

# The Law



A HOT TOPICS NEWSPAPER SUPPLEMENT FROM



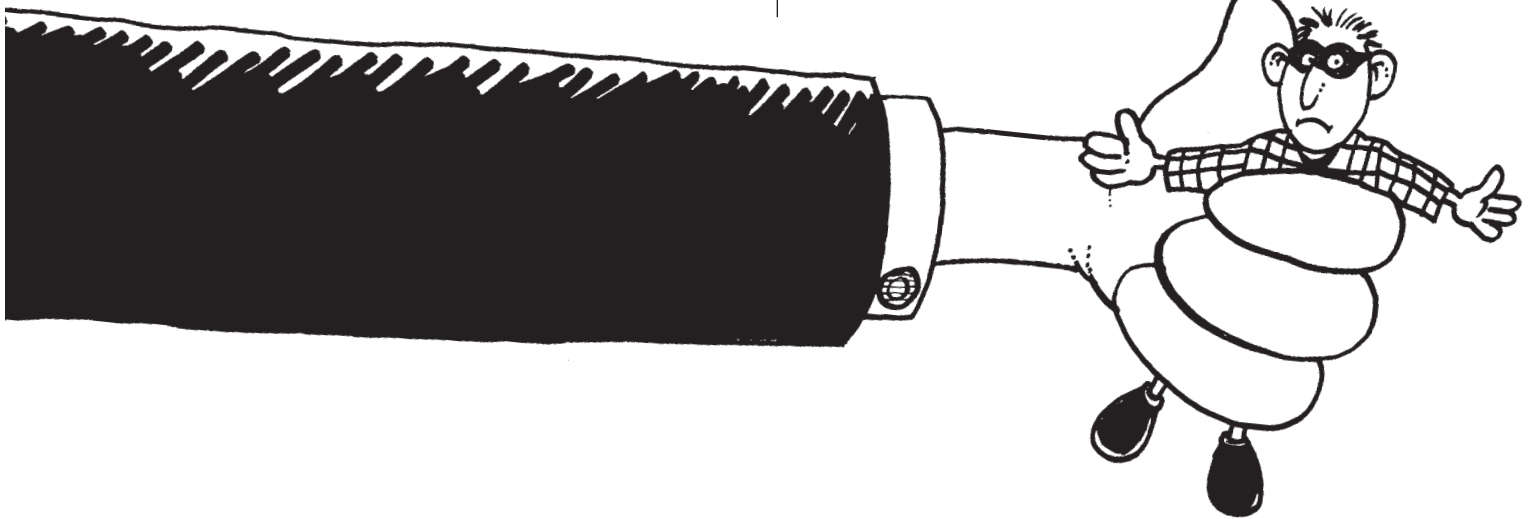
## “No one can escape the long arm of the law.”

That saying once meant anyone who broke the law would get caught. Today it means much more. Laws touch every one of us, every day.

There are laws about the way we behave, the houses we live in and the schools we attend. There are laws about the food we eat, the TV programs we watch, even the air we breathe.

In the United States, most laws are meant to prevent problems, making life better for everyone. We have laws to protect us from unfair treatment and from unsafe places to work. We have laws designed to shield us from violence. Our laws also give us ways to fight for our rights if we feel something wrong has been done to us.

In this newspaper supplement you will find out about our laws. You will see how the laws we have in our country make the United States different from any other country in the world.



## What is a law?

You know what rules are. Children are taught to obey the rules parents make at home and the rules teachers make at school.

Humans have been making rules ever since the first cave people started living together in groups. Rules are a guide for group members on how to behave so that everyone in the group can enjoy safety and order.

A law is a special kind of rule. Laws are rules made by the official leaders of a society to guide the way everyone behaves.

When kings and queens were in charge, they made the laws for

everyone in the kingdom. Nobody could complain, or else!

In our country, the laws are made by leaders we choose in elections. In a city, the city council makes the laws. In a state, the governor and legislature make the laws. In our nation, the Congress and President make the laws.

If the leaders we choose don't make laws we like, we can elect new leaders.

### Think about it

If you lived alone, and never had any contact with other people, would you need any rules?

### Try this

Imagine either your home or your school with no rules. Draw a picture to show what you think that would be like.



# There ought to be a law

Rules are called laws when they are made by leaders we elect. What would happen if we had no laws?

The cartoon on this page shows an imaginary place that has no laws. People can do whatever they like. As you can tell, this town would probably be a dangerous place to live.

