

Student Law Office

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Reflective thinking exercises – creative performance

Introduction

These tasks are designed to encourage you to think reflectively about your clients' cases and the issues they throw up. They ask you to look creatively at the work that you are doing and to explore the human impact of crime and the legal system. Many of the activities you will find unusual or even uncomfortable and this is intentional – they are intended to make you think outside of the normal legal box.

It may not be immediately obvious to you how these activities will help you understand the law better or improve your legal skills. However, if you enter into the exercise with an open mind and a willingness to learn you will find that it helps you to see that the law is not just about rules but has a social, cultural and emotional significance.

Task

The criminal justice system is designed to make judgments about whether people are guilty of criminal offences and the appellate framework acts as a safeguard to try to ensure that convictions are safe.

You are working on behalf of convicted people. The system has judged them guilty of the crimes with which they were charged. Many are in prison or have served prison sentences. Nevertheless, most of the clients you work for claim to be innocent of the crimes they are said to have committed. They want you to help them to overturn their conviction. If you succeed this will be a huge impact on the life of your client but will also impact on the victims of the crimes that were committed and their families.

Select one of your cases, then select one of the topics from the list below and finally select one of the activities. Prepare the activity and come to the firm meeting ready to perform your activity and discuss this with the other members of the firm.

Step one: Case file

Select one of the files you are working on, have worked on or are familiar with through discussions in firm meetings. You do not need to have met the client, although it may help if you have. Your performance should not deal with the issues in the case in any detail but should be inspired by your thoughts about the case.

Step two: Topic (select one)

Whether your client is innocent
How your client would feel if their appeal was successful
Whether you care if your client committed the crime
Whether your client had a fair trial
How a juror might have felt when looking at your client's case
The prison life of your client
The attitudes of the victim or their family towards your client

Step three: Activity (select one)

Note the activity must be creative as opposed to analytical. This is *not* intended to be a legal analysis.

Write and read out a monologue
Write and read out a poem
Choreograph and perform a dance
Write and perform a short play / dialogue (you will need a volunteer to play one of the parts – you will play the other)
Draw and describe a picture / painting
Take and display some photographs
Prepare and perform a mime act
Write and read a short story
Produce and show a short video film
Prepare and perform a puppet show
Prepare and deliver a role play
Write and sing a song
Write and tell a fairy tale
Compile and show a video diary
Write and read fictional prison diary entries

Step four: Performance

Come to the firm meeting ready to perform the activity. It should take between 5 and 10 minutes including any explanation you wish to provide.

Any constructive or supportive comments you have on others' performances will be welcome.

Step five: Afterwards

After the firm meeting you should prepare a written reflection of approximately half a page explaining the performances you have seen, how you felt performing your own activity and whether the experience has made you think in any different way or feel in any different way about the criminal justice system.