



**U.S. DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF IOWA**

COURT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

**Mock Trials Used to Engage Students in Discussions
on the Importance of the Rule of Law**





Inalienable Rights

As part of our outreach program, the U.S. District Court, in conjunction with the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, participated in the *Inalienable Rights* play and student workshops. Over 1200 students in grades 5-12 viewed the play *Inalienable Rights*, written by Roxann Ryan, PhD. The play covers three landmark Iowa Civil Rights cases: Coger steamboat public accommodation case (1873), Griffin and Katz drug store lunch counter case (1949), and the Clark school integration case (1868). The District Court sponsored a law workshop, which allowed students to participate in a mock jury trial. We used Tootsie the Goldfish case, which has five roles. Students who were not assigned a speaking role, served as jurors. Local lawyers and court employees facilitated the workshops.





History through the Arts Series – Abe Lincoln

As part of our outreach program, the U.S. District Court, in conjunction with the State Historic Museum, participated in the History through the Arts Series – Abe Lincoln. Over 1200 students attended this program. Local lawyers and court employees facilitated a law workshop, which allowed students to participate in a mock trial. Students acted out the roles of judge, courtroom deputy, attorneys, witnesses, defendant, and jurors. The mock trial script was written by Judge Bremer and involved an actual case tried by Abraham Lincoln: *Hurd v. Rock Island Railroad Co.* State Court Judge Colin Witt (former Law Clerk to Judge Longstaff) and U.S. Magistrate Judge Ross Walters (former Law Clerk to Judge William Hanson) appeared in “A Conversation Between Lincoln and Grant,” based upon a program presented at the 9th Circuit Judicial Conference.





Constitution Day

Each year, the District's judges, in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney's Office, Federal Public Defender's Office, and the State Bar Association visit local high school government classes or invite classes to visit the U.S. Courthouse for a program in honor of Constitution Day. Representatives from each agency give a brief overview of their work, and the importance of the Constitution. Students are provided a pocket copy of the constitution, handouts on the federal court system, and the importance of the Constitution.





12 Angry Men

Iowa judges and lawyers, along with court staff from the U. S. District Court helped the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines reach out to the community during the Betts Broadway Series' production of *Twelve Angry Men*, starring Richard Thomas. Over 30 volunteers participated in several programs offered for the public, to promote understanding of the importance of jury service, and the criminal justice issues raised in the play in February, 2008.

A group of Iowa judges and lawyers presented a morning of programming for 100 high school students and their teachers who had been invited to appear at the U. S. Courthouse in Des Moines. The ISBA Center for Law and Civic Education Director John Wheeler, assisted in program, based on the *We The Jury* program developed by the Young Lawyers Division of the Iowa State Bar Association. The Civic Center of Greater Des Moines obtained one of only ten national grants from the League of American Theaters and Producers to enhance the students' understanding of the Broadway production of *Twelve Angry Men*. "We are pleased to be able to help sponsor this program with the Civic Center," said Chief Judge Robert Pratt. "Serving on a jury is an important part of public service to our communities; this is a great chance for students to understand more about the jury system."

After hearing from attorneys, judges and court staff about how the jury panel is comprised, and how a defendant's constitutional rights are protected before and during a trial, the students participated in a voir dire conducted by an Assistant U. S. Attorney and Assistant Federal Public Defender. Then the students split into 9 jury panels, and watched a mock criminal trial in which a high school student was charged with possession of ecstasy, following a search of a school locker. The students deliberated and returned verdicts, and then discussed with the attorneys the dynamics of group decision-making, the constitutional issues involved in the search, defendant's rights, and how juries are selected and serve in Iowa. In the afternoon, the students attended the matinee performance of *Twelve Angry Men*, and then had a discussion with select cast members. Before attending the Education Day Program, Lucy Suvalsky, the Civic Center Education Manager, visited with groups of students at each high school involved, provided the students with copies of the play, and started the dialog about jury service, and the moral issues raised in the play. Following the events of the day, the students completed a reflective piece for display at the Civic Center, along with posters of the day's activities.

