

**Trash Goes To School**  
**Produced by: Cornell Waste Management Institute**  
**1991**

**Mock Trial: Roadside Dumpers**

*Adapted from Waste Management Awareness Attitude Activities*  
*St. Lawrence County, NY*

**GRADE LEVELS:** 9-12

**SUBJECT AREAS:** social studies, government

**CONCEPT:** Waste management and the legal system.

**OBJECTIVE:** To encourage students to understand our legal system and note the seriousness of environmental crime.

**MATERIALS:**

- Classroom set up like a court room
- Costumes (optional)
- Gavel
- Library
- Handout: [Description of Characters](#)

**KEYWORDS:** defendant, prosecutor

**BACKGROUND:** It is illegal to dump garbage or hazardous waste along roadsides or in other inappropriate places. Roadside dumping is on the increase for many reasons: it has become harder to dispose of some garbage, it is becoming more costly to dispose of, and some people just don't care. We need to be aware of these problems and encourage people to dispose of their garbage properly. If not, they will have to deal with the legal system.

**PROCEDURE:**

As you proceed, the students will participate in a mock trial, including the following characters: defendant, Reelie Sneaky; Judge, Hand D. Shaker; Prosecutor, B. Goodenough; defendant's attorney, D. Vide; other witnesses as needed

(At teacher's discretion). The class will act as the jury (the jury will write questions on 3x5 cards to assist the prosecutor and defendant).

1. Assign students to find out how a trial proceeds (visit a courtroom if possible).
2. Define the roles of the:

- Judge
- Defendant
- Prosecutor
- Defendant's attorney
- Witnesses

3. Read about courtroom procedure.
4. Discuss what a roadside dumper is and what motives exist for illegal dumping.
5. Have students read the appropriate character descriptions, then judge, in a mock trial, Reelie Sneaky, charged with being an illegal dumper.
6. Have students write an essay discussing the harm caused to society by illegal dumpers.
7. What would be appropriate punishment for Reelie Sneaky if he is found guilty (fines, jail, clean-up, etc.)?

#### **FOLLOW-UP:**

- Find out more about environmental crimes.
- Research the Superfund Act.
- Follow an environmental crime case in your area.

### **Description of Characters**

#### **Reelie Sneaky - Defendant**

You really know better than to dump garbage on the roadside because you have been caught before. This time while you were visiting Grandma Jones out in the back 40 you didn't think anyone could possibly see you, so you unloaded your pickup truck into an area that was already messy. You claim to be innocent and an outstanding citizen of Rose County.

#### **Hand D. Shaker - Judge**

You are an O.K. judge who doesn't want to make too many waves. You know Reelie Sneaky from the softball league and around town. You listen to the case and then poll the jury to make a final decision. You will decide the sentence if one is needed.

#### **B. Goodenough - Prosecutor**

You know the defendant and you know or strongly suspect that he has gotten away with this before. You are going to do your best in questioning him to make sure the truth comes out. Reelie forgot to check his garbage and threw out a letter addressed to himself that was found by the investigators.

#### **Witnesses - Sam and Mary Flack and their two kids**

You were having a family picnic on this nice sunny day. You saw something unusual happening about 200 yards away. While driving back home, you saw the new pile of trash and realize that the blue and white pickup must have left it there. He apparently didn't see you picnicking.

#### **Character Witness - Joe James**

You have known Reelie for 10 years, and you don't think he would do such a thing.

#### **Jury**

The class will act as the jury. You need to listen to the facts that are uncovered and make a judgment whether or not Reelie is guilty.