

AP US GOVERNMENT

Gideon's Trumpet, Anthony Lewis (Vintage Books, 1989)

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Gideon's Trumpet is a remarkable story, written by a renowned journalist, of democracy in action. A poor man, with little education, was able to get his case heard by the Supreme Court, which then issued a decision which changed the criminal justice systems throughout the country. I am asking you to read this for several reasons. First, *Gideon v. Wainwright*, from 1963, is an important Supreme Court case that you will need to know. Second, the book does a good job of showing readers how a case makes its way through the judicial system and how the Supreme Court makes its decisions. How does the Supreme Court decide to take a case? Third, the book elucidates a number of important terms associated with the American judiciary. What is a writ of certiorari? Fourth, the book covers the history of the concept of the "right to counsel" as it developed in American history. What was the relationship between *Gideon* and previous Supreme Court decisions? And finally, the book places these developments within the context of American federalism – that is, the balance of power between the national and the state governments. How might the states feel about decisions handed down by the (national) Supreme Court?

These, then, are the issues you should think of – and annotate – when you read the book. Don't worry too much about names of attorneys and the like. Instead, pay attention to these concerns:

1. The process by which a case moves through the court system – and, in particular, in the Supreme Court;
2. Terminology associated with that process;
3. The historical development of the 6th Amendment Right to Counsel
4. The impact of this development on the balance of national and state power.