

Wolf v. California

A Moot Court Activity

Materials

- [Welcome to Law School PowerPoint](#)
- Handout A: “Wolf Seeks Justice at Supreme Court”
 - One per student
- Handout B: Preparing for Court*
 - One per student
- Handout C: Moot Court Reflection
 - One per student

*Note:

You can use Handout B to separate your class into three groups: Wolf’s attorneys, state attorneys, and justices. Print Handout B on different colored paper and ask your students to form groups based on their handout color.



Overview

In this moot court activity, based on the story of the Three Little Pigs, the wolf is appealing his conviction for manslaughter of Little Pig Two. Students will read a news article explaining why Mr. Wolf is appealing his case to the U.S. Supreme Court. Next, working in groups, students will act as attorneys and justices to prepare for a mock Supreme Court case. Finally, students will act out a Supreme Court oral argument, with attorneys for each side arguing their case and the justices making a ruling.

Note: Students will need to be familiar with the story of the “Three Little Pigs.” The story in this activity is based on *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka. We highly recommend reading the book with your students before starting this lesson.

Objectives

Students can:

- Identify key details from a fictional text.
- Explain the role of the appellate court system in the United States.
- Develop an argument based on a given set of facts.
- Deliver an informative presentation.

Procedure

A. Focus Activity

1. Ask your students if they have ever been accused of doing something wrong that they did not do.
2. Ask your students how it made them feel. After listening to a few responses, ask a volunteer to share what they did to prove they had been wrongly accused. If no students share, volunteer a quick story of a time you have been in this situation.
3. Tell your students that in our legal system, we try very hard to make sure people are not punished for a crime they did not commit, but that sometimes a person believes they have been treated unfairly by the court. When that happens, they go to the Appellate Court.

B. Welcome to Law School

1. Tell your students that they are going to learn about how the courts work in the United States.
2. Use the Welcome to Law School presentation to introduce your students to the concept of a trial court and an appellate court.

At the end of the slideshow, there are three comprehension questions for students to answer to “pass the bar.” When you reach each question, pause to give your students time to answer before moving to the next slide for the explanation.

After your students have “passed the bar,” tell them that they will argue their first case: Wolf v. State of California. Tell them it’s a Supreme Court case, which means that a trial and at least one appeal has already taken place. They will be arguing about something that happened during the trial, a problem that the justices, sitting as an appellate court, will need to solve.

C. Preparing for Court

1. Tell your students that to prepare for court, they must first know the facts of the case. They are going to learn these facts by reading a news article. Pass out copies of **Handout A: “Wolf Seeks Justice from Supreme Court”** to each student. Read the article together as a class. After finishing the article, ask your students the following questions:

- Why was Mr. Wolf on trial?
- Why does Mr. Wolf think his trial was unfair?
- Why does the state attorney say Mr. Wolf’s trial WAS fair?

2. Pass out copies of **Handout B: Preparing for Court**. Separate your students into three groups: Mr. Wolf’s attorneys, the state’s attorneys, and the justices.

Tell your students they will use Handout B to help them prepare for the moot court. Review each section of the worksheet:

Section 1: Students should review Handout A and write down the facts they think will be important to the case.

Section 2: Students read through the arguments for both sides of the case, and the suggested questions for the justices.

Section 3: Based on their role, each group decides what they will present during the moot court.

Attorneys: Choose at least three arguments to present. They can be based on the suggestions, or students may come up with their own.

Justices: Brainstorm questions to ask each side, based on the facts of the case and the suggested arguments for each side.

Let students know how much time they have 15 minutes to prepare.

3. After the groups are done preparing their materials, ask each attorney group to choose up to three members to present their case. The remaining members will be responsible for answering questions from the justices. Remind the justices that each student is expected to ask at least one question during the moot court.



D. Conducting the Moot Court

1. Arrange your classroom as shown here:
2. Remind your students that Mr. Wolf's attorneys will present their case first. The attorneys will offer three arguments, but the justices can interrupt at any time to ask a question. After the attorneys answer the question, the presenting attorney should continue their argument. The state's attorneys will present their case in the same manner.
3. When your students are ready, prompt them to present in the following order
 1. Mr. Wolf's attorneys' presentation
 2. State's attorneys' presentation



4. After both presentations are done, ask the justices if they have any further questions to ask the attorneys. If they do, they may ask questions to the attorneys. Give attorneys a reasonable amount of time to answer, probably 30 seconds to a minute.
5. Tell the justices that it is time for them to decide. Tell them they will deliberate by sharing their opinions aloud so the attorneys can hear. Remind them that they do not all have to agree, but they should each express their opinion. Let them know they will have three minutes for deliberation.
6. After the deliberation, tell the justices it is time to vote. By show of hands, ask how many justices rule in favor of Mr. Wolf, then for the state.
7. Announce the court decision by saying

If found in favor of Mr. Wolf: "In the case of Wolf v. California, the court finds that Mr. Wolf did not receive a fair trial. He shall be granted a new trial by the state.

If found in favor of the state: "In the case of Wolf v. California, the court finds that Mr. Wolf did receive a fair trial. He shall serve the remainder of his sentence.

E. Debrief and Reflection

1. Tell your students now that they have gone through the appellate court experience, they will reflect on what they learned.
2. Give each student a copy of Handout 3: Moot Court Reflection. Ask them to fill out the questions based on their experience.
3. When students are finished answering the questions, ask students by show of hands how many of them think Mr. Wolf got a fair trial. Call on a few students to share why they think that. Repeat the process asking who thinks Mr. Wolf did not get a fair trial.
4. Ask for one or more volunteers to share their answer to question 3: "Why is the appellate court system important for people in the United States?"
5. Ask by show of hands how many students feel they know more about the court system than they did before this case.
6. Ask for one or more volunteers to share what they learned.