Suppose you were in charge of making laws for this town. Most local laws are made to protect people's health, safety and property.

## Try this

Look at the cartoon.

- Do you see anything unhealthy going on? Write a health law for this town.
- Do you see anything unsafe going on? Write a safety law for this town.
- Do you see any damage to the town's property? Write a law that would protect public property.
- Compare your laws with others written by your classmates.



# What if people don't obey?

What happens if you get caught breaking a rule at home or at school?

You get punished, right? Your parent might take away a privilege you enjoy. Your teacher might say you have to miss recess that day.

Punishing people who break a rule is an important way to enforce the rule — to make people obey it.

The special rules called laws have to be enforced, too. The elected leaders who make laws also decide how severe the punishment should be for breaking each law. But they don't enforce the laws themselves — they rely on police officers and courts to do that.

Police officers try to catch law-breakers. In court, a judge or a jury will decide if and how the person should be punished.

## Think about it

What should be the punishment for someone who breaks one of the laws you wrote for the cartoon town above?

## Where do our laws come from?

The government and laws we have were set up by America's early leaders when they wrote the U.S. Constitution. This document limits the power of the government and gives ordinary people many freedoms and rights.

The Constitution says anyone accused of a crime can be judged by a group of peers; that is, ordinary people like him or her. This group is called a jury. The right to a trial by jury makes our system of laws one of the fairest in the world.

### The Magna Carta

The leaders who wrote the U.S. Constitution got the trial by jury idea and many others from an earlier document called the Magna Carta. It was written in England in the year 1215. A group of noblemen put a sword to the throat of the cruel

and greedy King John. They forced him to agree to limits on the power of leaders — even kings! It said ordinary people should have rights.

### The Declaration of Independence

When early American leaders wrote our Declaration of Independence, they said all people were "created equal." They said everyone had the rights to life, liberty and happiness. And they said citizens should have a say in what laws are made.

We will explore the idea of equality on page 7.

### The U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights

Some early leaders thought the U.S. Constitution did not protect ordinary people enough. So 10 new sections, called amendments, were added.

These first 10 amendments are called the Bill of Rights. The First Amendment says we all have the freedom to choose a religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to meet together and discuss any issue.

We will explore freedom of speech and freedom of the press on page 5.

### Try this

You have just settled with a group of space travelers on Lodestar 300, a planet 2,000,000 miles from Earth. Color in the picture of this new space nation. On the lines below, list five things that will be against the law on Lodestar.

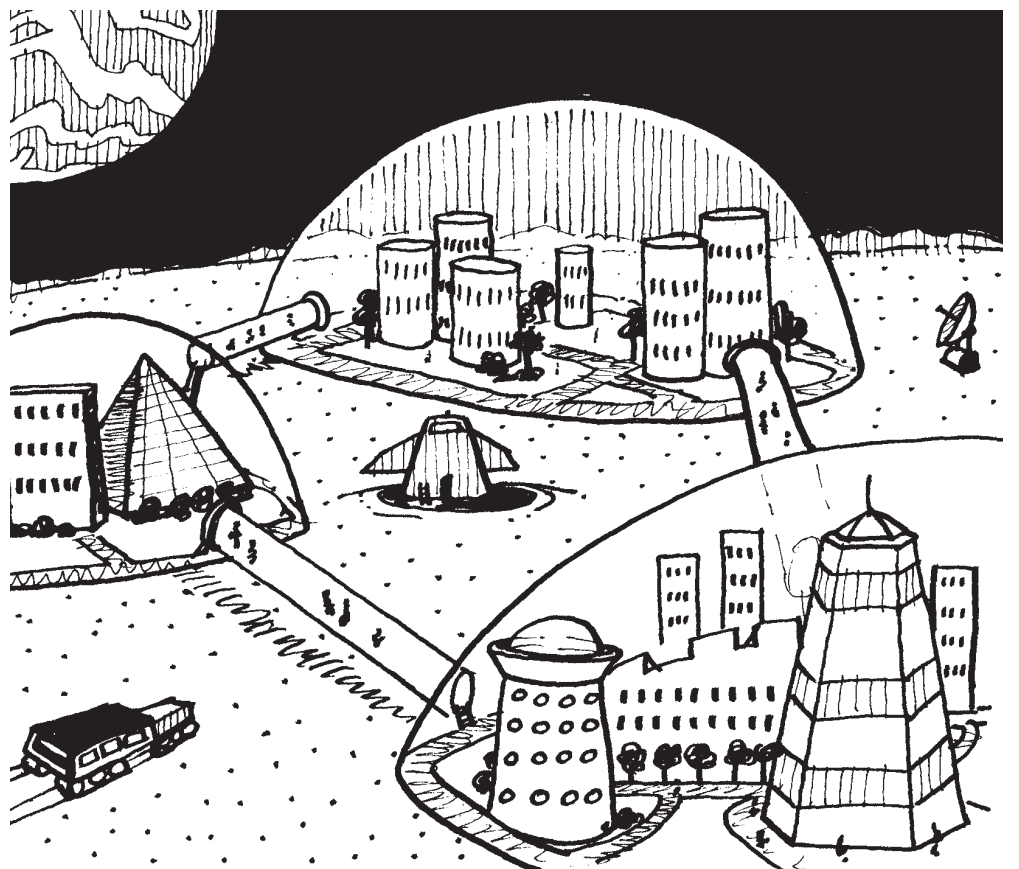
No \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_



