



CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Seventh Amendment

The right to trial by jury in civil cases

Imagine you lend your favorite bicycle to a friend. Your friend promises to return it but he never does. You ask for it back, but your friend refuses. Now you have a disagreement. What should happen?

FOR THE PARENT OR GRANDPARENT

The Seventh Amendment is about disagreements between ordinary people, not crimes. If the child has ever argued over something borrowed, start there — the whole chapter follows from it.

Why Do We Need Fair Decisions?

**Should the
strongest
person win?**

**Should the richest
person win?**

**Should someone in
power simply
decide the
outcome?**

The Founders believed the answer should be no. They believed ordinary citizens should have a voice in deciding important disagreements between people. That is why they protected the right to a jury trial in certain civil cases.



The Actual Seventh Amendment

RATIFIED 1791

"In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law."



What Does It Mean?

The Seventh Amendment protects the right to a jury trial in certain civil cases. A civil case is a disagreement between people or organizations, usually involving things like:



- ◆ Property
- ◆ Money
- ◆ Other private disputes
- ◆ Contracts
- ◆ Personal injuries



Two Different Kinds of Case

A criminal case

is when the government accuses someone of breaking a law.

A civil case

is usually when one person says another person has caused harm and asks a court to resolve the disagreement.

REMEMBER THIS

Young people, The Seventh Amendment says that in certain disagreements between people, a group of ordinary citizens can help decide what is just. Instead of letting one person have all the power, the Constitution allows a jury to help find the truth.



Why Did the Founders Include It?

The Founders remembered that before the American Revolution, British judges sometimes limited the colonists' ability to have local juries decide their disputes.

Many Americans believed that local citizens understood their communities better and could help prevent unjust decisions by distant government officials.

The Founders believed juries were an important protection because they placed some power directly in the hands of the people.



The Importance of the Jury

AN IMPORTANT IDEA

Justice should not belong only to powerful, wealthy people.

A jury is made up of ordinary citizens who:

- 1 Listen carefully.
- 2 Examine evidence.
- 3 Consider the facts.
- 4 Work together to reach a decision.

This reflects the belief that citizens have a responsibility to participate in self-government.



Bible Connection

The Bible teaches that justice requires wisdom, fairness, and concern for the truth.

"These things also belong to the wise: It is not good to show partiality in judgment."

Proverbs 24:23

God warns against showing favoritism.

James 2:1–6

A poor person and a wealthy person should both receive equal justice and protection under the law. The Bible also teaches:

"You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it."

Deuteronomy 1:17



Justice for Great and Small

Justice should not depend on someone's wealth, popularity, position, skin color, or gender.

Unfortunately, today, there are times when power, influence, money, political correctness, and woke ideology can influence judges and justices who pervert justice. This blinds the eyes of the wise, and twists the words of the righteous (*Deuteronomy 16:19*).



The Virtues Behind the Seventh Amendment

CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLE

BIBLICAL VIRTUE

Fair decisions

Justice

Listening to evidence

Wisdom

Equal treatment

Impartiality

Citizen responsibility

Stewardship

Honest judgment

Integrity



Rights Come with Responsibilities

The Seventh Amendment gives citizens an important role in justice. That means jurors should:

- ◆ Listen carefully.
- ◆ Avoid prejudice.
- ◆ Make decisions responsibly.
- ◆ Be honest.
- ◆ Consider evidence.



REMEMBER THIS

Citizenship is not only about enjoying freedom. It is also about serving the interests and welfare of our nation.

Jury Service and Self-Government

ONE OF THE MAJOR PRINCIPLES OF OUR FOUNDING WAS

"Self-government is the key to liberty."

The Founders also believed liberty required informed, responsible citizens who do their civic duties.

A Constitutional Republic does not work when people only ask, "What can my country do for me?"

It works when citizens also ask, "How can I help protect justice and freedom?"

Serving on a jury is one way that citizens participate in protecting justice and freedom.



Constitution Fun Facts

1

The Seventh Amendment was added in 1791 as part of the Bill of Rights.

2

The amount of "\$20" mentioned in the amendment was a significant amount of money in 1791, though the practical meaning has changed over time.

3

The Seventh Amendment applies to civil cases, not criminal trials.

4

Jury trials have roots going back centuries in English history, including the Magna Carta of 1215.



Founder Spotlight



Thomas Jefferson

1743–1826

Thomas Jefferson, our third President and chief author of the Declaration of Independence, believed that an educated and responsible citizenry was essential for a free nation. He believed people needed knowledge and virtue to participate wisely in self-government.

FAMOUS QUOTE

"I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves."

Jefferson believed that government power ultimately rests with an educated people (one of the reasons for writing this workbook). A jury reflects this principle by allowing citizens to participate directly in the administration of justice.

Words to know

Civil Case A legal disagreement between people or organizations.

Criminal Case A case where the government accuses someone of breaking the law.

Jury A group of citizens who listen to evidence and help decide a case.

Common Law A system of law developed through Biblical law, centuries of legal traditions based in Anglo Saxon customs, and previous historical court decisions.

Controversy A disagreement or dispute.

Impartial Fair and not taking sides.

MEMORY VERSE

"The righteous considers the cause of the poor, but the wicked does not understand such knowledge."

