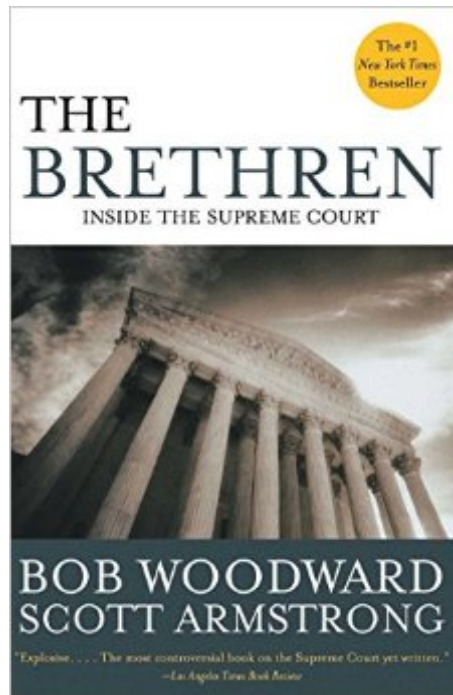




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# **The Brethren: Inside The Supreme Court**



## Synopsis

The Brethren is the first detailed behind-the-scenes account of the Supreme Court in action. Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong have pierced its secrecy to give us an unprecedented view of the Chief and Associate Justices—maneuvering, arguing, politicking, compromising, and making decisions that affect every major area of American life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Explosive...The most controversial book on the Supreme Court yet written." -- Los Angeles Times Book Review  
"Fascinating. The pace is swift, with details that rivet the attention." -- The Washington Post Book World  
"A provocative book about a hallowed institution...It is the most comprehensive inside story ever written of the most important court in the world. For this reason alone it is required reading." -- BusinessWeek  
"It is to the credit of Woodward and Armstrong that they were willing -- and able -- to shatter this conspiracy of silence. It is certainly in the highest tradition of investigative journalism." -- Saturday Review  
"One hell of a reporting achievement." -- The Village Voice  
"The year's best political book." -- New York Post

Bob Woodward is an associate editor at The Washington Post, where he has worked for forty-four years. He has shared in two Pulitzer Prizes, first for The Washington Post's coverage of the Watergate scandal, and later for coverage of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He has authored or coauthored twelve #1 national nonfiction bestsellers. He has two daughters, Tali and Diana, and lives in Washington, DC, with his wife, writer Elsa Walsh. Scott Armstrong is executive director of the

Information Trust. A former reporter for The Washington Post, he founded the National Security Archive and was a senior investigator for the Senate Watergate Committee.

It was certainly an eye opener as far as Supreme Court Justices are concerned. I was raised to think of these men as something godlike. Well, I guess that's just one big fat myth. They can be so petty and childish at times, it was embarrassing to read. And, I really never paid much attention to the Burger court, but wish I had. He was really a piece of work. No wonder history has treated him so unkindly. He and Nixon were two of a kind. Terrific read and at least we know these guys are human after all and more than just a little flawed.

Fascinating, fast paced and full of insights, it's easy to see why *The Brethren* remains in print decades after its original release, and why it continues to earn praise to this day. Woodward and Armstrong exemplify the highest standards and efforts of investigative journalism, conveying a vivid account of the events and personalities of America's peak, and usually secretive, legal institution, during a period of significant political and social upheaval. Their account begins with the closing days of the Warren court, hailed as a liberal period for the court's jurisprudence. In the White House, Richard Nixon sees Chief Justice Earl Warren's retirement as an opportunity to begin hosing down what he perceives as rampant, bleeding-heart liberalism, appointing Warren Burger as Chief. Subsequent Nixon appointments would strengthen the conservative wing of the Court, but as *The Brethren* reveals, not all goes according to plan. The book traces then traces the first six and a half years of the Burger Court. Along the way their account is one of a Chief who more often follows than guides the court, of processes within the court that raise serious questions about the carriage of justice and of politics and personalities playing a greater role than perhaps many realised. Woodward and Armstrong's writing covers significant ground, the structure and pace are both excellent and the injection of humour and the personalities of the various justices along the way speaks not only to their talent in writing this book, but also to the fine detail captured in their research for it. Accounts of the Supreme Court remain rare, and accounts of this quality rarer still. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend *The Brethren*

This is an excellent book and very thought provoking. It is a slow read because of the dryness of the material, but the characters are well defined and it is an inside look at how the Court functioned at the time Burger was Chief Justice, and Nixon was President. It is interesting that of the 3 sections of our government, we're all pretty familiar with how the President and the Congress operate, but

mostly in the dark about the operations of the Supreme Court. I really enjoyed the book and feel like I have a better understanding of the Court's procedures.

I did not learn much from this book that I had not already discovered in reading some of the biographies of Supreme Court Justices. Albeit, the language used in this book was to imply more discord, and dysfunction than there apparently was. The book covers the 1969 to 1975 terms. Woodward recounts isolated details of the resolution of a number of cases, the authors purport to expose the "decision making" of an institution which has managed to "escape public scrutiny." The book is packaged as a sort of political consumer's fact finding expedition. The authors, of course, did not interview any of the Justices, they interviewed legal reporters covering the Supreme Court, and a few former law clerks, waiters, drivers, etc. therefore, in legal terms the book is mainly double, triple, even quadruple hearsay. There are constant references to the Warren Court, which became apparent to me, that the authors were attempting to compare Chief Justice Burger with the former Chief Justice Earl Warren. Burger is portrayed as a pompous, "uncontrollable, blustering braggart" with no redeeming intellect, despised by nearly every member of the court. The authors portrayed the Justices as follows: Blackmun is weak, Marshall is lazy, Rehnquist is casual and sneaky, Douglas is inflexible, Stewart, Powell, White and Brennan are controlling, only Stevens, new to the court, escapes unscathed. In a court composed of nine jurists, a group compromise would seem to be a sine qua non in a democracy. Due process requires certain expediency, and it is doubtful that any judge has ever agreed totally with the opinions in which he simply "joins." Compromise is an inherent part of agreement. The conclusion of the book required reading between the lines: the text seems calculated to inspire cynicism. The book's tendency to discourage confidence in the system cannot be denied. The revelation proffered in this book of a myopic recitation of educated disagreement, under the guise of educating the public about its highest institution's "decision-making." What they have written is likely to create public disrespect for the legal system. I was extremely disappointed with this book and with Woodward. I read this as an e-book on the Kindle app for my iPad.

Written by Bob Woodward, one of the era's most celebrated investigatory reporters, with inside help from Justice Potter Stewart, the book takes you behind the scenes of the Burger Court through the Nixon and Ford presidencies. Insights into the politics, personalities and proclivities of the justices

are both amusing and enlightening. Even though the book is now nearly 40 years old, and all the protagonists have passed on (excepting Justice Stevens), the writing is engaging, the issues timeless, and the insights unique. If you are into politics or court history, this book is a must read.

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