## Rights and responsibilities

America is called “the land of the free” because our laws give us many rights.

In some countries, ordinary people are not allowed to speak out against their rulers. Our laws say we have the right to speak out. We have “freedom of speech.”

In some countries, rulers can prevent people from knowing about certain things. The rulers decide what information can be printed in books and newspapers or broadcast on TV or radio. Our laws say we have “freedom of the press.” No one controls the information we can give out or get.

Wonderful as our rights are, we do have to make sure we use them responsibly so that we don’t hurt other people. Remember, they have rights, too!

On this page, let’s explore freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

## Damon's protest puts free speech to the test

Think about rights and responsibilities as you read this story about Damon Carter, a sixth grader in a public school.

*Damon Carter is a very good student who finishes his work on time, helps the teacher and never misbehaves in class. One day when there is a substitute teacher, three children in the class act very badly. The principal comes into the room because of the noise. He does not know who has caused the trouble, so he takes away the recess privileges of the whole class for one week. Damon feels this is unfair. He decides to speak out against the principal’s action.*

### Try this

Damon chose to protest in three ways (see list at right). Decide whether he acted responsibly. Circle your answer. Be prepared to discuss your reasons with the class.



### Without a free press, what would you miss?

Suppose you lived in a country that did not have freedom of the press. The rulers could choose to ban any kind of information they didn’t like. Suppose that the leaders decided sports involving balls were getting too popular. They banned all words and pictures about these sports.

### Try this

Look at the sports section in today’s newspaper and cross out all the articles and photos that would be banned.

1. Damon walked in front of the school carrying a sign telling people the principal was unfair.

**RESPONSIBLE    NOT RESPONSIBLE**

2. Damon asked permission to speak at a school assembly about how unfair the principal is.

**RESPONSIBLE    NOT RESPONSIBLE**

3. Damon stood up at half-time at a school basketball game and gave a speech about the principal.

**RESPONSIBLE    NOT RESPONSIBLE**

### Think about it

If you were Damon, how would you choose to speak out responsibly?

## Is it fair?

Rules are meant to prevent a problem or to solve a problem in a way that is fair to everyone.

Sometimes, though, a rule can turn out to be unfair in some situations. It can have effects it was not meant to have. Then the rule has to be changed so it will do only what it was meant to do. Let's look at an example.

**Rule:** No leaving the classroom.

**Reason for the rule:** Too many students have been found in the hallways, walking around the building. The principal is worried that someone might get hurt.

Four situations come up that test the fairness of this new rule. Read about these situations below. As you read, decide for yourself whether you would let that child leave the classroom. Circle **YES** or **NO**. Then write your reason.

### Try this

After you have answered the questions below, pretend your school is a state and your class is the elected state legislature that makes its laws. The principal, your state's governor, wants "no leaving the classroom" to be a state law.

As a class, try to rewrite this rule into a law that will be fair to all.



1. Angelo asks to return an overdue book to the library.

YES                  NO

Because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



3. Donna wants to comb her hair because she's going to see David at lunch.

YES                  NO

Because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Luther wants to call home for permission to go on a school trip.

YES                  NO

Because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



4. Keisha asks to go to the nurse's office because she cut her hand badly.

YES                  NO

Because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Law word jumble

Unscramble the law words at right and use the circled letters to spell out a word below that describes something valuable that you have.

