1. Keep an eye on congress and the president – helps to define the power of other parts of government, one key aspect has been to examine presidential actions and judge on their constitutional activity. Relationship with federal government and the individual states, how much power to fed gov. and how much power to states.

2. Settlement of disputes over laws has the authority to invalidate legislation which it believes is unconstitutional. Has a responsibility for ensuring individual rights.

- Supreme Court can strike down laws passed by congress if they deem them unconstitutional, e.g. Roosevelt and his New Deal laws – passed by congress and struck down by Supreme Court. 2015 struck down state legislation on same sex marriage, in some states laws passed which stopped same sex marriage yet the supreme court over ruled it and its now allowed everywhere. An example where “in a democracy for the court to invalidate laws passed by the representatives of the people”
- (picture) Texas 1907 segregated school – African American School – public education formally segregated. Not just in the south, even states where slavery had never existed, there was still segregation. In 1954 – Brown vs. board of Education. Plessy vs. Ferguson, 1896 upheld principles of ‘separate but equal’. Brown decision reversed the Plessy, arguing that radial segregation was inherently unequal. Plessy – you could have segregation but education must be equal and on the grounds of equality. NAACP argued that Plessy had got it wrong and needed to be re-examined and so did the state legislation re. education, all came to ahead with the Brown decision in 1954 (Linda Brown) Supreme court re-examined the 1896 decision in 1954, by this stage the nature of the supreme court had changed, the political dimensions had changed since 1896 and so the court came to the decision that Plessy vs Ferguson was mistaken and racial segregation was unequal. Opponents of the brown decision argued that the