How did Chief Justice John Marshall, a Virginian, contribute to the growth of the U.S. Supreme Court’s importance in relation to the other branches of government?
Important legal precedents established by the Marshall Court strengthened the role of the U.S. Supreme Court as an equal branch of the national government.
Marbury v Madison (1803):

- Established the doctrine of Judicial Review
- The first time the court declared a law or act of government unconstitutional
- This secured judicial review as a powerful tool for checks and balances.

In this case, Marbury sued Madison for an appointment as a federal judge. It was the first time the court declared a law “unconstitutional”.
McCulloch v. Maryland (1819)

- This established the doctrine of implied powers for the federal government – the formation of the National Bank.
- Powers that seem “necessary and proper” as related to specific powers granted in the Constitution are supported.
- Specifically in this case, the different levels of government are not permitted to tax the other levels of government.
Gibbons v. Ogden (1824)

- The court ruled on interstate commerce.
- Established the court’s authority to mediate disagreements between branches of government, levels of government, and competing business interests.

This case involved competing claims of rival steam ship companies on the Hudson River.
The decisions of the John Marshall Court helped to strengthen the power of the national government, while defining the judiciary as an equal branch!