\_\_\_\_\_

g l a e l    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_        \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_  
 e o l s v        \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_  
 m e i r c    \_\_\_\_\_        \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_  
 a r l t i        \_\_\_\_\_        \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_  
 s l h p e        \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_

## Marching toward equality

In the United States, laws are supposed to treat everyone equally, or the same. Even so, at times in our past some groups of people have received worse treatment than others. Laws have given certain people fewer privileges because of their skin color, sex, age, religion, or language.

Because many people in this country used their freedom to speak out and protest unfair treatment, most of these laws have been changed or eliminated. New laws have been made to try to stop discrimination. The laws we have today make equal treatment a reality for more people than ever before.

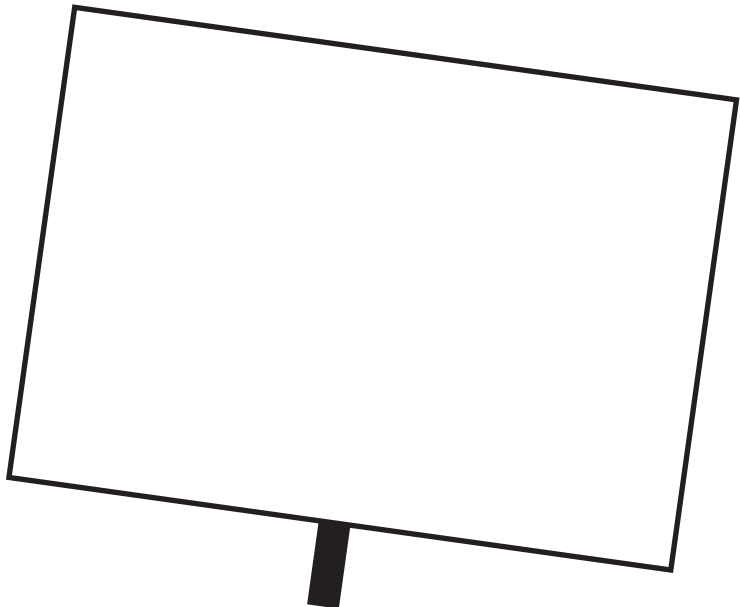
### Try this

Look through the newspaper to see if you can find any photos of people holding protest signs. What do the signs say? Do you agree or disagree with the protesters?



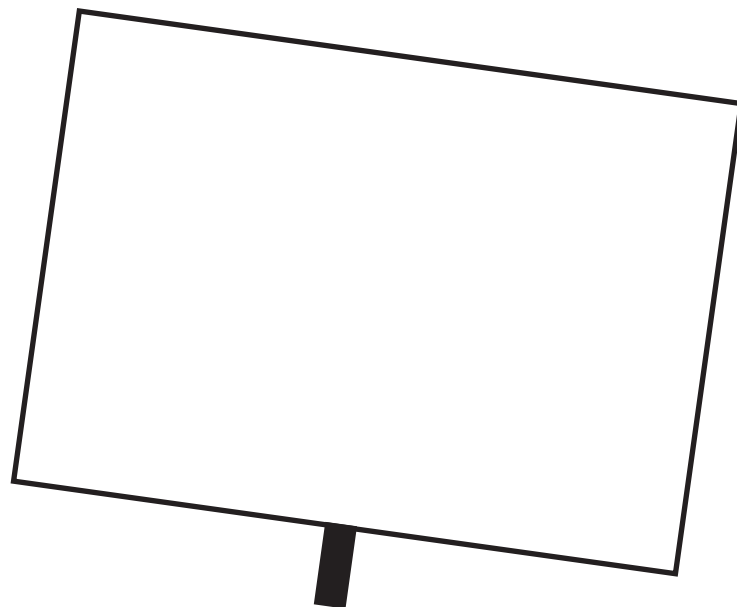
### Try this

Until 1920, women did not have the right to vote. The women who spoke out and protested against this unfair treatment were called suffragists. Pretend you are a suffragist. Write a message on the poster you will carry in a protest march:



### Try this

Until the 1960s, African Americans were often kept out of white neighborhoods, schools and businesses. They were often forced to eat and travel separate from whites. Pretend you are joining a civil rights march to protest this unfair treatment. Write a message on the poster you will carry.



# These crimes will sound familiar

Many characters in fairy tales, nursery rhymes or children's movies have committed crimes or been in trouble with the law.

## Try this

Read the crimes described on the facing page. Each crime described has a number from 1 to 8. Match the crime with the picture that fits it by writing the correct number in the # box.

