

CHARACTERS IN THE COURTROOM

Learning Objectives

Students will:

1. Understand the positions and responsibilities of all the officers of the court.
2. Utilize problem-solving skills through the use of analysis and evaluation.

TEKS: SS 5.19, 8.19C, Govt. 13B

Materials Needed:


- “Characters in the Courtroom” Learning Stations (1-11) attachment
- Copies of the “Diagram of a Courtroom” attachment for each student in the class

Vocabulary:

bailiff	judge
court reporter	juror
defendant	prosecuting attorney
defense attorney	witness

Teaching Strategy:

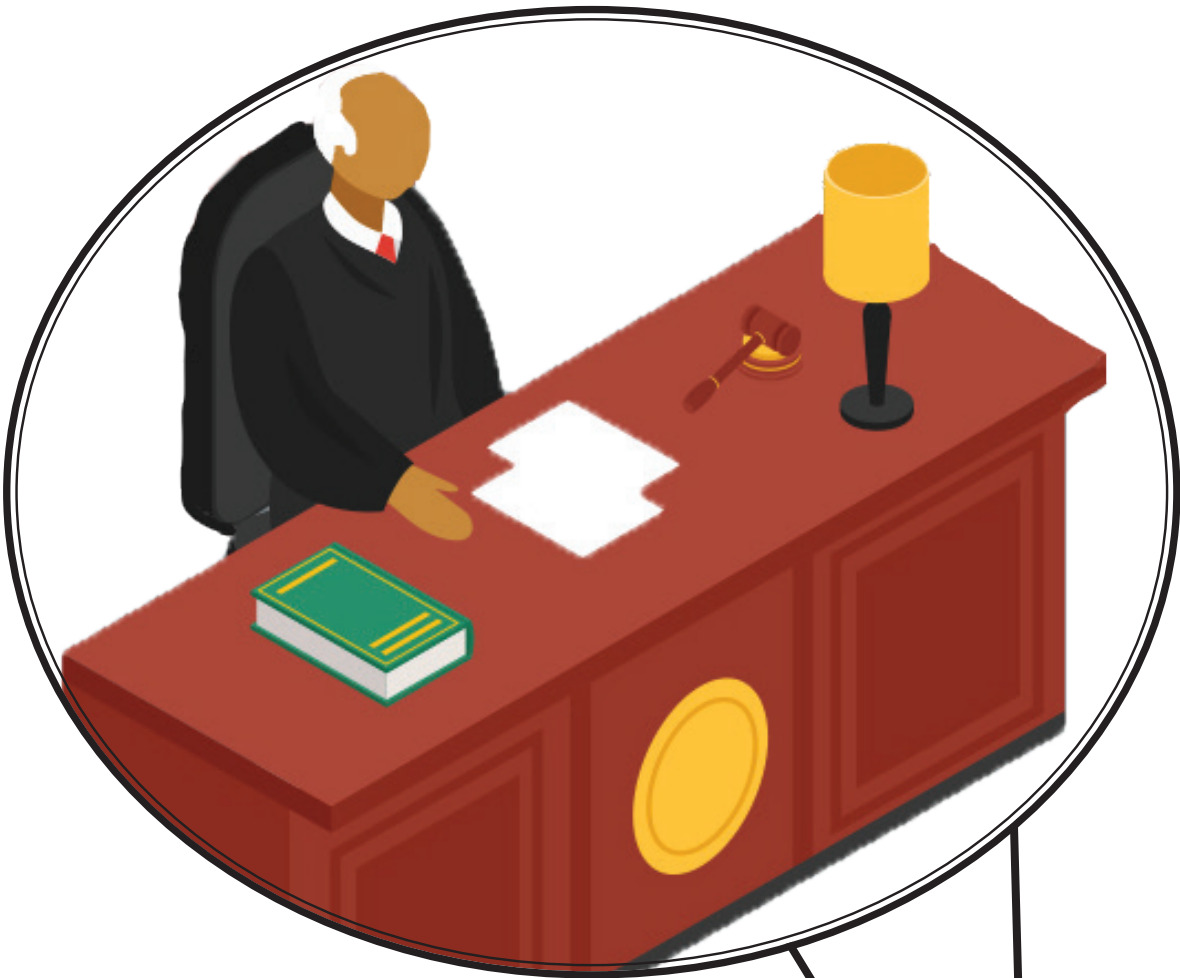
1. Preceding the lesson, tape the “Characters in the Courtroom” Learning Stations on the walls of the classroom.
2. Tell students that various people in the courtroom have special responsibilities to make sure that trials are fair and that everyone is treated equally.
3. Give each student a copy of “Diagram of a Courtroom.” Explain to students that the Learning Stations taped on the walls display the characteristics of the positions of each character in the courtroom. Using the information of each station, students should match the responsibilities listed on each station with the appropriate position listed on the identification sheet.
4. Allow time for students to visit each station and record their findings on the “Diagram of a Courtroom.” Students may work in pairs or independently.
5. After students have listed each station, debrief this part of the lesson by discussing the correct answers and the importance of each courtroom character.
6. To assess the students’ understanding, attach a label with the name of one of the courtroom characters on the back of each student in the class. (Students should not see the labels that are put on their backs. The names of the various courtroom characters may be used more than once.)

