



## The Trial of Humans

This activity will take the form of a **trial** (technically this is a debate, but trials tend to sound more fun to students). It will be the case of **Humans vs. Animals**. Humans stand accused of committing **atrocities** against the community of living beings (which includes mammals, reptiles, microbes, insects, fishes, birds etc.).

Specifically, humans are **accused** of habitat destruction, natural resource exploitation, global climate destabilisation, and many more crimes. The presiding judge is an owl, who is said to be the wisest creature of them all. Should the judge and jury decide that humans are guilty, then they shall be **banished** from Earth.

### Instructions

This activity will require you to divide the class into **two**. One group will represent the humans, while the other group will stand in for the animals (they are welcome to be any kind of animal they choose). You, of course, will be the judge! Each group will be tasked with researching their side's arguments.

- The human side will need to think of several reasons for why humans **should be allowed to remain** on Earth. These may include points such as their intellect, their ability to build complex machines, etc.
- The animal side will need to prepare a list of reasons for why **humans should not be allowed to remain** on Earth. These may include points such as their destructive habits, their inability to co-exist with other species, etc.

*\* Each side should aim to have at least one argument per student however that may not always be possible.*





# Teacher's Guide



It should take the two groups around **15–20 minutes** to think of their arguments. After this is done, you will present a **twist**. You will randomly select several students from both sides to form a third group: **the jury**. You will need to explain to students that the jury will sit alongside the judge and that it will be in charge of hearing both sides' arguments and reaching a **conclusion** with help from the judge. It's important that you tell the students that the jury is to be **neutral** (they should not automatically choose the side they were on but should have an open mind). It may help to make clear how special and **important** this role is so students are proud and do it well. The jury should be an **odd** number of students.

For the next **5-10 minutes**, the animal and human groups will need to organise their arguments so that each student knows which argument is theirs and in which order they will be presenting. Meanwhile, the jury should privately discuss amongst each other what they learnt **during** the preparation phase. This should help the jury become **less biased** as its members should gain a better understanding of **both** sides of the argument.

Once all the groups are ready, the trial can commence! The jury should sit in the **middle** of the room, with the **animals** on one side and the **humans** on the other. The judge (you) will stand in the centre and help **facilitate** the debate. The first speakers can come to the middle and flip a coin (or play rock paper scissors) to see which side will begin.

Once the first speaker has presented their side's first argument, the opposing side can choose whether to respond to it directly or to voice their own first argument. After each side has presented an argument, the opposing side should **always** be given the chance to respond to it directly (if they choose to do so) before they move on to their next argument. Once both sides have exhausted all their arguments, then it will be time for the **judge** and **jury** to **decide** on the **final verdict**, which can be returned to the class by one of the jurors.

During the debate, you can **help** any students who may be struggling with their arguments and ensure the debate flows smoothly by prompting students to respond to an argument or by requesting that the next argument be presented.

We welcome feedback and would be delighted to hear your thoughts on this activity. Feel free to send an email to [schools@climatescience.org](mailto:schools@climatescience.org) and we'll be sure to get back to you soon :)