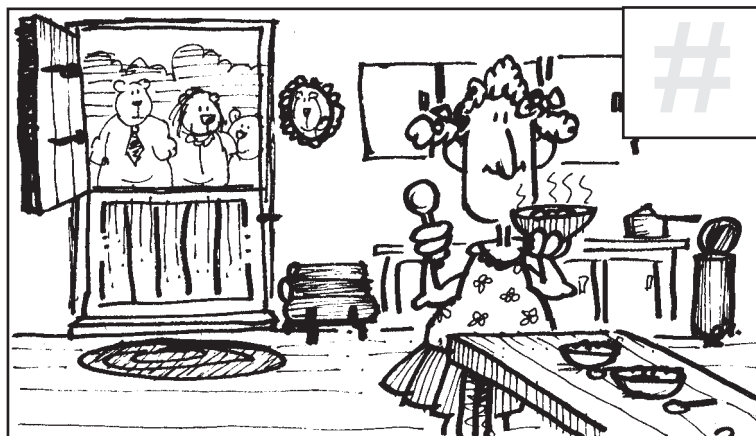
## Try this

What "crimes" have been committed? For extra credit, look up the definitions of the crimes listed here, then decide which crimes were committed in each case described on pages 8-9.

- attempted murder*
- breaking and entering*
- burglary*
- child abuse*
- conspiracy to commit murder*
- cruelty to animals*
- disturbing the peace*
- larceny*
- murder*
- negligence*
- robbery*
- trespassing*
- vandalism*

## Try this

Can you find an article in today's newspaper that involves one of the crimes listed here? What is it about?

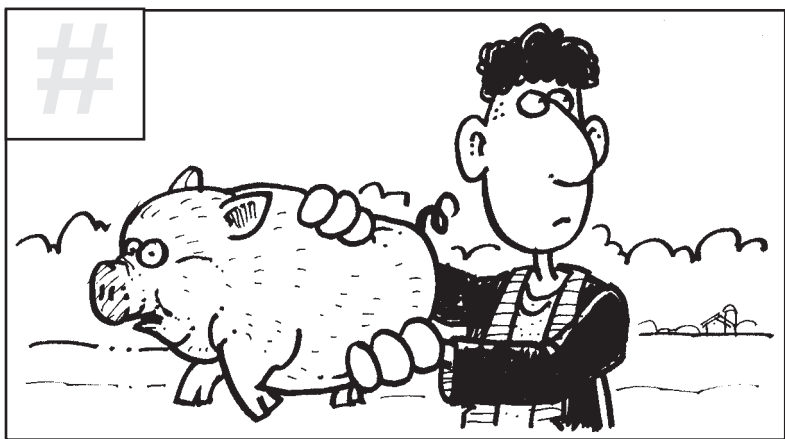




1. A young girl was walking in the woods. She was tired and stopped at a house. She knocked but no one answered. She opened the door and went in. She ate food, broke furniture, messed up the beds.



2. A young prince was being trained to be king. But his evil uncle wanted to be king himself. The uncle pushed the real king into a stampede and blamed the prince for the king's death. The prince ran away.



3. A young boy was seen running down the street carrying a pig. Someone else said the pig was his. The pig was eaten and the boy was beaten.



4. A woman had many children and a small, funny-shaped house. She didn't know what to do. At the end of the day she gave the children some broth for supper and beat them all soundly and put them to bed.

5. A boy was supposed to help his mother by selling her cow, but traded the cow for seeds that grew a giant plant. He climbed up to find a giant's home. He took valuable things and brought them back to his mother.

6. A cruel and selfish woman stole 99 spotted puppies. She planned to have them killed so she could make coats from their skins. The mother and father of some of the puppies tracked them down and saved them.

7. A boastful and evil queen grew jealous of her stepdaughter. She told her huntsman to kill the beautiful girl, but the huntsman helped her escape. The girl hid in the woods with the help of a little group of miners. The queen tracked her down and tried to kill the girl herself.

8. An outlaw lived in the forest with a band of merry men. They stole things from rich people and gave them to people who did not have much money. The sheriff and king tried to capture them.

## “If you do that, I’ll sue!”

You probably have heard that said. Maybe you wonder what it has to do with law.

When we talk about laws — people obeying laws and breaking laws — we tend to think of crime. But **criminal law** is only part of our legal system. Another important part deals with disputes between people. This part is called **civil law**.

A civil case starts with a decision by somebody to **sue** somebody else. The person writes up a document called a **lawsuit**, usually with help from a lawyer.

The lawsuit describes how the person feels he or she was treated unfairly. A judge or jury decides if there was unfair treatment, and if so, what should be done about it.

