



# COLONIAL COURTROOM CHAOS!

## *Guilty Until Proven Loyal? Mock Trial – Modern Parallels Teacher Guide*

This handout connects the colonial cases in the Guilty Until Proven Loyal? Mock Trial Activity to modern examples of legal inequality and economic impact. Use it during or after the trials to compare how rights and fairness are debated both in the 1700s and today.

### Case #1: Tea Smuggling

Colonial Context	Thomas Belling avoids British taxes by smuggling cheaper tea. Neighbors see him as a hero while the Crown calls him a criminal.
Modern Parallel	Small business owners today sell goods "off the books" to avoid high government fees or unfair tariffs.
Economic Impact Today	Loss of business licenses or heavy fines could destroy a small family business. Larger companies can afford expensive lawyers, while small owners cannot.
Discussion Prompt	When does avoiding unfair taxes make someone a criminal versus a hero?

### Case #2: Seditious Speech

Colonial Context	Samuel Green criticizes the King in public and is accused of sedition.
Modern Parallel	A protester today criticizes government policies on social media. In some nations this action is punished; in the United States, courts still handle free speech cases.

<b>Economic Impact Today</b>	People may lose jobs or face costly legal battles. Lawsuits over speech can drain resources.
<b>Discussion Prompt</b>	Should people ever be punished for speaking out against the government or leaders?

### Case #3: Illegal Assembly

<b>Colonial Context</b>	Tavern owner Elijah Whitfield is punished for allowing colonists to meet without the governor's permission.
<b>Modern Parallel</b>	Modern groups may be arrested if they gather for protests without a permit. Business owners can face penalties for hosting unauthorized events.
<b>Economic Impact Today</b>	Small businesses may face closure or fines. Arrests can bring legal fees, lost wages, and damaged reputations.
<b>Discussion Prompt</b>	Do you think the government should be able to limit when and where people gather to speak out?

### Case #4: Unlawful Search

<b>Colonial Context</b>	Captain Elias Turner refuses to allow British officers to search his ship without cause.
<b>Modern Parallel</b>	Today, this case connects to police searches without warrants, Transportation Security Administration, or digital privacy (phones, bank records).
<b>Economic Impact Today</b>	Property can be seized under civil asset forfeiture even before guilt is proven. Business owners may lose shipments or face huge costs.
<b>Discussion Prompt</b>	Should the government ever be allowed to search property without a warrant? Why or why not?