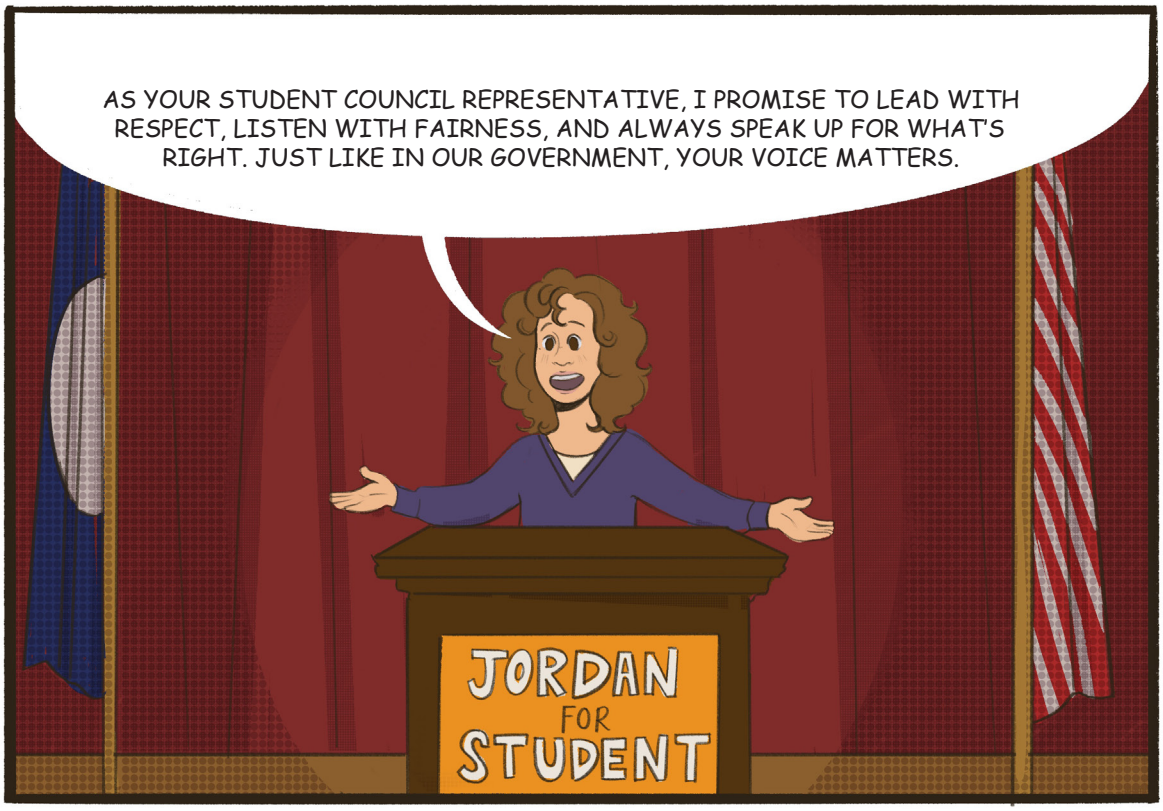


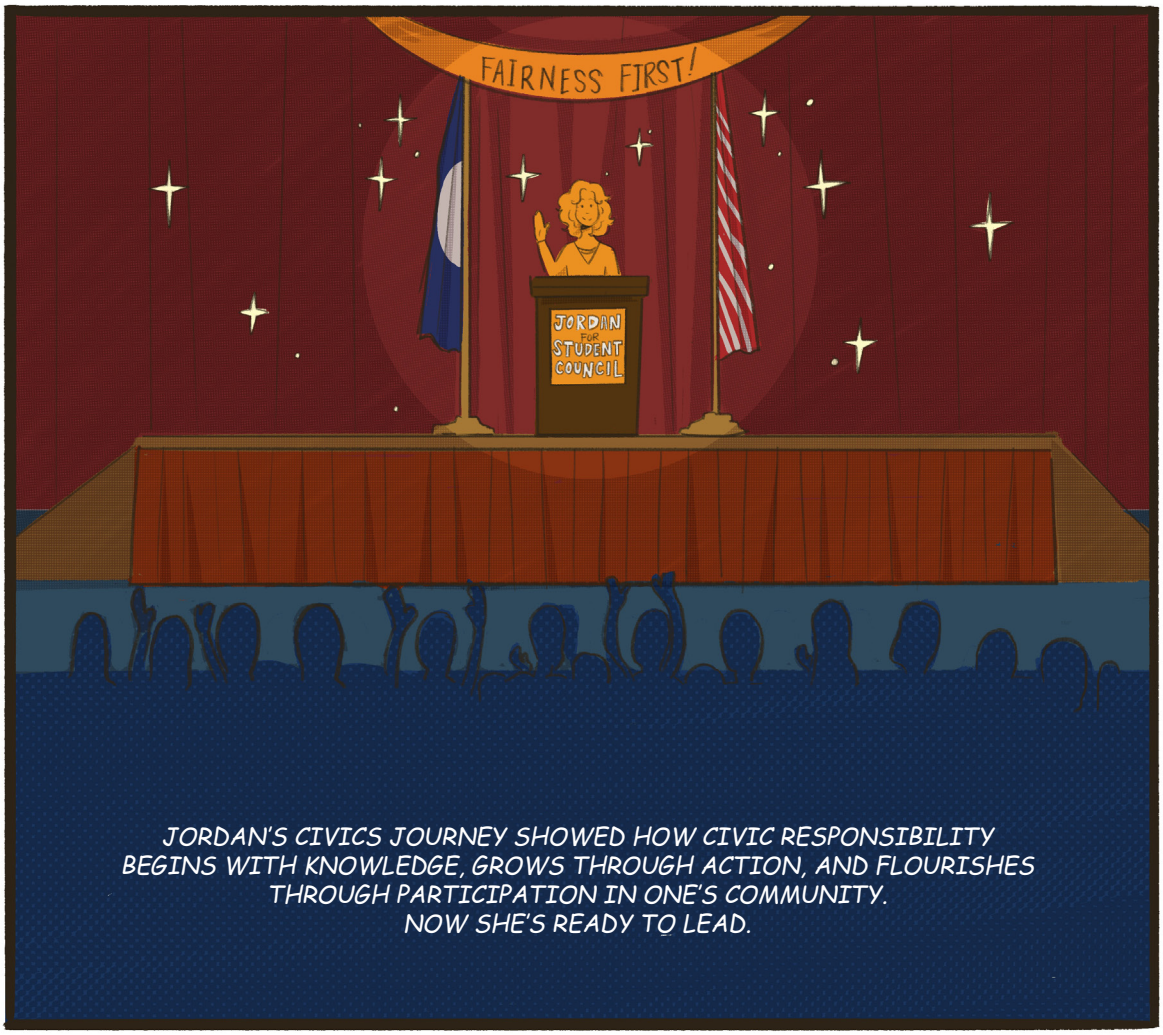


JORDAN REALIZED HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO LISTEN, STAY FAIR, AND FOLLOW THE FACTS - JUST LIKE REAL JURORS DO EVERY DAY




FAIRNESS FIRST!
THIS YEAR--
JORDAN FOR STUDENT COUNCIL
I LEARNED SOMETHING IMPORTANT - THAT LAWS, FAIRNESS, AND RESPECT START WITH US.
IN THE CAPITOL, I SAW WHERE LAWS ARE MADE. IN COURT, I LEARNED THAT EVERYONE DESERVES TO BE HEARD. AND RIGHT HERE AT SCHOOL, I SAW HOW WE CAN ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE.


