



ILLINOIS STATE  
BAR ASSOCIATION

# LAW-RELATED EDUCATION

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## IS JUSTICE BLIND?

An Elementary School Activity



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Ask students to study the image of Lady Justice above. This is the traditional symbol for Justice in the United States.

- Ask students why they think the figure is blindfolded.

Discuss impartiality. Justice does not “see” the differences in those who seek help. Decisions in U.S. Courts are not to be based on how people look, whether they are friends or foe, rich or poor, old or young. Ask how students how it would feel if they were judged by how they were dressed, who was sitting next to them, how tall they were or how they looked. Should a homeless person be treated differently than someone who lives in a big house? Should a person who wasn’t born in this country be treated the same as someone who was born here? Is it a good thing for justice to be blind?

- Ask students why they think the figure is holding scales.

Discuss fairness and equality. Scales represent equality and weighing the evidence to determine what is right and what is wrong, who has been hurt and how much. Ask students how they would feel if the scales could be tipped by threats to the judge or witnesses, or by bribes. What if the judge was friends with one of the parties in a trial? Would this be fair? Explain that judges need to “recuse” themselves if there is a conflict of interest to ensure fairness and equality.

- Ask students why they think the figure holds a sword.

The sword is a representation that an appropriate punishment will be determined by the Court. The sword is a symbol. It does not

mean that those who are guilty will be stabbed. Discuss ways of punishing those who are guilty. Explain what a “sentence” is.

What kind of factors should be considered when deciding on a punishment?

How severe the crime was?

The accused person’s age?

The accused person’s health?

How much money the accused person has?

What color the accused person is?

Where the accused person comes from? The community, out of state, or another country?



Here’s another depiction of Justice. Notice that the sword is now gone and has been replaced by a book. What would the book represent? (laws) Ask students if this is this a better was to depict justice? Is the book better than the sword?

Ask the students to think about the Pledge of Allegiance.

*I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America  
and to the Republic for which it stands,  
one Nation under God,  
indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.*

Is “liberty and justice for all” reflected accurately in the traditional symbol of Lady Liberty?

Are they pledging allegiance just to the flag or to the whole country?

What does indivisible mean?

When was the pledge written? Why?

Visit [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pledge\\_of\\_Allegiance#History](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pledge_of_Allegiance#History)

Even though the pledge was written after the Civil War, and after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, how did Lincoln influence the wording of the pledge as we know it now?

Visit [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pledge\\_of\\_Allegiance#History](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pledge_of_Allegiance#History)

And, finally, ask students to draw their own image showing how they would depict American Justice. Display the images around the classroom to celebrate the American Justice System.

For more resources on law-related education, visit the Illinois State Bar Association's LRE Website at <http://www.isba.org/Sections/lawrelateded.asp>



