

Aligned to Common Core State Standards



Lesson Plans and Activities for the

THEODORE
kid lawyer

BOONE

series by John Grisham



PenguinClassroom.com

Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer Core Curriculum Guide

Dear Educator,

This core curriculum lesson plan provides information and materials to support the use of *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer* in a civics, social studies, or language arts classroom. This legal thriller is an exciting way to introduce middle school students to the courts, the legal system, and the anatomy of a criminal trial. Students also learn valuable lessons about the rights of the accused, the jury system, and are exposed to career opportunities in the legal and criminal justice systems. Teachers are advised to create a Word Wall in the classroom to assist with vocabulary development and retention throughout the use of the book. The materials are designed to support the book with more accurate and state-specific information on the legal process as well as correlations to the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in Social Studies. We hope you'll use this comprehensive lesson plan as a way to present all that Theo has to offer to your students!

—Penguin School & Library

About the Series:

In the small city of Strattenburg, there are many lawyers, and though he's only thirteen years old, Theo Boone thinks he's one of them. Theo knows every judge, policeman, court clerk—and a lot about the law. He dreams of being a great trial lawyer, of a life in the courtroom. Brimming with the intrigue and suspense that made John Grisham a #1 international bestseller and the undisputed master of the legal thriller, *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer* will keep readers guessing and pages turning.

About the Author:

John Grisham is the author of 26 novels, one work of nonfiction, and one collection of stories. His works are translated into 39 languages. He lives in Virginia and Mississippi.

This guide was created by Annette Boyd Pitts, founding Executive Director of the Florida Law Related Education Association. Pitts is a respected author, program and curriculum developer, trainer, and education policy consultant in the fields of civic and law-related education. She has worked in over 25 countries to advance education for democracy efforts and has served as a Framers and Writers for the civics and government standards (grades 6–12) for the Florida Department of Education.



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Objectives:

As a result of these activities, students will be able to:

- Evaluate characteristics and qualifications of judges and lawyers
- Distinguish between civil and criminal law
- Illustrate the criminal trial process
- Identify constitutional principles and safeguards related to the rights of the accused
- Recognize the importance of jury service
- Analyze professional occupational options in the legal and criminal justice fields
- Develop arguments based on logic and reason
- Evaluate arguments based on the relevance and sufficiency of evidence.

Additionally, students will strengthen their reading, writing, research, comprehension, collaboration, speaking and listening skills.

Pre-Reading Assignment:

Prior to beginning the book, visit <http://www.theodoreboone.com/>, the official Theodore Boone Web site. Introduce students to John Grisham, the international bestselling author of the Theodore Boone book series. Show the photo and highlight his accomplishments. Next, show the four short videos (15 seconds each) from the Web site to serve as a teaser and to interest students in reading the book. Note: Do not show the courtroom section of the Web site at this time.

Important Note to Teachers:

Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer is a legal thriller and a work of fiction. The information presented is not factual or reality-based. For example, Theodore mentions on multiple occasions that he “hacks” into a computer to access information from the courts. Help your students understand that hacking means accessing a computer program and bypassing its security system, which is an illegal act if this scenario were found in a nonfiction text.

Additionally, Theodore is presented in the book as providing legal advice to friends and school staff although he is too young to have earned a law degree or a license to practice law. Usually his advice is followed by “you should talk to a lawyer.” Emphasize that only licensed lawyers are able to provide legal advice, represent clients, and prepare legal documents.



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Chapters 1–2

- Begin class by asking students to name their favorite legal television show, movie, or courtroom drama. (Examples: *Judge Judy* or *Judge Mathis*, *Law & Order*, or *Perry Mason*.) Have students name the shows and generally describe each one. Remind students that while some aspects of these movies or television shows may be based on real cases, these are programs designed for entertainment and may not reflect the actual realities of the legal process.
- In small groups of five, ask students to work together to draw a diagram of a trial courtroom on chart paper and label its features. Students should also identify the persons present in a courtroom during a trial, and their corresponding professions. (Chapter Two of *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer* will be helpful.) Students should design what they think a courtroom looks like from memory and without research at this point. They should label the diagram as well as list the people who are usually present in a courtroom.
- Post chart papers around the room. Remaining in their same groups, have students rotate clockwise to the next poster. Each group should maintain a color marker (each group should have a different color) throughout the review and make notes on the diagrams in that color throughout the exercise. They should review the diagram and list at the bottom any aspect of the poster that they agree or disagree with. If everything is correct on the poster, the group should place a check mark. If they disagree with specific aspects of the poster, they should place an X by the specific item and note the area of disagreement.
- Debrief as a full class and compare the diagrams and comments.
- Visit the Theodore Boone Web site and look at the Courtroom component. This will provide a generic overview of the layout of the courtroom as well as some of the people who work within the legal system. <http://www.theodoreboone.com/courtroom.html>