ANNIE WITTENMEYER



As a result of the Civil War, the Annie Wittenmeyer Home was founded in Davenport, Iowa to care for orphans who lost both parents in the war.

At the Annie Wittenmeyer Home, orphans lived in cottages with adults who took care of them. The children were fed and went to school. Annie Wittenmeyer was a nurse who served in the Civil War.

In this fictional case written by Judge Bremer, Sam and Taylor Richards, ages 7 and 12, are living with their grandparents because their dad and mom were serving in the Civil War. Their dad was a soldier, and their mom was a nurse at the same place their dad was fighting. Their dad died in battle. The family has not heard from the mother since that battle. The grandparents are very old and sick and cannot take care of the kids. They hope that the mother will return home. They do not want the kids to be adopted. The grandparents want the kids to live in a good place like the Annie Wittenmeyer Home. The State of Iowa is arguing against the grandparents, saying that the children should be put up for adoption now, because their mother probably will not come back, and it would be better for the children to have a permanent home.

Mock trials were conducted with students in middle school who were attending programming on the civil war at the State Historic Museum. In the post-trial discussions, issues of adoption and foster care were guided by experienced volunteer lawyers and judges.

WWII POW Camp in Iowa



In another mock trial written by Judge Bremer in November, 2011, issues of citizenship, military justice and due process were discussed.

During World War II, Iowa had P.O.W. camps; two large P.O.W. camps were in Clarinda and Algona. Iowa camps held prisoners from Germany, Japan, and Italy. The United States had 53,000 Italian P.O.W.s; many were in Iowa camps. Italy surrendered to the United States and Allied Troops in 1943, before Japan and Germany surrendered. After Italy surrendered, the Italian P.O.W.s had better living conditions than other P.O.W.s in the United States. Because of the War, food was rationed for everyone in the U.S. Many people in Iowa complained that the Italian P.O.W.s had more and better food than Iowans had. This case involves one of those complaints; the jury had to determine whether this violated the laws at the time.

After the trials, the volunteer judges and lawyers facilitated discussions of how enemy combatants are treated, how laws and expectations may differ today compared with during WWII, and whether the outcome would be different if the POW camp was not in Iowa.

ANDY THE SLAVE



In December 2012, the district court staff again partnered with the State of Iowa Historic Museum, providing a mock trial script written by Judge Bremer, and volunteers to moderate the mock trials, as part of a day-long program on the Civil War in Iowa. Based upon an actual Iowa case, the mock trial asked the student-jurors to decide whether a slave who traveled to Iowa after signing a contract with his owner in Missouri that allowed him a certain time to earn money to pay for his freedom, became a free citizen of Iowa, and thus relieved from the obligation to pay under the contract. The mock trial was presented to several hundred students, in 25 minute workshops; the program included presentations on other aspects of Iowa's participation in the Civil War. From the mock trial, the students learned about the Rule of Law, jurisdiction, civil rights, and contract law. A teacher's guide was prepared that allowed for further discussion back in the classroom.

Tinker v. Des Moines Public School District



In another partnership with the State Historic Museum, issues of student speech and protests were discussed, based on the case of *Tinker v. Des Moines School District*. In December 1965, a small group of students and their parents in Des Moines decided to express their opposition to the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War by wearing black armbands for about two weeks.

The principals of the Des Moines public schools heard of the plan. On December 15, the school district adopted a policy prohibiting students from wearing black armbands while at school. On December 16 and 17, seven of the 18,000 students enrolled in the Des Moines public school system wore the black armbands.

The students wearing the armbands were called into the principal's office and asked to remove them. When they refused, they were suspended.

Mr. Jerry Tinker sued the Des Moines School District on behalf of his children, alleging that their First Amendment right of free expression had been violated. The case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which held that students do not give up their 1st Amendment rights at the schoolhouse gates.

In the post-trial discussions, judges and lawyers reviewed issues relating to limitations on speech and assembly, the Vietnam War, and access to the courts.