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7. Instruct students that they are going to play a game called “Who Am I?” Students will interact with classmates and try to determine which character they are by asking classmates questions about the job their characters perform. Their questions may only be answered by “yes” or “no,” and students are not allowed to ask specifically, “Am I the judge?” Questions can only cover information about their jobs. Students may only ask each classmate two questions. When students think they have figured out who they are, they should return to their seats.
 8. Ask each student to state who he or she thinks he or she is and why. Discuss the questioning strategies students used and the number of questions asked before discovering their identity.

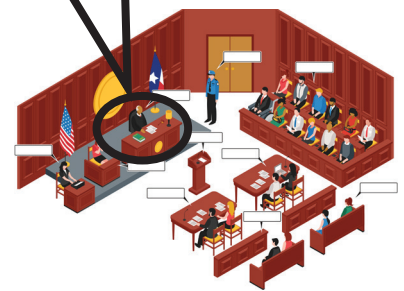
Extension for Gifted/Talented: Have students create a “Help Wanted Poster” for one of the characters in the courtroom. Posters should state the characteristics and responsibilities that their selected person should possess. A picture of the character described should also appear on the poster.



Learning Station #1

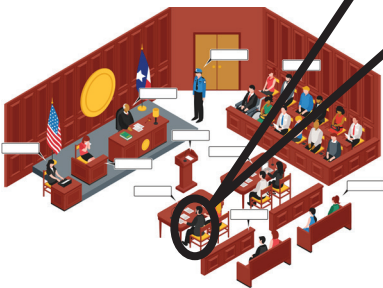


I make sure that the trial is fair and that everyone has a chance to present his or her side of the case. I sometimes have to rap my gavel to keep order in the court.



Learning Station #2

**In a criminal case, I am
the person accused of
breaking the law.**



Learning Station #3



During the trial, it is my job to record everything that is said by everyone in the courtroom. I usually type on a special machine similar to a typewriter.



Learning Station #4



I announce the entrance of the judge and swear in the witnesses. I ask them to swear an oath to tell the truth when they testify during the trial.

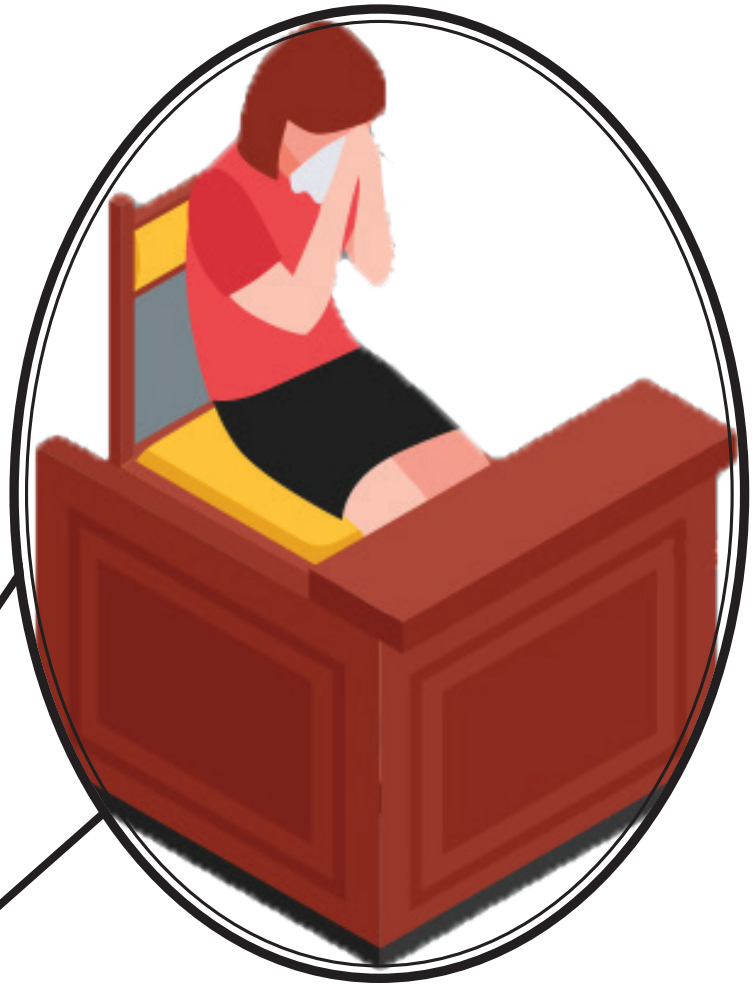
Learning Station #5



I am an attorney, and I represent the rights of the citizens of the State of Texas in a criminal case. It is my job to convince the jury that the defendant is guilty of breaking the law. One way I do this is by questioning witnesses on the facts of the case.



Learning Station #6



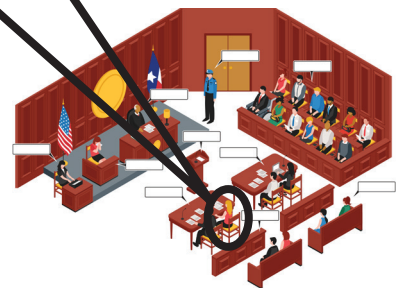
I have been asked to testify in court about what I know, have seen, and/or have heard concerning the facts of the case. I take an oath and promise to tell the truth.