### Keeping out of court

Lawsuits are troublesome and expensive, so most people will sue only as “the last resort.”

One way people try to prevent disputes from

turning into lawsuits is by writing a **contract** ahead of time.

Writing a contract is like making a deal — “You do this, I’ll do that.” The contract states what each side is expected to do. When a person signs a contract, he or she agrees to do what is expected.

Of course contracts can’t prevent every possible dispute. And people sometimes disagree whether both sides lived up to their part of the deal. So contract disputes sometimes become lawsuits anyway.

### Try this

Here’s a familiar story about a contract dispute:

*A poor girl wants to find a way to marry the prince. A little man says he will teach her how to make gold from straw if she promises to give him her first baby. She agrees.*

1. You are a lawyer. Fill in the blanks in the contract below and have the two people sign it. The girl makes the gold and marries the prince. *When the baby comes, she refuses to give it up. The little man sues.*
2. Your class is the jury. Do you make the girl give up her baby? If not, what penalty should she pay for breaking the contract?

## Contract

I, \_\_\_\_\_,

being of sound mind and body, do humbly agree to

\_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_,

being of sound mind and body, do humbly agree to

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ in the year \_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

## Is it a lie, or a different truth?

When judges or juries decide a case, they have to decide who is telling the truth. That can be very difficult.

Even if no one is lying, the story of what happened and why is often quite different when told by different people. That's because the way each person sees *one* experience is based on *all* of the person's experiences in life. Experiences give each person a unique **point of view**.

As you read the following story of Joey Wolfcryer, think about his point of view.

### The Shepherd Who Cried Wolf

*As told from the point of view of Joey Wolfcryer*

Let me introduce myself. I am Joey Wolfcryer. My job is to keep watch over a large flock of sheep just outside my village. All my life I have been the most responsible shepherd boy in the area.

I *had* an excellent reputation.

Because I have worked so hard at becoming the best shepherd possible, I did miss some of the classes that were taught in school. One of the classes I missed many times was Animal Identification.

Of course, these were all excused absences. All the people of the village, including my teacher, wanted me to concentrate on watching sheep.

Then the people of my village accused me of crying "Wolf!" to trick them and scare them as a joke. They said I was irresponsible.

But I *did* think I saw a wolf! One very dark evening, I saw something in the woods near my sheep. Although I had not gone to many Animal Identification classes, this animal didn't look like a dirty sheep to me.

My shepherd's manual clearly states that if a shepherd sees something that looks like a wolf, he should cry, "Wolf!" Since the animal I saw might have been a wolf, I know I did the right thing.

The people of the village were angry when they came running and found me laughing with no wolf in sight. This was just nervous laughter. Who *wouldn't* be nervous when a wolf is around?

Now my reputation is ruined.



*The original Joey Wolfcryer story was written by Anne Spector.*

### Try this

Discuss these questions with your class.

1. Do you think Joey is telling the truth from his own point of view?
2. Was anything about Joey's story hard to believe?
3. If you were on a jury deciding this case, would you find Joey guilty of crying wolf?

### Document match-up

Draw a line connecting a document in the left column with a phrase in the right column. Hint: review p. 4.

**Magna Carta**

set up America's government and laws

**Declaration of Independence**

added ten freedoms to the U.S. Constitution

**U.S. Constitution**

said all people are created equal

**Bill of Rights**

set up right to a trial by jury in year 1215

## Some laws sound silly

Rules, and the special rules called laws, usually are made for a good reason. They are meant to prevent a problem, or to solve a problem.

Problems may be different in one place than they are in another. Problems also change over time. That's why some laws seem silly to people who don't live in the time or place in which the law was made.

### Try this

On this page are some actual laws compiled by author Dick Hyman for his book, *Crazy Laws*. Some of these laws are still in effect. What problem do you think each of the laws here is trying to solve or prevent? Write your answer on the lines.