Proverbs 29:7





COLOR IT IN

You finished Chapter Eleven!

The Seventh Amendment — seven down, three to go.

BILL OF RIGHTS

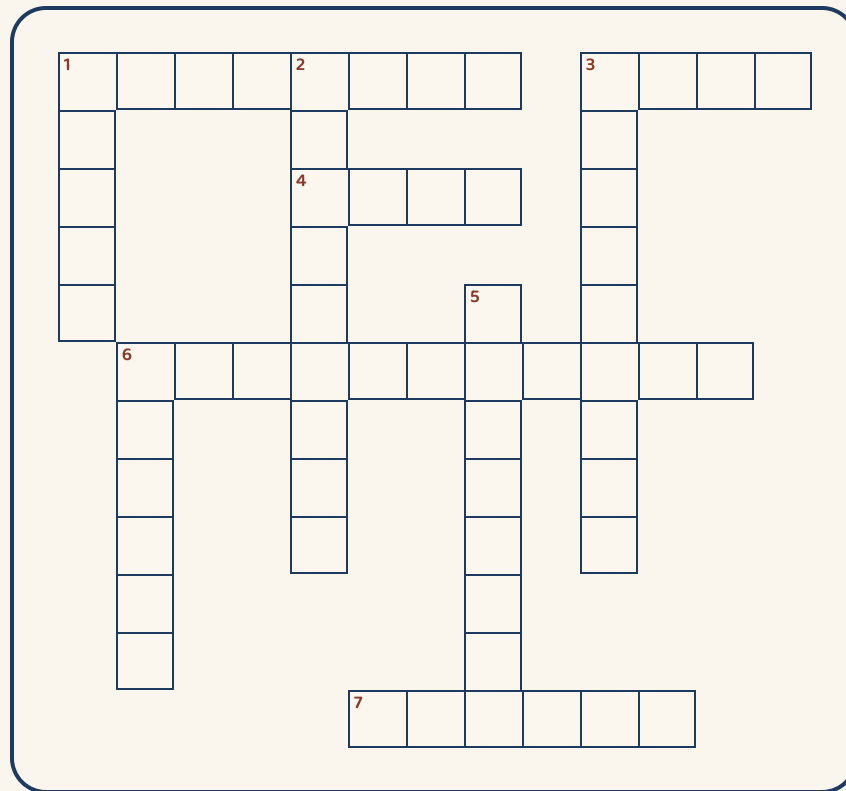


7 OF 10

- 1 A legal disagreement between people or organizations is a _____ case.
- 2 A case where the government accuses someone of breaking the law is a _____ case.
- 3 A group of citizens who listen to evidence and help decide a case is a _____ .
- 4 A system of law developed through Biblical law and centuries of legal traditions is _____ law.
- 5 A disagreement or dispute is a _____ .
- 6 Fair and not taking sides means _____ .
- 7 The amendment applies where the value in controversy shall exceed _____ dollars.
- 8 Thomas _____ said he knew of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves.
- 9 A jury is made up of ordinary citizens who examine _____ .
- 10 Our memory verse says the righteous considers the cause of the _____ .

Seventh Amendment Crossword

Every answer comes from this chapter. Write one letter in each white square.



ACROSS

- 1 A _____ case is when the government accuses someone of breaking the law.
- 3 A group of citizens who listen to evidence and help decide a case.
- 4 Our memory verse says the righteous considers the cause of the _____.
- 6 A disagreement or dispute.
- 7 The amendment applies where the value in controversy exceeds _____ dollars.

DOWN

- 1 A legal disagreement between people or organizations is a _____ case.
- 2 Fair and not taking sides.
- 3 Thomas _____, chief author of the Declaration of Independence.
- 5 A jury is made of ordinary citizens who examine _____.
- 6 _____ law grew from Biblical law and centuries of legal tradition.

Family Questions

Talk these through together before you write. There is no hurry.

1 • Why do you think the Founders trusted ordinary citizens to help decide legal disputes?

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2 • Why is fairness important when people disagree?

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3 • Why should wealth or popularity never determine justice?

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4 • What qualities make someone a good decision-maker?

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5 • How can we practice fairness in our own disagreements?

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FOR THE PARENT OR GRANDPARENT

Question three is the one worth slowing down for. Ask the child whether they have ever seen someone get their way just because they were louder, and let that answer sit before you talk about juries.

The Wise Jury

A family activity. Create a simple family disagreement scenario:

Example: Two children disagree about who is responsible to clean their room if they both share it. Have family members listen to both sides.

ASK

- ◆ What facts matter?
- ◆ Did everyone get a chance to speak?
- ◆ What would be a fair solution?



THEN DISCUSS

Discuss how this small example reflects the importance of listening before making decisions.

A Grandparent's Thought

The Seventh Amendment reminds us that freedom requires participation.

The Founders did not want justice to belong only to rulers, judges, or powerful people. They believed ordinary citizens had an important role in protecting justice.

The Bible teaches that God loves justice and calls His people to judge wisely and honestly.

A nation remains strong when its citizens do not simply demand their rights but also accept the responsibility of preserving justice and freedom.



THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Liberty survives when citizens love truth, practice wisdom, and willingly serve the cause of justice.