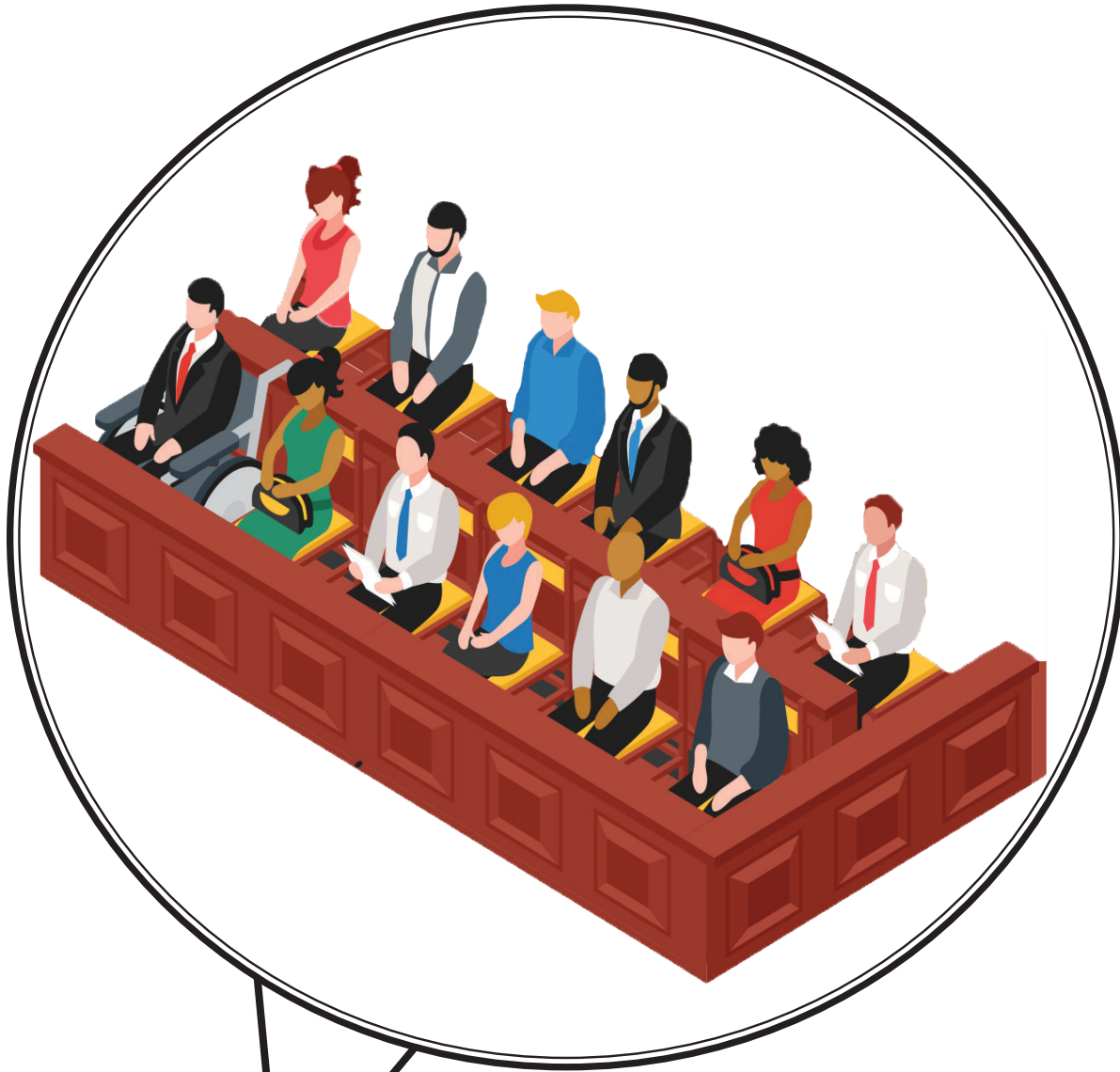
Learning Station #7



I am hired to help people with their criminal charges. I represent the defendant in criminal cases. During the trial, I question witnesses to bring out the facts of the case.