*Normal, Illinois, had a law making it illegal to make faces at dogs.*



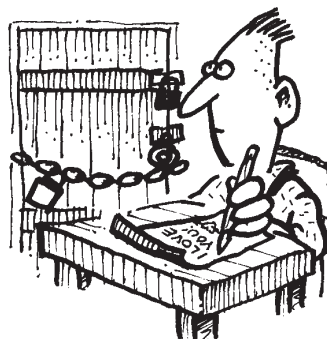
Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

*Kansas had a law making it illegal to eat snakes on Sunday.*



Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

*Connecticut had a law making it illegal for a man to write love letters to a girl whose mother had forbidden him to see her.*



Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

*Rumford, Maine, had a law making it illegal to bite your landlord.*



Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

*Alaska had a law making it illegal to look at a moose from an airplane.*



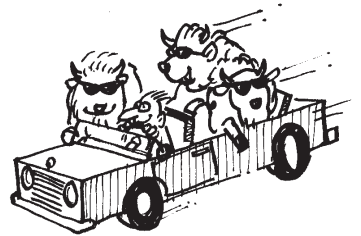
Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

*Missouri had a law making it illegal to carry an uncaged bear down a highway.*



Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

*Newton, Kansas, had a law forbidding the driving of buffalo through the streets.*



Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

*Monroe, Utah had a law requiring that daylight be visible between dancing couples.*



Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

### Think about it

Our country has a system for making new laws. We also have a system for changing or getting rid of the laws we have made. Why do laws sometimes have to be changed or abolished?

## “If you survive this trial, you must be guilty.”

Before there were laws giving an accused person the right to a trial by jury, a person’s guilt or innocence was sometimes decided in an unfair, unjust way.

In old England, for example, an accused person could be given a TRIAL BY ORDEAL. This “trial” exposed the person to pain and danger.

One kind of ordeal was a TRIAL BY FIRE, in which the accused had to walk across red-hot coals. If burned, the person was guilty; if not burned, innocent.

In a TRIAL BY COLD WATER, the accused was tied up and placed in a tub of water that people said prayers over. A person who sank was innocent because the “holy” water would accept a “pure” person. A person who floated was guilty.

As you can see, a trial by ordeal was a “no win” situation for the accused. To prove innocence, a person had to risk death or serious injury. And sometimes just surviving was seen as the sign of guilt, so the person was put to death anyway!

## Try this Trial by candy

### Materials needed

- Hard candy in a variety of colors (“Lawbreakers” work best!)

In your class, conduct a mini trial by ordeal. Follow these directions step by step.



### Step 1: The accused

Teacher announces that she heard several students making nasty remarks about her while her back was turned. To find out which students are guilty, she will charge them all with the crime and put the entire class on trial.

### Step 2: The trial

Each student is ordered to choose one colored candy from a bag. Students are ordered to place the candy in their mouths and hold it there for one minute without biting on it.

### Step 3: The verdict

At the end of one minute, students are ordered to stick out their tongues. Anyone whose tongue turned a dark color is pronounced guilty as charged because a dark tongue proves that evil words have come out of their mouths.

### Step 4: Reaction

Discuss the fairness of this trial.

## Think about it

What would be a better way to handle the teacher’s accusation?

## Credits and Acknowledgements

Writers: Debby Carroll, Anne Spector  
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### Answer to p. 6 word jumble

legal helps  
 trial crime  
 solve

Something valuable that you have: **rights**

### Answer to p. 11 match-up

**Magna Carta**  
 set up right to a trial by jury in year 1215

**Declaration of Independence**  
 said all people are created equal

**U.S. Constitution**  
 set up America’s government and laws

**Bill of Rights**  
 added ten freedoms to the U.S. Constitution

# A mock trial for you to try: Is Scar guilty in the death of Mufasa?

In the United States, every trial must be run in the same way. To see how a real trial is run, let's put on a mock trial with your class.

We'll borrow a situation from Disney's movie, *THE LION KING*. If needed, review the movie's characters and plot in a class discussion. Here's the situation:

King Mufasa is dead. His brother Scar is accused of murder. Scar has pleaded "not guilty." He says the king's death was an accident caused by the foolish behavior of Prince Simba.

Students will be needed to take all of the following roles:

- The **defendant**, Scar, who is accused of a crime
- The **defense lawyer**, who takes Scar's side during the trial and tries to prove he is innocent or that there is "reasonable doubt" of his guilt
- The **prosecutor**, a lawyer who represents the public and tries to prove that Scar is guilty
- The **judge**, who makes sure the lawyers follow all court rules
- The **witnesses**, who may be asked to tell the jury what they know about the case; including
  - Nala, Simba's girlfriend
  - Pumbaa, a warthog who is Simba's friend
  - Rafiki, a baboon who was the king's advisor
  - Sarabi, Mufasa's wife, the queen
  - Shenzi, Banzai and Ed, three hyenas
  - Simba, Mufasa's son, the prince
  - Timon, a meerkat who is Simba's friend
  - Zazu, a bird who was the king's assistant
- The **jury**, who will listen to all the arguments and decide whether Scar is guilty (any student who doesn't have another role should join the jury)



*Did Scar have a reason to resent Simba?*

## Step 1: Opening statements

Each side gets to make a short speech to the jury, called an **opening statement**. The **prosecutor** goes first, then the **defense attorney**.

