

The Trial of Mitsy-Bitsy Mosquito

A Puppet Show or Dramatization

Essential Question:

Who is a pest?

Background Information:

See *Background Information for Garden Earth – Pest and Disease Control*

Getting Ready:

Decide who will perform the puppet show. Will it be the students, the teachers or a classroom volunteer? This script, ‘The Trial of Mitsy-Bitsy Mosquito’ can be used either as a mock trial dramatization (with children reading the parts) or as a puppet show. Three puppeteers will be needed if you present it as a puppet show. One puppeteer will perform the judge and Mitsy, the second will perform both the attorneys while the third will perform the Bailiff and all of the other puppets.

Other characters can be added, depending on numbers of your group. For example, there could be six or twelve jurors. Or there could be some additional witnesses as long as numbers for both sides are balanced.

* NOTE: You can have Foreco play the judge. Ms. Mantis, representing the Population Control Department of the Eco-forest as the Plaintiff’s Attorney. Mme Squirrel, representing the Food Services Department of the Eco-Forest as the Defense Attorney. Freddy Frog as the Bailiff. For your performance, you can keep these characters in the roles or you can use others. The Judge could appropriately be an owl or a mammal such as a cat without a vested interest. The Plaintiff’s Attorney should probably be a predator. Note that there is a Plaintiff’s attorney rather than a Prosecuting Attorney because this is a civil trial. The question of damages is not, however, probed.

** Witnesses can be kept as is or changed. One reason for a change would be to use existing puppets. HOWEVER, if you change witnesses, you will also have to alter the script slightly. It is important to keep the messages of the witnesses intact. It is also desirable to have one defense witness be a predator of mosquito larvae rather than adult mosquitoes.

Location: Puppet Theater

Objectives: *Learners will:*

- 1) identify advantages and disadvantages of having mosquitoes on Earth

Skills: communication, listening, empathy, analysis

Supplies:

- **Script:** The Trial of Mitsy-Bitsy Mosquito
- **Puppets**
 - Judge*
 - Bailiff (preferably a frog or other insectivore)
 - Plaintiff’s Attorney*
 - Defense Attorney *
 - Mitsy-Bitsy Mosquito
 - **Witnesses: ****
 - Comet, the Reindeer
 - Wanda Woof
 - Dr. Wise Bird
 - Child from audience (can select and give scripted part beforehand, or select during the puppet show and let testimony be spontaneous)
 - Freddie Fish
 - Derek Dragonfly
 - B’linda Bat
 - Sir Knight Hawk
- **Props**
 - long lists of paper for both attorneys
 - gavel for Judge
 - handkerchief for Plaintiff’s Attorney
 - small ‘diet’ chart for B’linda Bat

Subjects: language arts, science

Time: 30 minutes

Mock Trial Dramatization

Staging: If performed as a mock trial, the most realistic arrangement of the stage would place the judge at a small table (judge's bench) in the center back with a chair beside it (witness box or stand). Looking at the stage, to the left of the judge's 'bench' and closer to the audience would be a table for the defense lawyer and defendant (Mitzy). To the right, would be another table for the plaintiff's attorney. If necessary, tables for the defense and plaintiff could be dispensed with, and just chairs used. Witnesses would move from audience to the witness box. The bailiff would be standing to the side of the witness box when on stage. Attorneys and Mitsy should face the judge when not speaking.

Puppet Show

If performed as a puppet show in a puppet theater, judge and witness box should be on stage all the time. Mitsy and the other characters would come and go as indicated in the script. Or a long, covered table could be used as a stage, with the judge in the center, Mitsy and her attorney at one side, and the plaintiff's attorney at the other. The witness box could be at one end of the table or a small table set on one side.

Learners can make simple puppets if needed or print templates for the puppets on card stock; color and laminate them. Set up a simple stage for performing the show. Assemble props as needed.

Procedure:

1. Assemble the students in front of the puppet stage or ready for the mock trial dramatization.
2. Perform the puppet show/mock trial dramatization.

Discussion/Assessment:

Why was Mitzy on trial?

Who considered her a pest?

Who appreciated her?

What eco-service did she provide?

Could we live without mosquitoes on Earth?

The Trial of Mitsy-Bitsy Mosquito

Poor Mosquito Victims (PMV) v. Mitsy-Bitsy and Kin

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Scene: Courtroom

On stage: JUDGE (*center, behind a bench*)
BAILIFF (*standing to side of judge*)
MITSY MOSQUITO (*from audience perspective, to front and left of judge.*)

BAILIFF: The Eco-court is now in session. Judge Name presiding. Our first case is Poor Mosquito Victims v. Mitsy-Bitsy Mosquito and her relatives. The plaintiff's attorney will be Name. (*PLAINTIFF ATTORNEY stands, bows to audience and sits*) Mitsy-Bitsy Mosquito and her relations will be represented by Defense Attorney Name. (*DEFENSE ATTORNEY stands, bows to audience and then sits.*) As Defense attorney stands, MITSY buzzes appreciatively.

