

# Incorporating Mock Hearings into Law and Civics classes in Catholic Schools

Developed with assistance from Patricia Valeri Tortis, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board and Angelo Bolotta, Institute for Catholic Education, Ontario



## How Mock Hearings Support the Catholic Graduate Expectations

Mock hearings can facilitate the development of many of the attitudes and values expected of Ontario Catholic School Graduates. This provides students with an opportunity to understand how participation in the justice system, both in its various roles and in its entirety, can integrate an individual's faith with civic duty and responsibility. Mock hearings ask students to reflect, form opinions, and make reasoned judgements and legal arguments that incorporate moral and ethical decision making.

This resource is designed to help the Law or Civics teacher in a Catholic school to integrate Catholic graduate expectations into the preparation and delivery of the mock trial. The activities outlined below can augment the mock hearing preparation process.

### ***Catholic Graduate Expectations Met By Mock Hearings***

- CGE1c – actively reflects on God's word as communicated through the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures
- CGE1d – develops attitudes and values founded on Catholic social teaching and acts to promote social responsibility, human solidarity and the common good
- CGE2a - listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values
- CGE2b - reads, understands and uses written materials effectively
- CGE2c - presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others
- CGE2d - writes and speaks fluently one or both of Canada's official languages
- CGE3a - recognizes there is more grace in our world than sin and that hope is essential in facing all challenges
- CGE3b - creates, adapts, evaluates new ideas in light of the common good
- CGE3c - thinks reflectively and creatively to evaluate situations and solve problems
- CGE3d - makes decisions in light of gospel values with an informed moral conscience
- CGE4a - demonstrates a confident and positive sense of self and respect for the dignity and welfare of others
- CGE5a - works effectively as an interdependent team member
- CGE7a – acts morally and legally as a person formed in Catholic traditions
- CGE7b – accepts accountability for one's own actions
- CGE7c – seeks and grants forgiveness

## Lesson Plan: Contrasting Concepts of Justice

---

**Introductory Classroom Discussion:** A secular or Catholic view of Justice: What is the difference?

**Estimated time:** 20 minutes

**Required materials:** none

### Teacher Instructions:

When students prepare for and participate in mock trials, they have the opportunity to think critically about their views on justice, love, sin, punishment, forgiveness and rehabilitation. This reflection can relate to the Christian belief in the resurrection, the pardoning of sin and reconciliation. Contrasting principles of sentencing and remedies available in the secular justice system with teachings about Christian forgiveness can contrast the difference between the Catholic instruction to “forgive those who trespass against us” and society’s system of rules, consequences and reconciliation.

As a class, discuss the attributes of secular versus Catholic concepts of justice, as outlined below. Invite students to think of examples within religious teachings, as well as their daily lives that illustrate each. Ask students to identify concepts of justice from other religious traditions.

### Discussion Prompts:

People of many faiths identify the roots of freedom and love in a just and fair society. Concepts of fairness and forgiveness are foundational to both religious teachings and secular life. The abstract principle of *justice* includes moral rightness, premised on ethical behavior, equitable treatment, fairness and respect for rights. The concept of justice includes the fair treatment of all people, rational connections between actions and consequences, and equal protection of the law, free from discrimination.

In a secular democracy, the justice system interprets and enforces the democratically created law essential to a safe, ordered and respectful society. The values of fairness, responsibility, protection of those who are vulnerable, pursuit of the truth, and ethical co-habitation align with the values and beliefs of many religious and non-religious citizens. An institution that demonstrates respect for individually held beliefs while finding common ground in these secular values allows society to protect its citizens, facilitate healing and forgiveness, as well as individual responsibility and consequences.

The Catholic tradition is closely tied with concepts of justice. Pope Paul VI said that “action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world” is a “constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel” (Synod on Justice, 1971 #6). Justice is premised on sincere respect for those that we interact with and a commitment to treat others fairly. Both the Old and New Testament are full of stories that illustrate the importance of fairness, including the right to be heard, to know the accusations, to present alternative views and to expect measured consequences. Just punishments promote rehabilitation and forgiveness. In the New Testament, God reveals Jesus Christ as just and righteous. He is held up as a model of how to live with and for others. His teachings include many lessons on how to respond to sin and transgressions with forgiveness and love.

