



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2000 Volume II: Crime and Punishment

...By Reason of Insanity An Exploration of the Mental Disease/Defect Defense

Guide for Curriculum Unit 00.02.02
by Angela Beasley-Murray

The media constantly bombards us with crimes that are horrendous, the crimes of passion and more frightening the crimes of dispassion. We are affected by our own fears of powerlessness and helplessness to stop such crimes. Our greatest fear is that perhaps we will become victims or that one of our own family members might commit a crime. We are all looking now what are the signs, hoping that what we see is not quite what it takes to commit a crime of national interest. What happened? In what situation could a six-year-old be that could cause him to want to be violent?

What is the rage in the skies, on our highways, in our schools, and in our homes? Why aren't we outraged at the fact we need more prisons to warehouse our explosive individuals committing crimes? Is the individual who is rageful responsible for his rage? What is the context of the life of the individual that one day goes ballistic?

"...By Reason of Insanity: An Exploration of the Mental Disease/Defect Defense" unit will provide the legal definition of insanity. The M'Naghten test and control inquiry defines and establishes for our criminal justice system an exacting framework to understand insanity. The courts look at the context of the individual defendant experience to determine mens rea, having a guilty mind.

(Recommended for Reading, grade 10.)

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