



Acting Up in Contemporary Law

Guide for Curriculum Unit 90.02.10
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This unit centers around preparing the students for improvisational roles in a mock trial. Vocabulary and discussion of relevant material related to crime, character roles, courtroom procedure, and sentencing are intertwined into activities such as lecturing, note taking, critical analysis, and dramatization.

In order for the students to enact competently a mock trial, a section containing legal material is followed by a section devoted to improvisational exercises aimed at developing the student's self confidence and performance skills. In Section I, Criminal Procedure, the objectives met include: familiarization with causes of crime, rights of the accused, categories of homicide, types of sentencing, legal reasons for imprisonment, criminal procedure, courtroom characters, and courtroom procedure. In Section II, Performance Development, the objectives met include: character development, development of concentration skills, improvisational skills, and blocking. The three sample lesson plans act as guides for the educator. They focus on steps necessary for an accurate, student-developed mock trial.

This unit covers a four to five week teaching block. Although geared for a class of twenty-five students, the concept may be adapted to smaller or larger classes. The material may also be modified to meet the needs of varying levels of students.

All in all, "Acting Up in Contemporary Law," is an organized, sequential guide for improvisation and criminal law. The mock trial presented involves a woman accused of first degree homicide in the death of her husband. She refuses to plea-bargain, insisting she was provoked. Therefore, the defense tries to show that it was actually voluntary manslaughter.

(Recommended for Contemporary Law and Urban Study, grade 9; and Drama, grades 7-12)

Key Words

Drama Basic Improvisation Performance American History Constitution Judicial System Mock Trial

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