

The United States Justice System: Mock Trials

Characters/Roles:

- Hon. Matthew Larson, Presiding Magistrate
- Prosecuting Attorneys (1-3)
- Defense Attorneys (1-3)
- Accusers and Accused
- Witnesses and Experts

Court Procedure:

1. Opening arguments
 - a. Prosecution
 - b. Defense
 2. Accusation is made
 3. Prosecution calls Accusing witness
 - a. Defense cross examines
 - b. Prosecution can redirect; Defense can redirect
 4. Defense calls Accused witness (defendant)
 - a. Prosecution cross examines
 - b. Defense can redirect; Prosecution can redirect
- *Continue this step until both Prosecution and Defense have called all of their witnesses
5. Prosecution calls Accused (defendant) to the stand
 - a. Prosecution cross examines
 - b. Defense can redirect; Prosecution can redirect
 6. Closing arguments
 - a. Prosecution
 - b. Defense
 7. Magisterial deliberation
 8. Verdict

Written Assignment:

Each student will need to complete a written portion of this activity (typed and double-spaced), and they are as follows:

Prosecution & Defense – The lawyers acting as prosecution and defense can work together to prepare opening and closing statements. Your opening statement should be a 1-2 paragraph statement about the trial in general in order to set the stage; your closing should be a 30 second to 1 minute conclusion that dramatizes why the magistrate should rule in favor of your clients. Each lawyer must also prepare a set of interview questions used to question witnesses during the testimony. Lawyers should evenly divide their clients between themselves, but should also be prepared to help their fellow lawyers with questioning of clients when needed.

Witnesses/Expert – Each witness must assist their lawyers in preparing evidence for the trial. As a witness, you must provide at least one piece of substantial evidence or testimony to help their lawyers prove their case for or against you (this could be a “painting”, a journal entry, etc.). Each witness will also need to write a 1-2 paragraph testimony detailing your statements before the court. You will not read this testimony to the court! You must present your case as if you were actually testifying.

Accused (Defendant) – You must assist the defense in preparing evidence for the trial. As a defendant, you must provide at least one piece of substantial evidence or testimony to help prove your innocence. You will also need to write a 1-2 paragraph testimony detailing your statements before the court. You will not read this testimony to the court! You must present your case as if you were actually testifying.

Grading:

- Research and Trial Preparation in the Classroom (50 pts)
- Everyone must participate in preparing for the trial. If you are caught tweeting, snapping, or inappropriately using your class time you will receive an automatic zero.
- Presentation (100 pts)
 1. Does your presentation reflect knowledge of the situation? (10 pts)
 2. Do you play your part adequately – i.e., fulfill your duties in the court proceedings? (40 pts)
 3. Does your presentation demonstrate that you have carefully considered the evidence? (10 pts)
 4. Does your presentation demonstrate adequate preparation? (20 pts)
 5. Did you come dressed for the part – i.e. courtroom attire, costumes, etc.? (20 pts)
- Evidence (50 pts) – Due at the end of the trial

TOTAL = 200 PTS