

SAMPLE LESSON

“State v. Mary Witch” Scripted Mock Trial (3–5)

LAW DAY | CONSTITUTION DAY 2026

WA Courts Lesson: State v. Mary Witch**OBJECTIVES**

Fully scripted, nothing to source, and a guaranteed hit with this age group. As students run the mock trial — taking on the courtroom roles, following the steps of a trial, and building confidence speaking in front of the class — the visit points them at three constitutional core ideas:

1. Students will recognize that the rule of law applies to everyone — even someone people assume is guilty is entitled to a fair trial. (*Core Constitutional idea: The rule of law*)
2. Students will explain why a court decides on the evidence and the rules, not on reputation or who simply seems guilty. (*Core Constitutional ideas: The rule of law, Equality and fairness*)
3. Students will identify the protections of a fair trial — being heard, having a defense, and a verdict based on evidence — as part of what the Constitution guarantees. (*Core Constitutional idea: Rights and liberties*)

CONSTITUTION IDEAS

- **The rule of law.** No one is above the law — not even the government. Same rules for everyone.
- **Rights and liberties.** The Constitution protects freedoms for everyone who lives here.
- **Equality and fairness.** Everyone is treated equally — a promise the country is still working to keep.

**STUDENT
TAKEAWAYS —
WHAT THEY
LEAVE HOLDING**

- Everyone gets a fair trial — even someone people assume is “the bad guy.”
- Courts decide on evidence and rules, not on who seems scary or guilty.
- Both sides get to tell their story. That’s what fairness looks like.

**THE TRIAL
SCRIPT**[Download in
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THE STORY

On March 25, of this year, two children, Hansel and Gretel, disappeared for two weeks. They spent those two weeks in the gingerbread cottage of Ms. Mary Witch. Witnesses Jack Rabbit and Verl Squirrel reported that they saw the children nibbling on the gumdrops and candy canes, which decorated the windows of the Mary Witch's cottage in the woods. They also said that the Witch then called out to the children and invited them into her cottage. Squirrel was suspicious since some animals of the forest believe that the Witch eats children. They sent Daisy Deer, who was tall enough to peep into the candied windows, to see what was going on. Deer watched for two weeks. Deer reported that she saw Hansel kept in a cage. Gretel cooked and cleaned during this time. After two weeks the children left during the night. Squirrel and Deer reported to the police. The police then arrested Ms. Witch and charged her with the crime of kidnapping.

SETTING UP THE CAST — TWO WAYS

Everything below assumes you've pulled the full lesson, complete trial script and jury instructions (see above). Skim it ahead of time so you know the flow before you assign roles. Either way, the verdict doesn't need to be "right," and a slightly rough read still lands the civics. The debrief in Part 5 (see Lesson Agenda below) is where it all comes together.

Cast ahead with your teacher.

Ask your teacher to assign the speaking roles and, ideally, have students read through the script once before your visit. This isn't because the lesson is hard — it's fully scripted — but pre-casting is what protects your 20 minutes in the room. Matching your strongest readers to the bigger parts (the attorneys and the witch) makes the whole thing hum.

- **Full cast:** give up to 14 students speaking parts — 1 bailiff, up to 4 prosecuting attorneys, up to 3 defense attorneys, and 6 witnesses — with the 6-8 more participants as the jury.
- **Hand out and highlight scripts:** have students highlight or underline their own lines.

No prep happened beforehand?

The script makes this very doable — just adjust how you run it:

- **Trim the cast:** fewer speaking parts means fewer cold readers to wrangle. Allows for up to 8 speaking parts — 1 prosecutor, 1 defense attorney, and 6 witnesses — the bailiff can be read by the judge. Cap the jury at 12 participants like a real jury.
- **You drive the pace** by reading the bailiff and judge's lines with energy and cuing each speaker ("Prosecutor, your witness"). When someone stumbles, feed the line and roll on.
- **Give yourself runway:** keep your Part 2 framing short so the cold read has room to breathe.

PRE-VISIT PREP (BRING/PRINT)

- **Pre-highlighted scripts — save class time on a cold run.** Mark each role's lines ahead of time (one copy per part) so students can jump right in and bring your own marked copy for the judge's lines (and the bailiff's, if you're covering that role) — worth it either way.
- **Optional: name tags or role cards for the cast.** With a bailiff, several attorneys, and six named witnesses, simple labels keep a big cast organized and help the jury track who's who.
- **Optional: a few easy costume props** for the animal witnesses (deer, squirrel, rabbit) and the witch — boosts the fun and helps those roles read across the room.

LESSON AGENDA

Room setup (two minutes at the top of class) — You at the front desk or podium; a chair beside you as the witness stand; the prosecution seated on the side closest to the jury, defense on the other; witnesses behind their attorneys; the jury along one side; the bailiff by the witness stand.

Parts 1–3 — Opening, framing, takeaways (~13 min)

Run these as the Constitution Day agenda template lays out (see Lesson Planning Guide). Two lesson-specific elements are all you need to add for your visit:

Part 1 — Welcome and who you are (~3 min)

Introduce yourself and share why you're visiting.

Part 2 — Why this year, why the Constitution (~5 min)

Set the stakes around the 250th anniversary, then bridge straight into the mock trial: tell students they're about to sit as a courtroom for a real case — *State v. Mary Witch* — and use it to introduce your two core ideas:

- The rule of law means the same rules apply to everyone — even a witch gets a fair trial.
- Rights and liberties means everyone has the right to be heard before anyone decides they're guilty.

Part 3 — What it means for you: takeaways (~5 min)

Before the trial starts, tell students these are the three things to watch for as the case unfolds — they'll need them when it's time to weigh in on the verdict. Write them on the board:

- Everyone gets a fair trial — even someone people assume is “the bad guy.”
- Courts decide on evidence and rules, not on who seems scary or guilty.
- Both sides get to tell their story. That's what fairness looks like.