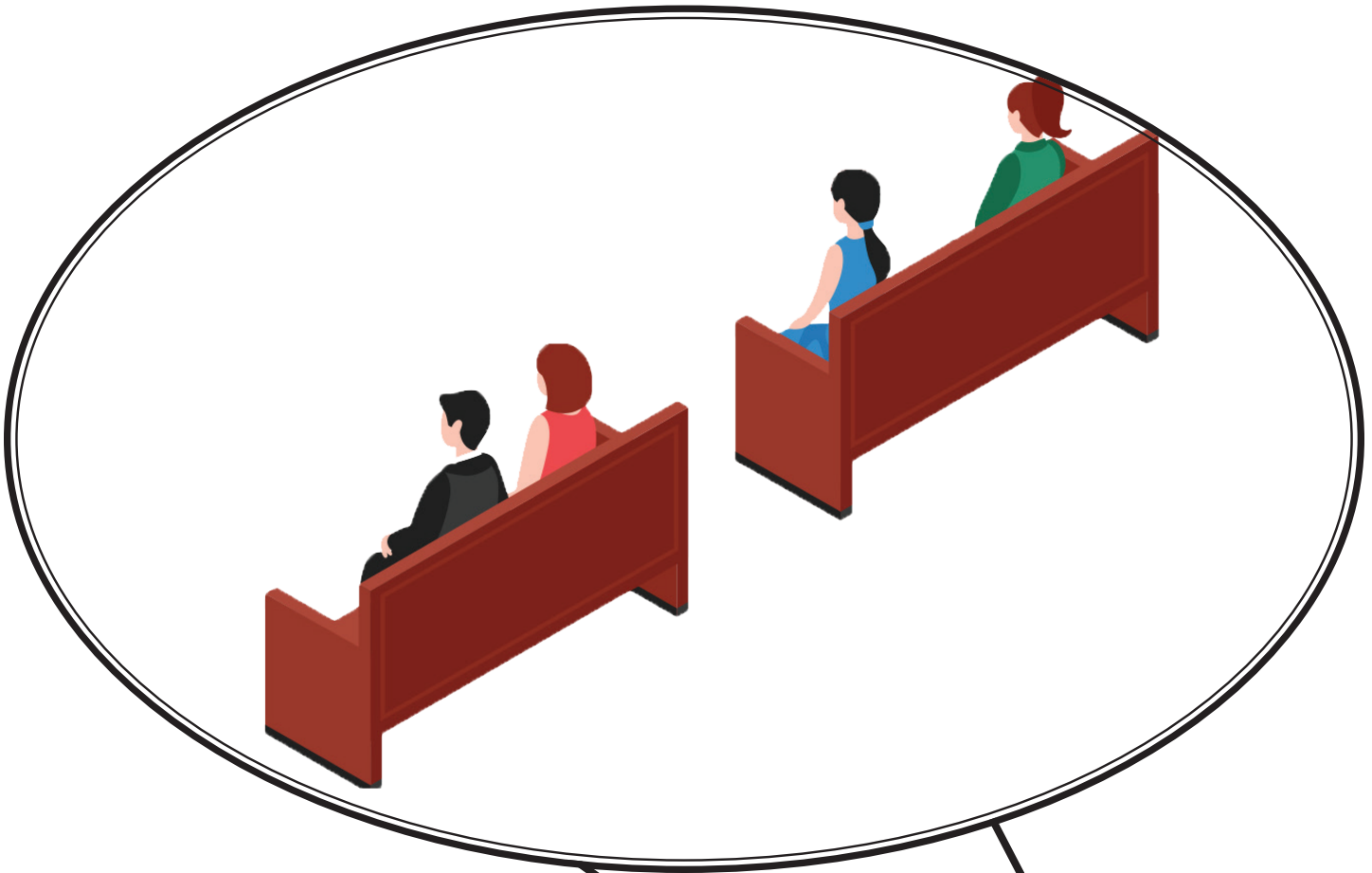
Learning Station #8



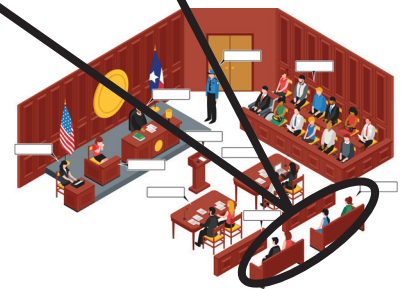
Twelve (or six) of us listen to the testimonies of all the witnesses during a trial. After the judge has given us special instructions, we decide the outcome, or verdict, of the trial.