Correlations to Common Core Standards: RH 6.4, 7.4, 8.4, 6.7, 7.7, 8.7; SL 7.5

Chapters 3–5

- Have students research the difference between trial and appellate courts. Encourage them to locate diagrams of trial and appellate courts in their specific states and differentiate between the two types of courts.



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- Have students write a two or three paragraph paper distinguishing between trial and appellate courts in their state and the hierarchy of law. Students should highlight how the courts operate, what kinds of cases are handled in each court, the general layout of the court, distinguishing factors, and number of judges.
- Debrief and show a picture of a real trial courtroom from your state and an appellate courtroom. Let students know there are trial and appellate courts at the state and federal levels.
- Show students how a case progresses through the courts at the state and federal levels. Let students know that most of the cases mentioned in *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer* would be state court cases. Highlight for students that the names of courts at the state level may differ from state to state. After researching the types of trial and appellate courts in your state, students should insert the appropriate names in each level of the class diagram.
- Review the hierarchy of laws and courts and highlight the highest law in the land.
- The numbers of jurors may also differ from state to state. Have students check your state laws to see how many jurors are utilized for different types of cases in your state.

Correlations to Common Core Standards: RH 6.3, 6.4, 6.7, 7.3, 7.4, 7.7, 8.3, 8.4, and 8.7

Chapters 6–8

- In *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer*, multiple chapters list different types of cases. For example, family law, divorce, criminal law, traffic, small claims, etc. Have students make a list by chapter of the types of cases mentioned.
- Review with students the differences between civil and criminal cases. Then have students classify the cases mentioned in *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer* as civil or criminal. If unsure or if they think it could be either civil or criminal, have students list why. Review and debrief.
- Ask students specifically about the Duffy trial. Is it a civil or criminal case? Why? The correct answer should be criminal as it was a murder trial. Highlight the general process from arrest through sentencing in a criminal case. Using *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer*, have students work in small groups to diagram the process utilized in conducting the trial.



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- Alternatively, have students bring in newspaper articles about trials.
- In small groups, have students review their articles and determine if the cases discussed would be state court cases or federal court cases. Also classify the cases by trial court or appellate court and then by civil or criminal cases. Share and debrief in class. Keep copies of the articles for additional exercises.
- As a culminating activity to this section, ask students to write a two to four paragraph paper utilizing multiple sources to answer one of the following two questions:
 - 1) If the case *State v. Duffy* was tried in your state, how would the case progress through the state courts? Using appropriate vocabulary, set the stage for the trial, including who would be present in the courtroom at each level, how many jurors would be on the jury, and what types of attorneys would argue the case. (Students should be graded on this assignment.)
 - 2) How does the *State v. Duffy* in the *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer* book compare to a case you are already familiar with in your own state or another state? The case can be contemporary or historical. Highlight the similarities and differences between the two cases.
- Students should also integrate their knowledge into a Glogster presentation or poster to share with the class. They can incorporate photos and video to make it a multimedia presentation. See: <http://www.glogster.com/>
- To reinforce and debrief the writing exercise, invite a local criminal court judge or attorney to class to discuss the process for a murder trial in your state.

Note:

Students should have access to documents including the state constitution to provide the foundation for the structure and function of the state courts. Provide an outline to help students navigate the branches of government through the articles as established in each state's constitution. Additionally, students should research state laws which highlight criminal procedure, composition of the jury, etc.