Part 4 — Main event: the mock trial (~25 min)

This is the heart of the visit — students remember the trial itself more than anything you say around it. Tell them why they're doing this: to get a feel for how a real court works, to practice speaking in front of a group, and to see the range of people — judge, attorneys, bailiff, jury — who make the legal process run. Give it the room it needs; a confident read of the full script beats a rushed one every time.

The full cast (~14 speaking roles):

- Judge — you (or a confident student you coach).
- Bailiff (1) — opens the court and swears in witnesses.
- Prosecuting attorneys (1 - 4) — represent the State; they call Hansel, Gretel, and Daisy Deer.
- Defense attorneys (1 - 3) — represent the witch; they call Verl Squirrel, Jack Rabbit, and Mary Witch.
- Witnesses (6) — Hansel, Gretel, and Daisy Deer for the prosecution; Verl Squirrel, Jack Rabbit, and Mary Witch (the defendant) for the defense.
- Jury — keep to about 6 to 8 rather than 12; they engage in a short deliberation and elect a foreperson to deliver the verdict.

NOTE: There are 9 - 14 speaking roles, but if you have less volunteers taking a part, just double up — one student can play more than one witness, or you/the judge can also serve as bailiff. Everyone not cast is the jury; keep it to 6-8 participants so they have a real group to deliberate. Short on volunteers? Loop in the teacher too — they can cover an extra witness or just be ready to jump in if the room needs a nudge.

Give it the time it needs.

The full script — openings, six witnesses with cross-examination, closings, and deliberation — runs longer than it looks, usually 25 minutes or so with students reading aloud. That's by design here; the trial is the heart of the visit.

- If you're tight, trim a witness or two (the animal witnesses, Verl Squirrel and Jack Rabbit, are the most cuttable) rather than rushing the verdict.

Let it be fun.

The case is genuinely funny — a deer who admits to window-peeping, a witch who insists the cage was just “a bed with high sides,” attorneys lobbing objections. Let them ham it up; the laughs are what make the civics stick.

The decision.

After the closings, give the jury its instruction straight from the script (see the lesson page for “Jury Instructions”): kidnapping means using force to keep someone against their will, and to convict they must be convinced beyond a reasonable doubt — and all of them must agree. Then let the jury huddle, pick a foreperson, and deliver the verdict to the court.

- Did Mary Witch intentionally abduct Hansel?
- Did Mary Witch intend to inflict bodily harm on Hansel?

There's no right answer — that's the design.

The evidence really does cut both ways (was it kidnapping, or a sick child and a helpful stranger?). Whichever way the verdict lands, the civics is in how they got there. Set it up in a sentence and protect a beat at the end to debrief into Part 5.

Part 5 — Wrap-up, Q&A and career conversation (~12 min)

This is where it lands the plane and plants a seed about a life in law — protect this time even if the trial ran long. For many students, you're the first legal professional they've met.

Debrief using the trial's own tensions.

With a little less time here, protect the debrief first — that's where the civics lands — then let the career conversation run as long as the clock allows. Lead with the conflicts the script built in:

- What was it like playing your role — judge, attorney, witness, juror?
- What job did each part of the courtroom do? Ask the room to name it: the judge decides on the law and keeps order, the prosecutor and defense each argue one side, the jury weighs the evidence, the bailiff keeps things running. → checks and balances — no one person runs the whole trial.
- “The witch said it was a bed with high sides. The deer said it was a cage. How do you decide who to believe?” → weighing evidence and credibility.

- “I wouldn’t let the attorneys bring up the witch’s past or the other missing children. Was that fair — why would a court leave that out?” → why a case is decided on this evidence, not reputation or rumor.
- “We decided on the rules and the evidence, not on whether the witch looked scary. Why does that matter?” → the rule of law, and equal treatment under it.
- “What was my job as judge versus the jury’s job?” → who decides what, and why that’s split up.
- If there was a [Student judge] – did you agree with the jury’s verdict? → sometimes real judges and juries don’t agree — that’s how the system is designed to work.
 - *Tip: If you’ve seen or heard of a case where a judge and jury landed differently, share a brief, general version here — it turns “sometimes that happens” from an abstraction into something real.*
- Before moving on, ask: Any questions about how the jury deliberated? Any questions about how a trial works, now that you’ve been in one?

**NOTE: If the room goes quiet, prime the pump yourself — answer one of the questions above before opening it back up. Keep a couple of your own follow-ups in your back pocket in case the debrief needs a nudge.*

Tie it back.

Land the throughline from your opening: 250 years ago people made promises about fairness, and a fair trial — even for someone everyone assumes is guilty — is one of those promises kept. That’s not automatic; it’s the system working the way it’s supposed to. Someday they’ll vote, serve on a jury, maybe even argue a case of their own. The next 250 years — and what those promises mean in practice — are theirs to carry forward.

Turn it into the career talk.

Open the floor for questions. If it’s quiet, prime the pump yourself — “A lot of people ask if being a lawyer is like on TV, want to know?” works well. They just did the work — built an argument, testified, weighed evidence, reached a verdict. Name that, then name the range: lawyers, judges, paralegals, clerks, legal aides. You don’t have to be a lawyer to be part of justice. Expect “have you ever met a real bad guy?”— lean into it; this is your honest opening to talk about the work and how you got here.

If time allows, share your own path — what you studied, that there’s no one “right” way in, and that you don’t need a legal family background to get here.

NOTE: Let Q&A run the clock rather than rushing to fill it — and “I don’t know” is a perfectly good answer. If the conversation gets cut short, that’s a good reason to come back.