

## “Mock Jury” Activity for Teaching the Basics of Copyright

A few key points to keep in mind when employing this activity:

- In order to be visually literate, students must understand copyright essentials
- Copyright does not have to be boring or threatening
- While participating in this activity, most students will surprise themselves by how strongly they feel about issues that pertain to copyright use and infringement
- Copyright is a complex issue and simply handing out flyers or guide sheets of “dos and don’ts” will do little to inspire students to explore their fears, feelings, and opinions about copyright violation
- This activity accomplishes learning outcomes (a) and (c) of Standard 7 of the ACRL/IRIG Visual Literacy Standards in that (a) the student “develops familiarity with intellectual property, copyright, and fair use as they apply to image content” and (c) states that the student who, in this case, may be a creator of a work him/herself, “recognizes own intellectual property rights as image creators.”

### The Mock Jury Activity

Beforehand, supply literature on the court cases for students to read in order to familiarize themselves with the cases and prepare for the mock jury. (I have used several pertaining to particularly visually oriented cases, students especially enjoy Rogers v. Koons as well as the Chicago Picasso district court case). On the day of the activity, divide the class into three groups and have students in two of the groups move their chairs so that they are facing each other to simulate a courtroom. The third group will be the “jury” and they will have to decide how they would rule based on the arguments of their peers. (This method works to place the instructor in a facilitator mode rather than a referee or “decider.” Instead of trying to convince the teacher, the students are trying to convince their peers). Let the groups switch roles for each case they try. Discussing and debating a case such as the Rogers v. Koons case, for example, in the “courtroom” allows students to consider the ways in which they might intend to appropriate another artist’s work and what they need to consider before doing so. Understanding that this is an issue for well-known, established artists gives them even more pause. Students delight in this activity and it is a fun, hands-on way for them to experience and get in touch with their feelings about copyright use as well as violation.

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