*** Correlations to Common Core Standards: W 7.2, 7.6-7.9; SL 7.1a,b,c,d, and 7.2**



Chapters 9–13

Discuss the role of judges in our legal system:

- Each state may have different methods for selecting judges. However, judges in all states are expected to make decisions based on the law, not based on political pressures, public opinion, or other outside influences. Judges should be fair and impartial.
- Judges have certain rules they must follow in their courtroom as well as certain ethical standards.
- Additionally, each state may have different qualifications to be a judge. Most states require judges to be lawyers or members of the State Bar (professional organization for attorneys) for a certain number of years before becoming a judge.
- Attorneys also are required to have specialized training and education. They must also pass a test for their particular state or jurisdiction.
- Attorneys are “officers of the court” and must swear to uphold the Oath of Admission to their State Bar and to the practice of law.
- Both judges and lawyers can be disciplined for violating their codes of conduct. See sample Code of Judicial Conduct for Florida: <http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/decisions/ethics/index.shtml>

Drawing upon information learned in previous activities as well as the book, divide the class into three groups:

- One group will serve as trial judges, one group will be the prosecuting attorneys and one group will be the criminal defense attorneys.
- Provide each group with their specific roles and instruct students to use and cite specific pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says in the book as well as inferences drawn from the text.



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- Students serving as attorneys should work together in their respective groups to discuss the opening statements in *State v. Duffy* and prepare bullet points to highlight arguments for their side.
- Students should use logic and reason in developing their opening statements. Then individually, each student will write their opening statements and practice how to deliver or present the statements orally.
- The judges' group will review the opening statements as presented in *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer* to determine a foundation of how opening arguments were presented in the book. The judicial group should also review the elements of the code of judicial conduct for your state so they will understand what is expected of them on the bench.

Once each group has prepared for the activity, reassemble the groups with one judge, one prosecuting attorney and one defense attorney in each small group. When assembled, have the judge call the case of *State of (insert your state name) v. Peter Duffy* and ask both sides if they are ready to begin. (The judge should also remind the "jury" what the opening arguments will and will not provide as noted in *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer*.)

The Prosecuting Attorney will provide opening statements followed by the defense attorney. Each side will have 3 minutes to present the summaries of their case and what they intend to demonstrate in the trial. The judge will time each attorney. No one is allowed to object or interrupt. Students may use the book to develop their opening arguments. Judges should provide feedback at the end concerning the attorneys' speaking skills, demeanor, and presentation.

Debrief as a full class. Ask the judges for their feedback on the opening arguments. The attorneys should also provide feedback on the demeanor of the judge in their groups:

- Were they attentive and listening throughout the opening arguments? Were the judges respectful to the lawyers? Were the judges punctual in beginning court in a prompt manner and in providing equal time to each side? Did the judge interrupt the attorneys during their arguments? Ask students what is the importance of an opening statement is. How does it set the stage for the remainder of the trial? How should juries analyze the opening statement with respect to the overall trial? You may allow select students to demonstrate their arguments in front of the class. Judges may aid in the selection process. Teachers may elect to show clips of effective and ineffective opening arguments from actual trials.

Correlations to Common Core Standards: WHST 7.1; SL 7.3, 7.4, 7.6; RL 7.1, 7.8



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Chapters 14–16

- *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer* provides opportunities to strengthen student knowledge on the constitutional principles and safeguards relating to the rights of the accused. Students will learn about the rights guaranteed when accused of a crime and the corresponding principles related to criminal trials.
- First, have students review the terms associated with constitutional rights of the accused. (If possible, provide a copy of the handout to each student.) Ask them to familiarize themselves with the concepts and principles.
- Then, assemble students in small groups (3–5 students each). Assign each group a different principle and case to research. Each group will prepare a Glogster multimedia presentation for each case. Students should be given adequate time in class to work on these projects.
- Recreate (on chart paper) the Constitutional Principles so that it may be presented or displayed in the classroom. On the top of the chart paper write the name of the concept or principle you are addressing as the title. Under the name of the concept, write the definition of the term. For example: Right to legal counsel: provides the right to an attorney, for persons who cannot afford an attorney, the government will appoint one to represent you. Next cite where the concept is found in the US Constitution. Cite the specific Article and Section or amendment?
- Then create a visual to help students remember the concept and apply it to specific scenarios. It should be a symbol or picture that will be easy to associate with the concept or principle.
- Using the US Supreme Court case listed for each concept, research the case on www.oyez.com or another site to locate information and resources to help with the remainder of this component. Write the name of the case and the year it was heard or decided in the US Supreme Court. Try to locate a photo affiliated with the parties in the case or some other representation to signify the concept.
- Provide a short summary of the case, lower court rulings, the question before the US Supreme Court, and arguments on each side. Finally include the decision of the court and reasoning on each side.