Central Heights Bugle

Wolf Seeks Justice from Supreme Court

By Lydia Bly



WASHINGTON, D.C. – A year after he was found guilty, Alexander Wolf is appealing his manslaughter conviction to the United States Supreme Court. Wolf claims his right to a fair trial was violated due to a biased jury.

Two years ago, Wolf blew down Little Pig One's straw house and allegedly ate him. Then he allegedly went to Little Pig Two's stick house and blew it down before eating him as well. The police arrested Wolf at the house of Little Pig Three, where Wolf was banging on the door and yelling at Mr. Pig to come outside. Little Pig Three was unharmed. At trial, Wolf was found not guilty in connection with Little Pig One's death. But Wolf was found guilty of manslaughter in connection with Little Pig Two's death.

After the trial, Sugar Plum Fairy, a juror, gave an interview saying that she didn't know if Wolf meant to hurt the pigs, but after he knocked the straw house down, he should have been more careful when he got to the stick house. Wolf was sent to Heights Prison to serve a six-year sentence.





Last year, Rapunzel began filming a documentary based on the case: “The Three Pigs Tragedy.” While interviewing the pigs’ parents, Rapunzel came across a yearbook belonging to Little Pig Two. It contained a photograph of Little Pig Two’s kindergarten class including his teacher: Sugar Plum Fairy.

In a previous appeal, Wolf’s lawyers argued that Sugar Plum Fairy’s relationship with the victim made her biased against their client. “Ms. Fairy should never have been on the jury,” said one of Mr. Wolf’s lawyers. “All Americans have the

right to a fair trial with an impartial jury. We are determined to get Mr. Wolf justice in this case.” An impartial jury is one that does not take sides before hearing all the evidence.

The state’s lawyers have argued that Ms. Fairy was not biased, as she was not aware she had ever met the victim. “Ms. Fairy has taught kindergarten for decades and had not seen the victim in over 20 years. She did not recognize him, and had no bias against Mr. Wolf,” said state attorney Papa Bear. Ms. Fairy added “I have taught many princesses, princes, bears, toads, hens, and pigs. How would I remember one pig from another?”

Pinocchio, another juror from the trial, said, “I became friends with Ms. Fairy during the trial. She never mentioned that she knew Mr. Little Pig Two, but she did talk a lot about how much she loved all her students, past and present.”



People across the country are waiting for the outcome of this case. “Fair trials are a cornerstone of American democracy,” says Cinderella, a civil rights advocate. “People want to know their rights will be protected if they go to court.”

The Supreme Court will hear arguments in the case this week, with a decision to come shortly after. Whether the Court agrees with Mr. Wolf or not, their decision will impact similar cases for years to come.

Preparing for Court

Section 1: Facts of the Case:

1. Mr. Wolf blew down Little Pig Two's house and ate him.
2. Sugar Plum Fairy was Little Pig Two's kindergarten teacher.
3. Sugar Plum Fairy was on the jury that convicted Mr. Wolf of manslaughter.

Based on the news article, what other facts do you think will be important to the case?

Section 2: Arguments and Questions

Arguments for Mr. Wolf:

1. Since Ms. Fairy was Little Pig Two's kindergarten teacher, she probably had a soft spot for him, and wanted to punish Mr. Wolf. Her verdict was emotional, not based on evidence.
2. Ms. Fairy did not tell the court that she knew Little Pig Two. If she had told the judge that she knew Little Pig Two as a child, they could have dismissed her or asked her questions to decide if she could be fair.
3. Mr. Wolf has the right to a fair trial. It doesn't matter how much evidence the state thinks it has. Mr. Wolf has the right to an impartial jury that doesn't take sides before hearing all the evidence. The trial he had was not fair because Ms. Fairy was on the jury.

Arguments for the state:

1. Even if Ms. Fairy might have remembered Little Pig Two from 20 years ago, she still based her decision on the evidence. She did nothing wrong.
2. Since Ms. Fairy did not remember Little Pig Two from kindergarten, she could not have told the court that she knew him.
3. The evidence against Mr. Wolf was very strong. Even if Mr. Wolf was tried again today, he would still be found guilty by a jury of his peers, whether Ms. Fairy was there or not.

Questions from the Justices

Come up with questions for both sides in the case. Remember, you are trying to answer the question:

Was Mr. Wolf’s right to a fair trial with an unbiased jury violated because Ms. Fairy, a jury member, knew the victim?

Based on the facts of the case and the arguments presented by both sides, what information would help you answer this question?

Sample Questions:

1. Do you think Ms. Fairy could have made a fair decision if she had remembered Little Pig Two? What if Little Pig Two was not exactly her favorite student?
2. All 12 jurors found Mr. Wolf guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Do you think Ms. Fairy convinced all the jurors that he was guilty?
3. Ms. Fairy did say that she loved her students “past and present.” If she did know him, how could she not be biased?
4. If Ms. Fairy was talking to other jurors, which we know she did based on Pinocchio’s interview, could she have talked them into voting guilty?

Section 3: Prepare Your Case!

Using the information in Sections 1 and 2, work with your group to decide:

- **If you are attorneys:** what three arguments are you going to present to the justices?
- **If you are justices,** what questions will you ask each group of attorneys?



Moot Court Reflection

Reflect on the Case

1. What was the outcome of the moot court?
2. Do you agree with the outcome? Why or why not?
3. Why is the appellate court system important for people in the United States?

Personal Reflection

4. What role did you play in the moot court?
5. What are some things you did well?
6. What would you do differently next time?
7. What did you learn from the moot court?