BAILIFF: (*to Mitsy*) Hush! (*to audience*) The Poor Mosquito Victims claim that Mitsy-Bitsy and her relatives are MAJOR INSECT PESTS UP TO NO GOOD and SHOULD BE GOTTEN RID OF.

MITSY makes hissy buzzes. Ducks out of sight as BAILIFF moves towards her. Reappears shortly.

JUDGE: Mr. Bailiff, do we have jurors to hear this case?

BAILIFF: Yes, your honor. I've gathered some of the smartest people in the world (*indicating audience*) to be jurors. *BAILIFF exits as judge speaks.*

JUDGE: (*looking over audience and nodding*) Excellent. It is always sad, lady and gentleman jurors, to learn that some fellow creatures may be causing trouble. But I know. . .

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: (*stands*) Excuse me, your honor. Shouldn't we find out if any jurors might not be fair because of some..um.. past experience. I mean, I would object to having any jurors who had been bitten by my clients, Mitsy-Bitsy or her relatives.

JUDGE: Good point. Will any jurors who have ever been bothered by mosquitoes please raise your hands? (*Presumably most of audience will.*) Hmm. This is a problem. (*Pauses to think about it.*) You know, Miss (or Mr.) Attorney, these look like the kind of jurors who will listen fairly to each side of the case. (*Looks over audience.*) I'm sure they will. Let us proceed.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY sits.

JUDGE: Poor Mosquito Victims, you may present your case. (*To Plaintiff's Attorney*) You may call your witnesses.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY stands, and remains standing during plaintiff side of case.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: Your honor, I have a list (*waves long, narrow sheet of paper*) with the names of thousands of people and animals who wanted to tell us what terrible pests mosquitoes are. In the interest of time, I asked just three of these possible witnesses to come here today-- Comet the Reindeer, Wanda Woof, and Dr. Wise Bird.

BAILIFF enters.

BAILIFF: Your honor, all the witnesses have already sworn to tell nothing but the truth.

JUDGE: Excellent. (*To Plaintiff's Attorney*) Please call your first witness.

BAILIFF exits.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: I call Comet, the Reindeer.

COMET enters (perhaps to sound of sleigh bells).

COMET: (*goes to witness stand*) Ho! Ho! Ho! My name is Comet Claus. I just want to say

MITSY: (*perks up*) Looks like a reindeer meal. Must be time for lunch.

JUDGE: (*bangs gavel*) Order, order in the court. (*DEFENSE ATTORNEY pushes MITSY out of sight.*) Before you continue, Mr. Comet, may I ask if you are one of Santa's team.

COMET: Yes, I am.

JUDGE: Well, we certainly appreciate your coming so far to testify.

COMET: It is worth it for me to be able to say MOSQUITOES ARE AWFUL!!! I know that people are plagued by itchy bites and bumps. I know that sometimes mosquitoes drive people inside and they can't play or work out of doors. But animals like me don't have any inside to go to. Some of my cousins have lost so much blood to mosquito mobs that they died.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: Thank you, Mr. Comet.

COMET: (*leaves, waving to audience*) You're welcome. Merry Christmas to all.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: I call Wanda Woof to the stand. (*WANDA WOOF enters.*)

WANDA WOOF: Woof! My name is Wanda Woof and I want to explain that...

MITSY: (*Bounces up again.*) Looks like a hot dog. Must be time for lunch.

JUDGE: (*bangs gavel*) Mr. (or Miss) Defense Attorney, you must keep your client, Mitsy-Bitsy Mosquito in order.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: (*pushes Mitsy down*) Yes, your honor.

JUDGE: Please continue Miss Woof.

WANDA WOOF: (*clears throat*) Did you know, jurors, that mosquitoes carry diseases such as heartworms that can kill dogs like me? My cousin, Laddie, died of heartworms. (*Sniffs*) It was so sad. We all cried and cried. (*Wipes away tear*) Then there was poor widow poodle, and the Labrador puppies, and (*begins to sob*) and...

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: (*offers Wanda a handkerchief*) It's OK, Miss Woof. Thank you for coming.

WANDA WOOF exits, crying.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: Now, I call Dr. Wise Bird. Dr. Bird is a world famous research scientist who. . .

MITSY: (*Appears, looks around, sees audience.*) It IS lunch time. Look at all of those meals out there.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: (*to Judge*) Your honor, would you please have the Defense Attorney do something about this mosquito. If not, I'll take care of her myself. (*Moves toward mosquito menacingly*)

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: (*standing quickly*) Your honor, the Plaintiff's Attorney is threatening the defendant -- threatening to eat her.

