Name: _____ Date: _____

A Judge Who Cannot Pick a Side

Circle group

A judge has a hard job. Two sides disagree. The judge listens to both and helps decide what is fair. To do this, a judge must be impartial. That means the judge does not favor one side.

Judges follow rules to stay fair. Before a case starts, a judge thinks about who is involved. Say the judge's cousin is on one side. Or say the judge owns part of a company that is being sued. Then the judge must step away. Another judge takes over. This is called recusal.

A judge may not talk about a case with only one side. Both sides hear everything, or it is written down and shared with both. The judge decides using the facts and the law. The choice should not depend on what is popular.

This matters because people accept a decision more easily if the judge was fair. Think of a referee in a game. If the referee's brother played for one team, everyone would worry about the calls.

Questions

1. What does impartial mean?

_____

_____

2. When must a judge step away from a case?

_____

_____

3. What is it called when a judge steps away from a case?

_____

_____

4. What does a judge use to decide?

_____

_____

5. Why do people accept a fair judge's decision more easily?

_____

_____

6. Why is a judge like a referee?

_____

_____

Words to know

impartial: not favoring one side over the other
recusal: when a judge steps away from a case to stay fair
popular: liked by many people
involved: taking part in something
referee: a person who makes sure a game is played by the rules

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

A Judge Who Cannot Pick a Side

Triangle group

A judge in a courtroom has a hard job. Two sides disagree, and the judge must listen to both and help decide what is fair. For this to work, a judge has to be impartial. That means the judge does not favor one side over the other.

Judges follow rules that protect this. Before a case begins, a judge thinks about whether he or she knows anyone involved. Suppose a judge's cousin is on one side of the case. Or suppose the judge owns part of a company that is being sued. In situations like these, the judge must step away, and another judge takes over. This is called recusal.

Judges also may not talk about a case with only one side. Everything said to the judge is said while both sides can hear it, or it is written down and shared with both. The judge then decides using the facts and the law. A decision is not supposed to depend on what is popular or on who has more friends.

Why does this matter? People accept a decision more easily when they believe the judge was fair, even if they lose. Think of a referee in a game. If the referee's brother played for one team, everyone would worry about the calls.

Questions

1. What does it mean for a judge to be impartial?

_____

_____

2. When must a judge step away from a case?

_____

_____

3. What is the word for a judge stepping away from a case?

_____

_____

4. What does a judge use to make a decision?

_____

_____

5. Why do people accept a decision more easily when the judge was fair?

_____

_____

6. Why does the passage compare a judge to a referee?

_____

_____

Words to know

impartial: not favoring one side over the other
recusal: when a judge steps away from a case to stay fair
popular: liked by many people
involved: taking part in something
referee: a person who makes sure a game is played by the rules

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

A Judge Who Cannot Pick a Side

Square group

A judge presiding over a courtroom faces a demanding task. Two sides disagree, and the judge must listen carefully to both before helping to decide what is fair. For that to be possible, a judge has to be impartial, which means refusing to favor one side over the other.

Judges follow a number of rules that protect this fairness. Before a case begins, a judge considers whether he or she knows anyone involved. Suppose a judge's cousin is on one side of the case, or suppose the judge owns part of a company that is being sued. In circumstances like these, the judge is expected to step away so that a different judge can take over. This practice is called recusal.

Judges are also forbidden from discussing a case with only one side. Everything said to the judge is said while both sides can hear it, or it is written down and shared with both. The judge then reaches a decision by relying on the facts and the law, and not on what happens to be popular or on who has more friends.

Why does all of this matter? People tend to accept a decision more readily when they believe the judge was fair, even if they lose. Consider a referee in a game: if the referee's brother played for one of the teams, everyone would worry about every call.

Questions

1. What does it mean for a judge to be impartial?

_____

_____

2. Under what circumstances is a judge expected to step away from a case?

_____

_____

3. What is the practice of a judge stepping away called?

_____

_____

4. What should a judge rely on when reaching a decision?

_____

_____

5. Why are people more willing to accept a decision they lose when the judge was fair?

_____

_____

6. What does the example of the referee's brother show about judges?

_____

_____

Words to know

impartial: not favoring one side over the other
recusal: when a judge steps away from a case to stay fair
popular: liked by many people
involved: taking part in something
referee: a person who makes sure a game is played by the rules

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: A Judge Who Cannot Pick a Side

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: A Judge Who Cannot Pick a Side

Easier · 167 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.4

1. The judge does not favor one side.
2. When the judge knows someone in it or owns part of a company in it.
3. Recusal.
4. The facts and the law.
5. They trust the result, even if they lose.
6. Both must not favor one side, or people will doubt their decisions.

Triangle: A Judge Who Cannot Pick a Side

This passage · 213 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 4.8

1. The judge does not favor one side over the other.
2. When the judge knows someone involved or owns part of a company in the case.
3. Recusal.
4. The facts and the law.
5. They trust the result, even if they lose.
6. Both must not favor either side, or people will doubt their decisions.

Square: A Judge Who Cannot Pick a Side

Harder · 230 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.7

1. The judge refuses to favor one side over the other.
2. When the judge knows someone involved or owns part of a company in the case.
3. Recusal.
4. The facts and the law.
5. They believe the process was honest, so they trust the result.
6. Anyone making rulings must not favor a side, or people will doubt the calls.