

James Angle

Lesson Plan for the Middle Ages  
Manor Court Systems

During the course of the school year, I teach several unit on law in ancient societies. Lessons on written vs. oral law, types of court proceedings, trials, and universal imperial law are discussed. Given the opportunity and new resources, this idea can be added to our discussion on law.

Objectives:

1. Compare and contrast legal systems throughout time periods
2. Discuss the importance and role of the legal system
3. Make a list of developments in the legal system throughout time periods
4. Within the Middle Ages create a list of common complaints heard in court
5. Explain how common legal complaints were dealt with on an English Manor
6. Using a diagram of the PA court system, explain the function of the different levels.
7. Students will read and interpret primary sources

Lesson Plan:

I. Day 1

- A. Watch a scene from Judge Judy
- B. Discuss other legal show, *Judge Joe Brown*, *People's Court*, *Law & Order*, *CSI*, *Bones* and their role in society
- C. Refer back to Athenian and Roman courts- i.e. entertainment, open to the public
- D. Bring conversation around to key point-what is the purpose of such figures as Judge Judy or Joe Brown
- E. **Homework:** Research how local legal matters are settled. In paragraph format, write a description. Research can be completed on line but it's generally far easier to ask parents or other adults to explain the role of the local magistrate
- F. Key Points:
  - ↳ Americans enjoy legal matters for an entertainment value
  - ↳ Legal matters have been a source of entertainment for centuries
  - ↳ Local court systems serve a role of settling smaller disputes that do not require trials

II. Day 2

- A. Review and discuss answer to homework.
- B. Share video on PA courts
- C. Project diagram and information. Have students draw diagram, leaving room to take notes
- D. At each level, label the purpose and common complaints heard
- E. Give students some example cases and ask them to identify the jurisdiction of the case
  - ↳ Use White boards to ensure that all students are participating
- F. Discuss which level on the chart and not in our area but discuss why they are necessary and separate.
- G. Key Points:
  - ↳ Students will identify the levels of the PA court system
  - ↳ Students will identify the purpose of each level
  - ↳ Given a situation students will determine which jurisdiction a case would be heard

↳ Discuss the difference of Urban and Suburban/rural court needs

III. Day 3

- A. Review the manor system, focusing upon the social classes of people. Have students recreate the list, responsibilities, and social classes of people.
- B. Assign the students to groups of 3-4
- C. Refer students back to Day 1 and the general conversation about local complaints and problems.
- D. Create a chart format with the following information
  - ↳ Surmises,
  - ↳ Actual complaints,
  - ↳ what that tells us, significance
- E. For each social class on the list, groups of students will surmise what complaints the people of that class may have. These are to be written down the chart a chart format (Surmises, Actual complaints, what that tells us, significance).
- F. Distribute packets of legal stories from Medieval Manor Courts from The Ties that Bound and general information from Charlemagne.
  - ↳ Discuss/review primary sources
  - ↳ Students will identify the purpose for using such documents
  - ↳ The English were particularly thorough in their legal record keeping
- G. As a class read the segments from Charlemagne that identify who and what purpose a count provided. As a teacher discuss this as the basis for the Manor court system that developed under feudalism.
- H. Students will read the stories as a group, recording the complaints by general class, and the outcome)
- I. Key Points:
  - ↳ Identify the levels and rights/obligations of Manor society (not all people were equal)
  - ↳ Emphasize that not all people were equal
  - ↳ Identify the common complaints of people in the legal system
  - ↳ Identify the origin of the word court/count from Charlemagne
  - ↳ Identify the Manor Court system
  - ↳ Read the primary sources and analyze the common complaints.

IV. Day 4

- A. Complete work from previous day.
- B. Finally as a group complete the last segment of the chart, what this tells about the people of the class. Students are to make generalizations about values. Think like an anthropologist.
- C. Wrap-up: As a whole class, share generalizations. Discuss the court cases, values, and compare/contrast to today's system.
- D. **Homework:** Quiz on Day 5, Two parts label to include the sections of the PA court system and short answer question in which students will explain the purpose and functioning of the Manor Court system.
- E. Key Points:
  - ↳ Read the primary sources and analyze the common complaints.
  - ↳ Generalize the values and problems to different Medieval society

V. Day V

- A. Quiz

Resources:

1. PA Legal Systems: <http://www.courts.state.pa.us/Links/Public/AboutTheCourts.htm>
2. The Ties that Bound by Barbara Hanawalt
3. Charlemagne, Father of a Continent by Alessandro Barbero

Additional Information:

What methods will be used to present this information?

- Lecture
- Video
- Group work and discussion
- Primary sources
- Question and answer scenarios

What kind of evaluation will be used?

- Quiz
- Short Answer
- Question and answer
- Chart completion