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- If using the Glogster component, incorporate the multimedia component from the www.oyez.com site within the presentation as it contains the oral recordings and transcripts, etc.
- Students should end each presentation or poster with a summary of the outcome and significance of the case.
- Extension activities may include a simulation of the oral arguments in the US Supreme Court.


Correlations to Common Core Standards: RL 7.8, W 7.4, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8; SL 7.1, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6; RH 6.1-4, 6.7-8

Chapters 17–19

Theodore Boone wants a career in law! Ask students specifically what two legal careers Theodore Boone dreams of when he becomes an adult (judge or trial lawyer). Determine what he will need to do in order to be a trial lawyer or a judge in your state.

- Students should research for homework and complete the career pathways handout.
- In small groups, have students share their charts and information and determine similarities and differences. They should review information found on their State Bar Association Web site, state constitutions (for judicial qualifications), law schools in their state, or other relevant resources. Students should cite resources and turn in their handouts.
- Have students work in small groups to identify other career opportunities involved in the legal or criminal justice system. Make a list of such positions and divide among group members to research education requirements and other experience needed for each position.
- Have students prepare employment advertisements for a position using each of the careers selected. Create a bulletin board entitled *Justice Wanted* and include samples of the job announcements to create an awareness of the career opportunities available. Debrief and relate back to characters in *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer*. For homework, have students identify the characters in the book with specific positions and career opportunities identified in class.
- Explore legal heroes in our country! Research and write about outstanding lawyers or judges that have played an influential role in our American legal system.
- Provide *State v. Duffy* case materials to simulate a criminal jury trial.





**Teachers: Encourage your
students to join the
Theo Boone fan club!**

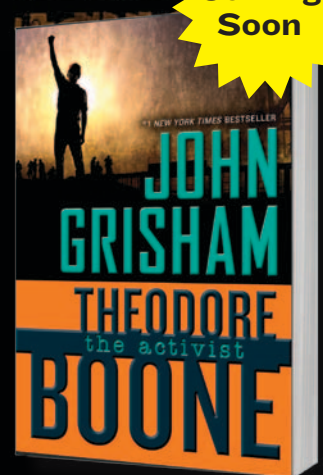
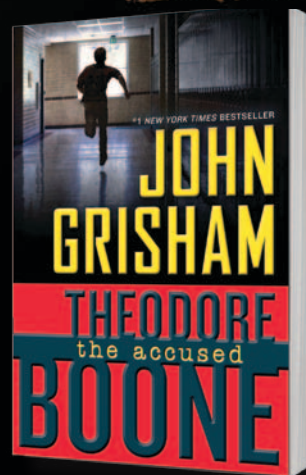
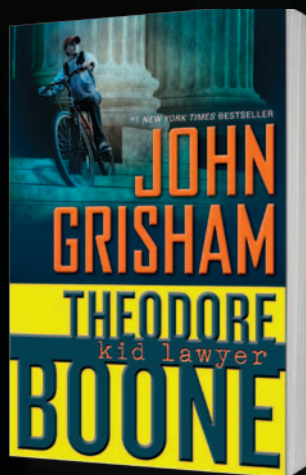
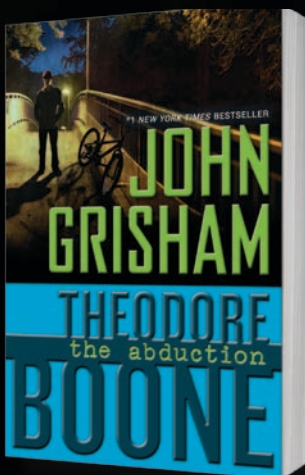
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A young boy wearing a red cap and a grey jacket is riding a bicycle on a stone path. In the background, there are large, classical stone columns of a building. The scene is lit with a cool, blueish-green light.

Praise for #1 *New York Times* bestselling Theodore Boone series:

"Smartly written"

—USA Today

"Edge-of-your-seat drama, sophisticated plotting, and plenty of spunk"

—Chicago Sun-Times

"Classic Grisham"

—The Los Angeles Times

"Not since Nancy Drew has a nosy, crime-obsessed kid been so hard to rest."

—The New York Times

"Gripping...I would recommend this book to anyone who loves a good mystery. I think everyone will be enthralled by Theodore Boone."

—Scholastic News