## Lesson Plan: Analyze the Principles of Justice

**Principles Of Justice:** Analysis and Discussion of the Story of Susanna in the Book of Daniel

**Estimated time:** 30 minutes with optional student research assignment

**Required materials:** Story of Susanna, Book of Daniel, Chapter 13

### Teacher Instructions:

This story allows the student to reflect upon the Catholic views of justice, sin and punishment along with the introduction of legal terminology such as: *testimony, evidence, perjury, blackmail, the balance of proof/beyond a reasonable doubt, examination and cross-examination, sentencing, verdict and judicial impartiality*. Students can be asked to define the terms before reading the story and then read the story with a view to identifying these concepts and contrasting the ancient view of these legal principles with their modern use.

After reviewing the story, ask students to research modern incidents of wrongful convictions in Canada (see [www.ojen.ca](http://www.ojen.ca) or [www.aidwyc.org](http://www.aidwyc.org) for examples, including Stephen Truscott, David Milgaard, Donald Marshall, Guy Paul Morin, etc.). Have students examine the mechanisms within the justice system to appeal or overturn a conviction.

### *The Story of Susanna*

*Susanna was the young, beautiful wife of Joakim. She sent away her attendants to bathe alone in her walled garden. While she was alone bathing, two lusty elders secretly observe her. "Wickedness came forth from Babylon, from the elders who were judges and who were supposed to govern the people." (Daniel 13: 5-6) (judicial impartiality) When Susanna makes her way back to her house, the elders or judges stop her and threaten to claim that she was meeting a young man in the garden unless she agrees to lie down with them. (blackmail, evidence, testimony)*

*Susanna refuses to be blackmailed. The people, however, believe the elders/judges. She is arrested and sentenced to death (sentence) As she is being led away she affirms her innocence and cries out, "O eternal God, you know what is secret and are aware of all things before they come to be; you know that these men have given false evidence against me" (Daniel 13: 42) (perjury)*

*As Susanna was being led away to her execution, God stirred up the holy spirit of a young man named Daniel and he cried out "I will not have a part in the death of this woman...Are you such fools, O Israelites! To condemn a woman of Israel without examination and clear evidence? Return to court, for these men have given false evidence against her." (Daniel 13: 44-47) (evidence, examination, burden of proof/beyond a reasonable doubt)*

*Daniel then separates the two men and questions them separately about the details of what they saw. (cross-examination) Daniel asks them the same question and the elders give very different answers. Daniel asks the first elder what he witnessed. (testimony) Daniel asks about the tree under which Susanna allegedly met the young man and the elder says it happened under a mastic tree. When Daniel asks the other elder which tree the encounter allegedly took place under he says it was an oak tree. Given the great difference between the mastic and the oak tree, it is evident that the elders have lied and they are ultimately punished. (cross-examination, verdict, punishment)*

## Extension: Textual Analysis - Old and New Testament

### Teacher Instructions:

The following textual analysis activity can be assigned prior to assigning the roles in the mock hearing, as an extension activity or used to make accommodations for students with different learning needs.

Ask students to read two of the following passages and reflect on their meaning within the context of justice, love, sin, punishment, forgiveness and rehabilitation. This reflection could be in the form of oral discussion, either in small groups or as a whole class, or a written reflection.

### OLD TESTAMENT

- *The Ten Commandments (Exodus 19: 20–21)*
- *The Law concerning Violence (Exodus 21: 12-26)*
- *Laws of Restitution (Exodus 22: 1-14)*
- *Justice for All (Exodus 23: 1-9)*
- *Sin Offerings (Leviticus 4: 1-2, 27-35, Leviticus 5: 1-13)*
- *Offerings with Restitution (Leviticus 5: 14-19, Leviticus 6: 1-7)*

### NEW TESTAMENT

- *Judging Others (Matthew 7: 1-5)*
- *The Golden Rule (Matthew 7: 12)*
- *Love for Enemies (Luke 6: 27-32)*
- *The Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:1-11)*
- *The Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32)*