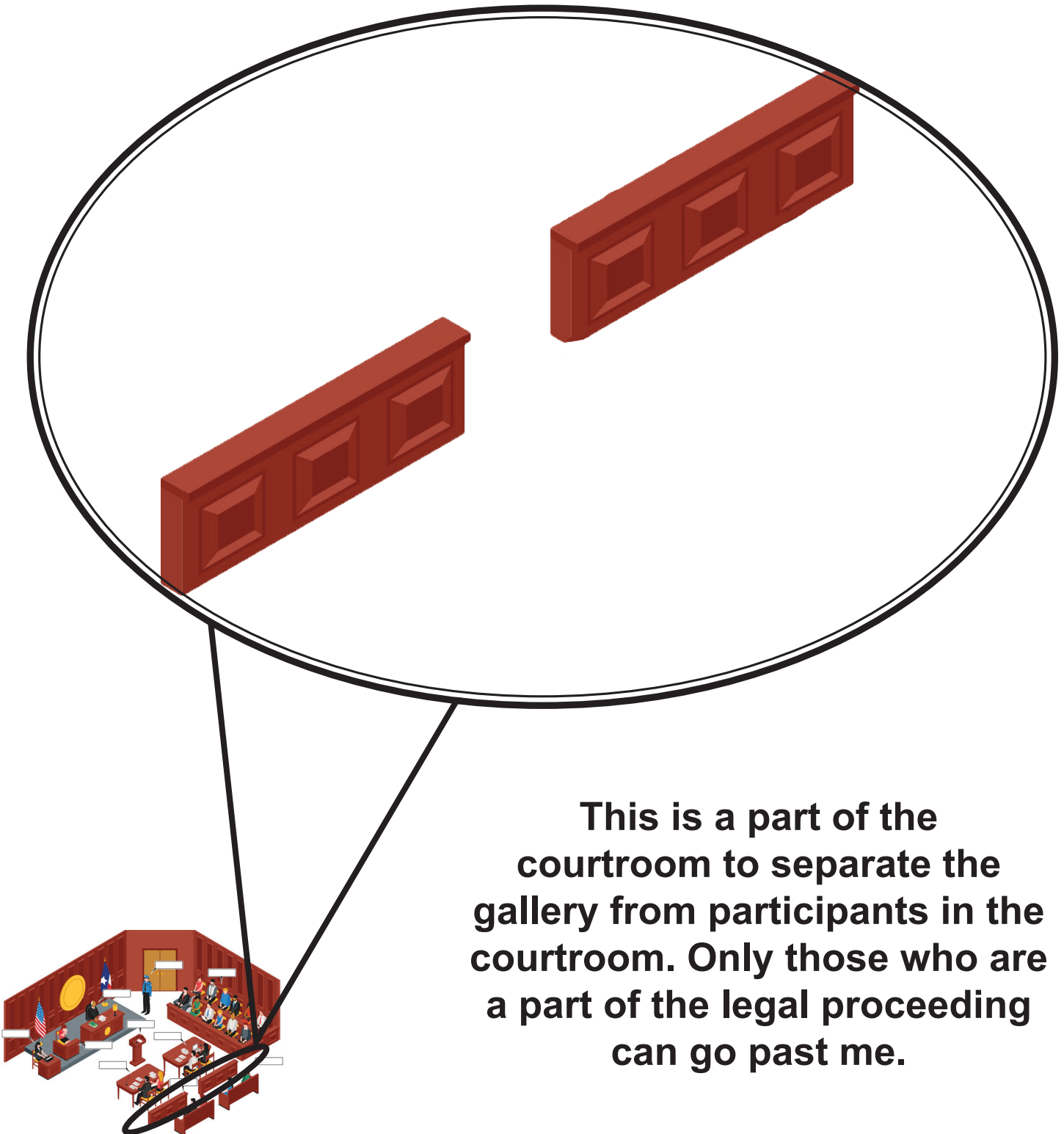
Learning Station #9



**I sit in the gallery
(audience). I may just be
interested in watching the
trial, or I may be a member
of the press, reporting on
the trial to the public.**

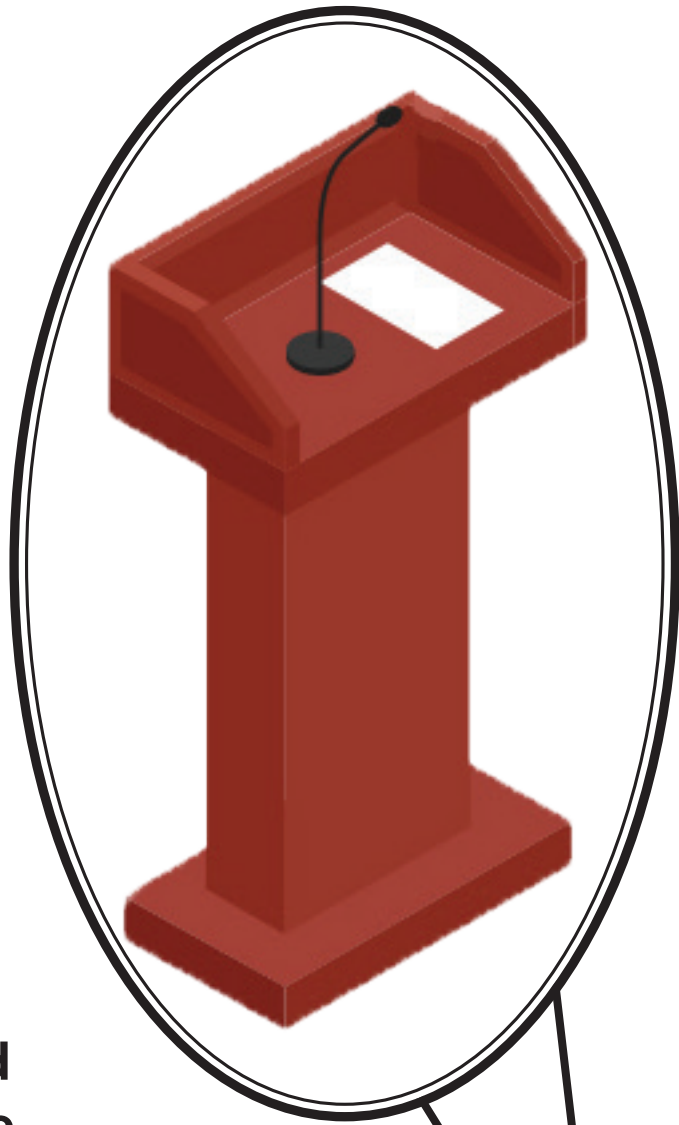


Learning Station #10

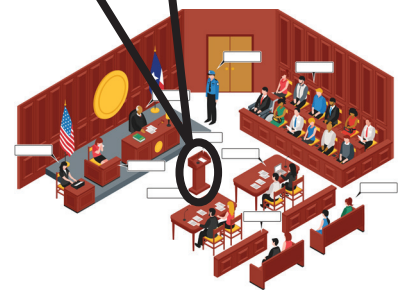


This is a part of the courtroom to separate the gallery from participants in the courtroom. Only those who are a part of the legal proceeding can go past me.

