

# Literacy and the Law



**Lesson Title:** *Actively Understanding Key Academic Terms and Facts* (4<sup>th</sup> lesson in unit)

**Context of the lesson within the project:** This lesson will reinforce the meaning of vocabulary as it relates to the trial of David and judicial concepts by having students actually use the vocabulary in improvisations.

**Standards Addressed:**

**Visual and Performing Arts Standards – Theatre**  
**Creative Expression**

**Development of Theatrical Skills 2.1** Participate in improvisational activities to explore complex ideas and universal themes in literature and life.

**Objective(s):**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of vocabulary by using improvisational techniques.  
Students will analyze the facts of the case based on sequence of events, and character’s motivations.

**Assessment:** Teacher observation based on the following rubric:

**Quality Criteria:**

<b><u>Creative Expression</u></b>	<b><u>Meets or exceeds all criteria</u></b>	<b><u>Meets criteria</u></b>	<b><u>Meets some of the criteria</u></b>	<b><u>Significant criteria missing</u></b>
Participates in improvisational activity	Very actively participates in the activity	Participates in the activity	Some participation	Hesitant or ineffective participation
Explores complex ideas and themes relating to the vocabulary	Excellent use of vocabulary as it relates to the improvisational task. Uses the vocabulary word in a manner that explicitly shows understanding of the word.	Good use of vocabulary and correct meaning	Uses vocabulary correctly some of the time	Very little use of vocabulary
Recalls facts, details of case using an analytical approach to sequence of events, motivation of characters. Correct use of vocabulary.	Excellent analysis and insight as to motivations of key players.	Analysis and insight of each player with proper vocabulary.	Facts and sequence correct but lacking in analysis and vocabulary	Needs work on all areas.

## Literacy and the Law

**Materials and Resources Needed:** Vocabulary Note page for students, Gathering the Facts Handout, iPad or smartphone for video (optional, but preferred).

### Learning Activities:

5 minutes:

**Hook: How many of you like to talk? This is your opportunity to use dialogue, create your own character, and use the vocabulary of the court!**

**We will play a game called Vocabulary Improv...**(somewhat like What's my Line?)

**Model Improvisation:** Ask for four volunteers in advance: Using four vocabulary words, "become characters" who are having a discussion about a scenario of your choice (example: a young person is accused of tagging the school building, or David's case). Post the following vocabulary on the board, and use the vocabulary handout to accurately show the meaning within the discussion:

Constitution, judicial branch of government, rule of law, due process, burden of proof, beyond a reasonable doubt, impartiality. (You may want to "set this up" with volunteers before the lesson, giving them their vocabulary word in advance, so they can prepare.) For example, you might start the conversation for them by saying, "*What do you think about this case? Do you feel that the rules of our class Constitution were broken in this case? Another student then needs to "chime" in using one of the other vocabulary words ~ adding to the conversation, (continue conversation until all have added and the words have been used.*

Goal: **Accurately** use as many of the vocabulary words on the list as possible within your discussion. Clarify use of vocabulary and improvisation relating to the same with whole group.

30 minutes:

**Improv Scenario: in groups of five, you are students at David's school and are discussing the case, K-1 v. David.**

### Rules:

1. Everyone must have the opportunity to participate and will choose one word from the pile of vocabulary words (cut up from the list provided).
2. Your conversation, using the word, must show that you understand the meaning of the vocabulary as it relates to the case. (Analysis) (Synthesis)
3. After everyone has added to the discussion, using their vocabulary word, they may pick randomly from the pile of words to add to the discussion if they still have time left.
4. Your team receives 2 points each time a starred vocabulary word is used accurately, an additional point when another vocabulary word on the sheet is used properly. If the same

## Literacy and the Law

vocabulary is used again, one point is gained for the starred vocabulary, and no additional points for the other vocabulary words.

5. One member of the team videos the improvisation with cell phone or ipad if possible. Following the discussion teams watch their own video and establish points earned for the number of vocabulary words used correctly and in context with the case. One team may share with another to see if they came up with the same score...they compare with the score teams gave themselves and analyze the discrepancies, ie: accurate use of the vocabulary word.

**No Tech Options:** One person is the “scorekeeper”, using the vocabulary chart to note accurate use. One group shares their improvisation with another group and they discuss the vocabulary used, and why they believe it was/was not used accurately.

15 minutes: **Set up for future argumentative writing: Gathering the Facts**

Use the “Gathering the Facts” handout to assist in the analysis of the case and the conversation about what may have happened, using vocabulary where possible, ie: the Defendant, David, the witness, Suzie, the prosecuting attorney (in teams preferably)...

Please compare “what happened” to how it relates to the law. For example, “What has happened so far?” **Connect** that fact to a discussion with how it relates to the Rule of Law. For example, “This fact is important because it creates reasonable doubt in my mind that David could have stolen the stickers.”

### **Closure:**

Discuss any of the vocabulary words that need reinforcement. Let students know they will be members of the jury soon ~ and they will be making decisions as informed citizens who understand the vocabulary of the law!

**Special Needs of students are considered in this lesson:** Create heterogeneous groups, visual of the vocabulary words helps assist students, opportunity for creative interaction is beneficial for GATE and kinesthetic learners.

**Extension Ideas:** Students describe a case and the conflicting issues using as many vocabulary words as possible.

**References:** Common Core State Standards, California VAPA/theatre standards