

John Brown Mock Trial

Good News!! Our class has been transported back to late October of 1859. John Brown has just been captured after his raid on Harper's Ferry and our class will become the courtroom to decide his fate.

The charge: John Brown is being tried with murder, treason, and inciting an insurrection. All punishments are on the table at this point. John Brown can be found not guilty or guilty. If found guilty, the jury must decide his punishment and the options here are 5 years, 10 years, 30 years, life in prison, or execution by hanging.

What you will be doing:

1 person will become John Brown and testify before the court (3-5 minute testimony) at the end of the trial right before the defense and prosecution give their closing.

2 people will become the defense attorneys for John Brown. This team needs to prepare a plea (not guilty or guilty). This team needs to be ready to question the witnesses (William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, and John Brown Jr.). Most of all, the team needs to try and convince the jury of John Brown's innocence or get his sentence as short as possible.

2 people will become the prosecutors in the trial. This team will attempt to prove John Brown guilty and will try to convince the jury that for his actions he deserves to be executed. This team must be ready to give an opening, interview the witnesses, and give a closing.

Mr. Montgomery will become the judge to make sure the court is held in the high honor it deserves. He will not be doing the judging (that is for the jury) but he will be the authority to see that procedure is followed.

5 people will serve in the jury. For the purposes of our trial, unanimity is not needed. A simple majority agreeing on Brown's guilt or innocence will render him so. If the majority of the jury finds Brown guilty, the jury will have to find a majority on what sentence he will receive. Each jury member must decide if John Brown is innocent or guilty based on what they hear in this court. Each jury member needs to write down 5 notes throughout the course of the trial to defend their conclusions about John Brown's guilt or innocence.

1 person will become William Lloyd Garrison and testify in court. This person must be aware of Garrison's attitudes towards slavery and towards John Brown. This person will respond to the questions of the prosecution and the defense as he/she sincerely believes Garrison would do.

1 person will become Frederick Douglass and testify in court. This person must understand who Douglass is and his beliefs on the issue of slavery. Douglass and Brown

had discussions and this person must be aware of the nature of those discussions and aware of what Douglass thought of Brown.

1 person will become John Brown Jr. and testify in court. This person must answer the questions from the prosecuting and defense teams as they believe a son of John Brown's would have.

Helpful Hints:

Use the facts at your disposal but bring in some of the great emotion that must have surrounded this case because of everything at stake here.

Make sure you know your role in this court. The first thing you will want to determine (unless you are on the jury and you therefore make your judgments based on the arguments presented in court) is if you think John Brown should be found guilty or innocent. Once you know that, then you can strategize a way to influence the jury to see John Brown in the light you see him.

Procedures:

This court needs to conduct itself with honor and integrity at all times.

Prosecution gives opening. (5 minutes)

Defense gives opening. (5 minutes)

Prosecution calls and questions William Lloyd Garrison. (5 minutes)

Defense gets turn questioning William Lloyd Garrison. (5 minutes)

Defense calls and questions Frederick Douglass. (5 minutes)

Prosecution cross-examines Frederick Douglass. (5 minutes)

Defense calls and examines John Brown Jr. (5 minutes)

Prosecution cross-examines John Brown Jr. (5 minutes)

John Brown testifies before the court. (5 minutes)

Defense gives closing remarks. (5 minutes)

Prosecution gives closing remarks. (5 minutes)

Jury deliberates and renders verdict and sentencing (if found guilty). (5-10 minutes)