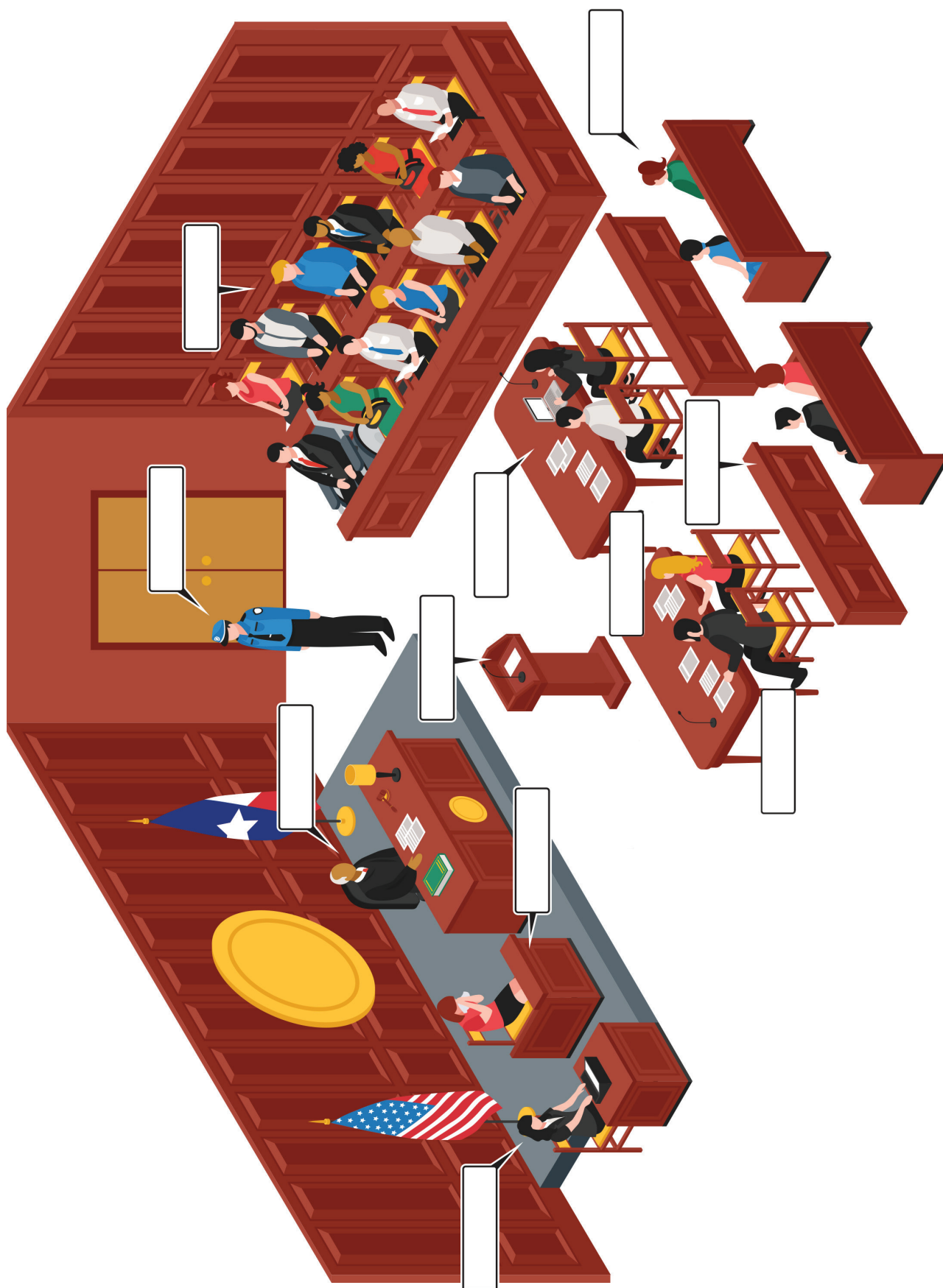
Learning Station #11



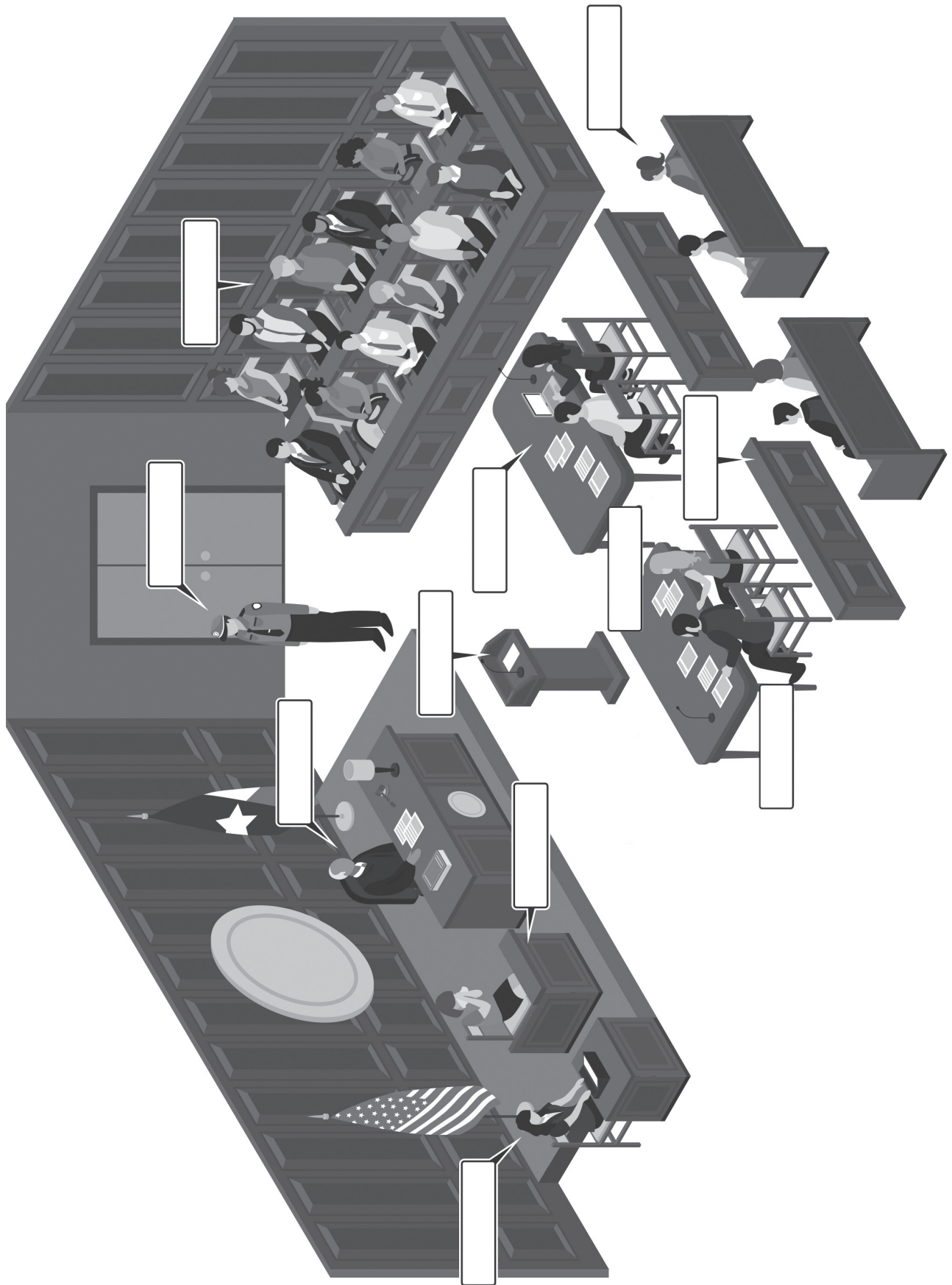
This is a part of the courtroom to where attorneys may stand while addressing the court. It often sits in the “well” of the courtroom (the area in front of the judge and jury.)