The prosecutor should summarize why Scar is guilty. Help the prosecutor by writing down two points to make in this speech. Consider what was said and done before and after Mufasa's death.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Scar's defense lawyer should summarize why the jury should conclude that Scar is innocent. Help the defense by writing down two points to make to show Mufasa's death could be either Simba's fault or an accident.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

# YOU BE THE JUDGE

## Step 2: Question the witnesses

The prosecutor and the defense lawyer get to bring in witnesses who can tell the jury something about the case. The things a witness says are called **testimony**.

Each side also gets to question the other side's witnesses. This is called **cross examination**.

Name two witnesses the prosecution should call; note how each can help prove Scar is guilty.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Name two witnesses the defense should call; note how each can help prove Scar is innocent.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 3: Closing statements

Each side gets to make another short speech to the jury, called a **closing statement**. Again, the **prosecutor** goes first, then the **defense attorney**.

In this speech, each side tries to make the jury feel sure that everything its witnesses said is true. Each tries to make the jury feel unsure whether the testimony of the other side's witnesses was truthful.

Write two things that could be said about a witness that might make the jury unsure he or she is telling the truth.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



*Had Simba done anything foolish before?*



*Would Scar have been able to trick his young nephew?*

## Step 4: The jury decides

The jury goes off by itself to discuss the trial in private and make a decision, which is called a **verdict**. Jurors must decide whether they have a **reasonable doubt** that Scar is guilty. Having doubt means not being sure.

If the jurors have any doubt, their verdict must be **not guilty** and Scar must go free. If they have no doubt, their verdict should be **guilty** and Scar will be punished.



*Can a jury be sure that friends will tell the truth about each other?*

## Step 5: The judge sentences

If Scar is judged guilty, the judge decides what his punishment, or "sentence," will be.

## Step 6: Class discussion

Was the trial fair? Does everyone agree with the jury's decision? Does everyone agree that the punishment fits the crime?

## Word Find Puzzle

See if you can find these nine words hidden in the puzzle at right. They may be written side-to-side, up-and-down, or on a slant. Circle each word you find.

- CIVIL*
- COURT*
- CRIMINAL*
- ENFORCE*
- EQUALITY*
- FAIRNESS*
- FREEDOM*
- LAW*
- RIGHTS*



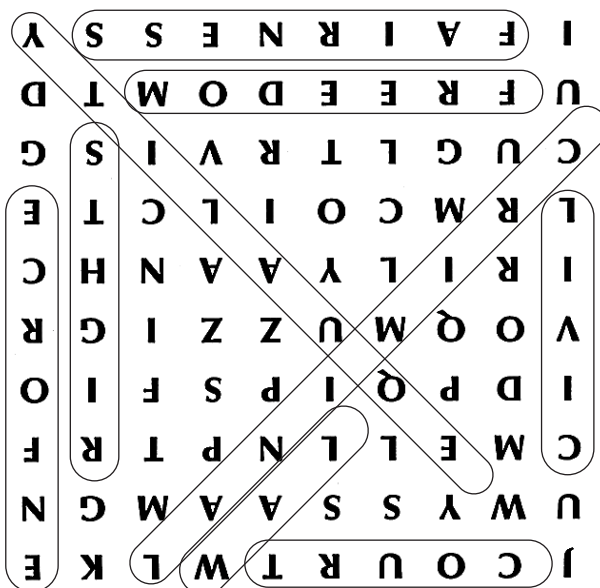
## Front page law

Law makes news in many ways, every day. Read the headlines on the front page of today's newspaper. As a class, make a list of how many of the top stories involve law in some way. Be

alert: It may not be a direct way.

When you have finished your list, rate the laws involved in order of importance to you in your life. Then write a short paragraph explaining why the law you rated number one is most important.

## Answer to Word Find puzzle



## Legal snapshot

Here's a game you can play with your whole class. Look through all the photographs in today's paper. Pick a photo and see how many laws and rules you can list just from what is shown in the picture.

For example, a picture of a child crossing a crosswalk would involve laws asking drivers to stop at red lights, or to stop for people walking across the street. But if a car is in the picture, you could also list some laws about cars and driving.

See who can come up with the longest list for a single photo.