AS YOUR STUDENT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE, I PROMISE TO LEAD WITH RESPECT, LISTEN WITH FAIRNESS, AND ALWAYS SPEAK UP FOR WHAT'S RIGHT. JUST LIKE IN OUR GOVERNMENT, YOUR VOICE MATTERS.
JORDAN FOR STUDENT


FAIRNESS FIRST!
JORDAN FOR STUDENT COUNCIL
JORDAN'S CIVICS JOURNEY SHOWED HOW CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY BEGINS WITH KNOWLEDGE, GROWS THROUGH ACTION, AND FLOURISHES THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN ONE'S COMMUNITY.
NOW SHE'S READY TO LEAD.

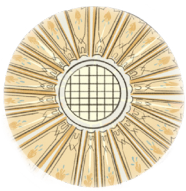
Fun Facts Along the Way!
Capitol Square as a Civic Campus



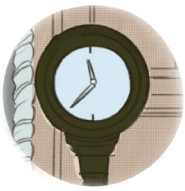
Virginia Capitol, Richmond
The Capitol is home to the oldest continuously elected lawmaking body in North America, the Virginia General Assembly, which began as the House of Burgesses in 1619.



Virginia Capitol Building
Thomas Jefferson helped design the Capitol while he was serving in France, modeling it after an ancient Roman temple to show that Virginia's new government was built on classical ideas of democracy and republicanism.



Virginia State Capitol Dome
Did you know the gold dome inside the Capitol isn't actually made of gold? It's painted to shine like it is! The design was inspired by ancient Roman temples and was hidden from the outside until the 20th century.



General Assembly Building
The General Assembly Building is the first one in Virginia history designed just for lawmakers to do their work, with modern technology, big windows for natural light, and lots of space for the public, including students, to watch meetings and share their voices.



George Washington Equestrian Monument
The statue of George Washington outside the Capitol is considered the most accurate likeness of him ever made. The artist, Houdon, took a life mask of his face and measured his body while Washington was still alive!



Bell Tower
The Bell Tower was once used to signal legislators that it was time to meet. Today, it serves as a Visitor Information Center and stands as a symbol of history and communication.



Supreme Court of Virginia
This is the highest court in the state. The justices here help decide important questions about laws and fairness. As you walk by, you're passing a place where justice is shaped every day!

Capitol Square

Capitol Square is one of the oldest public squares in the nation! It's home to many statues and landmarks, including a famous one of George Washington.



Capitol Square is both a public park and a "civic campus," where the executive (Governor's Executive Mansion), legislative (Capitol and General Assembly), and judicial (Supreme Court of Virginia) branches all work within a short walk of each other.

When you walk through Capitol Square, you're not just in a park with many trees and plants that are native to Virginia, such as oaks, dogwoods, and American beeches. You're also walking through all three branches of your state government and the history of how Virginians have worked to expand rights and democracy.

With more than 100,000 vistors each year, storytelling monuments and memorials like the "Mantle," a tribute to Virginia Indian nations, and "Voices from the Garden," honoring Virginia women, show that the story of who is represented in government and public memory is still growing and becoming more inclusive.[1] The Virginia Civil Rights Memorial on Capitol Square honors students and lawyers who challenged school segregation, including Barbara Johns and Oliver Hill, making the Square a powerful outdoor classroom about equal rights and civic courage.[2]

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1 The History Mom. (2019, December 17). Virginia Capitol (Richmond). The History Mom. https://thehistorymom.com/2019/12/18/virginia-capitol-richmond/

2 House of Delegates, Commonwealth of Virginia. (n.d.). Virginia State Capitol [PDF]. http://hodcap.state.va.us/publications/Capitol_Visitor_Guide.pdf

IN OPEN COURT

A Virginia Judicial Civics Education Initiative

In Open Court is a comprehensive civics education website dedicated to increasing public understanding of Virginia's judicial system. Through free, accessible educational content and resources, the website empowers students, educators, and community members to explore the courts, understand their rights and responsibilities, and become informed, engaged citizens.

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