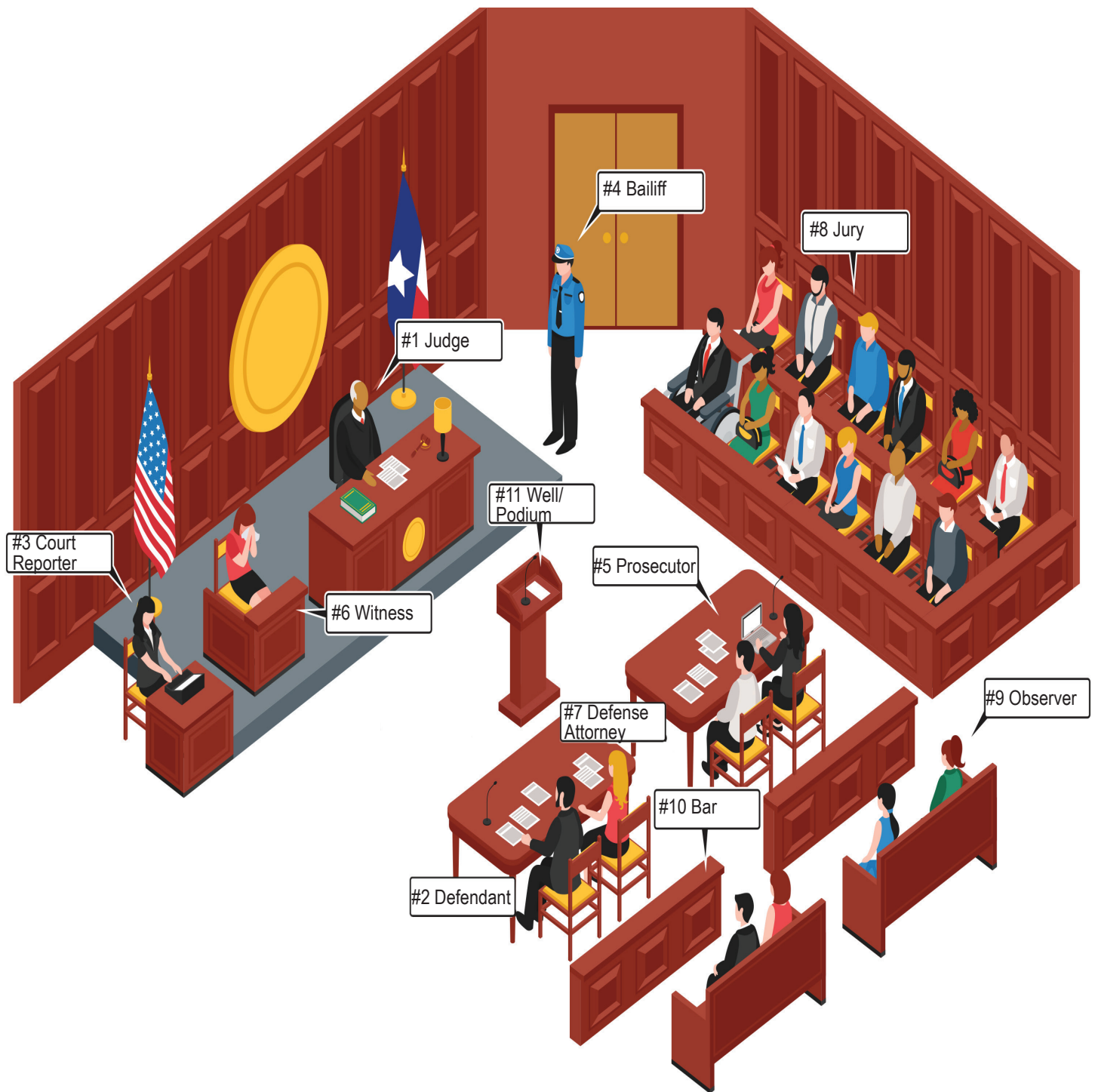


Courtroom Diagram: Characters in the Courtroom



Courtroom Diagram: Characters in the Courtroom





Answer Key

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|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Judge | 6. Witness |
| 2. Defendant | 7. Defense Attorney |
| 3. Court Reporter | 8. Jury |
| 4. Bailiff | 9. Observer |
| 5. Prosecutor | 10. Bar |
| | 11. Well/Podium |

Legal Terms for a Criminal Trial

Acquittal

Affidavit

Bailiff

Bench trial

Burden of proof

Charge to the jury

City ordinance

Class C Misdemeanor

Closing arguments

Contempt of court

Counsel

Court clerk

Crime

Criminal case

Cross-examination

Defendant

Defense attorney

Direct examination

Evidence

Felony

Judge

Judicial branch

Juror

Misdemeanor

Motion

Municipal courts

Not guilty

Objection

Opening statement

Overrule

Perjury

Prosecutor

Reasonable doubt

Rebuttal

Stipulated facts

Subpoena

Sustain

Summons

Testimony

Verdict

Voir dire

Witness

Definitions of Legal Terms in a Criminal Trial

Words Defined

Acquittal - A court decision of not guilty

Affidavit - A written statement made by a witness that is sworn to be true

Bailiff - The court official who maintains order in the courtroom

Bench trial - A trial conducted by a judge only; no jury

Beyond a reasonable doubt - The degree of proof required for a determination of guilt in a criminal trial

Burden of proof - The requirement to prove a disputed fact in court

Charge to the jury - Instructions to the jury by the judge

City ordinance - A law passed by a city, or county government that may be prosecuted as a crime

Class C misdemeanor - A crime punishable by fine only

Closing arguments - An attorney's last remarks to the jury, a summary of his or her case that calls the jury's attention to important testimony

Contempt of court - Willful disregard for orders made by the judge

Counsel - The legal representative of another; an attorney

Court clerk - Manages the court and handles paperwork

Crime - An act which the legislature has made unlawful by passing a statute declaring such acts to be illegal

Criminal case - A case in which someone is charged with having violated a criminal statute

Cross-examination - The questioning of a witness by the attorney representing the opposing side

Defendant - The person being charged with a crime


Defense attorney - The attorney representing the defendant

Direct examination - The questioning of a witness by the attorney who called him or her to testify

Evidence - Proof presented in court through witness testimony or exhibits

Felony - A crime for which a person can be sent to a state or federal prison; typically punishable by more than one year in prison





Judge - The person who decides questions of law, rules on objections, and instructs a jury at the close of a case

Judicial branch - The governmental branch that interprets law and resolves disputes

Juror - A citizen who serves on a jury which decides the outcome of a court case

Jury summons - An order to serve as a potential juror in court

Misdemeanor - A crime punishable by fine and/or up to one year in jail

Motion - Application in court made by a lawyer to obtain a rule in favor of his or her client

Municipal courts - Courts created by the Texas Legislature in each incorporated city of the state; courts that hear violations of city ordinances and Class C misdemeanors that occur within the city limits

Not guilty - Determination in a criminal case in favor of the defendant when not enough proof to find the defendant committed the crime has been presented

Objection - When an attorney for one side feels that something improper has occurred in the proceeding

Opening statement - A statement made by each side at the beginning of the trial, which gives a brief introduction of what each side intends to prove

Overrule - When the judge disagrees with an objection made by one of the attorneys in court

Perjury - Knowingly telling a lie in court after having sworn to tell the truth

Prosecutor - A lawyer who handles the criminal case on behalf of the State or city

Rebuttal - An additional argument given by the prosecution after the defense has presented its closing argument

Stipulated facts - Facts agreed upon by both parties before a trial begins

Subpoena - A court order to appear as a witness in a trial

Sustain - When the judge agrees with an objection that is made by one of the attorneys

Testimony - Evidence presented under oath by witnesses at a trial

Verdict - The decision made by a judge or jury as to the outcome of a trial

Voir dire - The process of selecting a jury; from a French phrase meaning “to see and to say”

Witness - A person who testifies in court