JUDGE: Mr. (or Miss) Plaintiff's Attorney. You must not eat the defendant. Such things are not supposed to happen at a trial. Mr. (or Miss) Defense Attorney, you must keep Mitsy Bitsy Mosquito from disturbing this trial.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: I'll try your honor. (*DEFENSE ATTORNEY tugs MITSY offstage.*)

JUDGE: Please continue.

DR. WISE BIRD enters. DEFENSE ATTORNEY returns.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: Dr. Wise Bird, please tell us about the diseases that mosquitoes carry to people.

DR. BIRD: In terms of the numbers of people infected, the worst disease is malaria. In 2003, 300 million people suffered from malaria and about three million died. These were mostly children in tropical countries. Mosquitoes can also carry yellow fever, encephalitis, West Nile disease....

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: (*jumps up*) May I ask a question, your honor? (*JUDGE nods.*) Isn't it true that only a few species of mosquitoes carry diseases?

DR BIRD: Yes, but those kinds are very dangerous. Most people can't tell one mosquito from another.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: Thank you, Dr. Bird.

DR. BIRD exits.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: Now, your honor, I would like to call one of the children in the courtroom. (*Looks at audience.*) Do I have a volunteer?

Hands wave. PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY selects the child given a part before play or randomly.

CHILD comes to stand by witness box.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: Please tell the court your name.

CHILD does.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: Have you ever been bitten by mosquitoes?

CHILD: Yes, it's terrible.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: Can you explain that?

CHILD: Yes, sometimes you get lots of bites and they itch so bad that you scratch them and then they bleed. One time, my friends and I couldn't play outside because there were so many mosquitoes.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: Thank you for telling us about your experience. You may return to your seat.

CHILD exits.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: Your honor, we rest our case. (*Sits down*)

JUDGE: Those are serious charges indeed. Mr. (or Miss) Defense Attorney, do you have any witnesses to defend Mitsy-Bitsy Mosquito and her relatives?

DEFENSE ATTORNEY rises and stands for the defense side of case. MITSY-BITSY MOSQUITO returns to her seat.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Your honor, you may be surprised, but many animals wanted to speak on behalf of our need for mosquitoes. (*Waves a long paper list.*) Being from the

department of Food Production, I myself know how important they are. Our witnesses will tell you more.

BAILIFF enters.

BAILIFF: Your honor, all the witnesses have already sworn to tell nothing but the truth.

JUDGE: Excellent. *(To Defense Attorney)* Please call your first witness.

BAILIFF exits.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: We call Freddie Fish to the stand.

FREDDIE FISH enters and goes to witness stand.

FISH: In the pond where I live, mosquito larvae (those are baby mosquitoes) are a big part of our diet.

MITSY: Can you believe that? He has the nerve to brag about eating poor, helpless, little mosquito babies.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Be quiet, Mitsy-Bitsy! He's here to help you.

JUDGE: Are we going to need to cage the defendant?

MITSY: No, no. I'll be quiet. I won't interrupt this BABY EATER.

JUDGE: You may continue, Mr. Fish.

FISH: That's about it. Without mosquito larvae, many fish would starve to death. Fewer fish, fewer birds, maybe fewer people.

FREDDIE FISH exits.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: We now call Derek Dragonfly to the stand.

MITSY: *(in a low voice)* Derek Dragonfly. Hah! Murderer Dragonfly would be better.

JUDGE glares or gestures at Mitsy, but doesn't speak as DRAGONFLY enters.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Mr. Dragonfly, could you please tell the court how important mosquitoes are to dragonflies?

DRAGONFLY: *(looks at Mitsy)* Important! Of course, they are important. Dragonfly children, who live in the water, too, love mosquito larvae. As for dragonfly adults like me, well, we find grown-up mosquitoes nutritious bits for breakfast, brunch, lunch time, snack time, tea time,

dinner time, actually any time. If this one would just fly a bit, I could show you how we catch these buzzy nibbles and...

MITSY disappears during last sentence.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: No, no. A demonstration is not necessary. Thank you very much, Mr. Dragonfly.

DRAGONFLY leaves and MITSY reappears cautiously.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: We now call B'linda Bat.

MITSY: First a dragonfly, now a bat?!!! Dive for cover everybody! *(to audience)* Let me know when it's safe. *(MITSY disappears.)*

B'LINDA BAT enters.

BAT: My name is B'linda Bat. Some jurors may have seen me or my cousins hanging out by street lights, chomping down tasty mosquitoes. They are delicious!!!! And, see this chart. *(Pulls up 'dietary' chart.)* See how rich in proteins and other important nutrients mosquitoes are. They are vital not only to our diet, but those of other animals like frogs and many birds.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Thank you, Miss Bat, and speaking of birds, we now call Sir Knight Hawk to the stand.

B' BAT exits. KNIGHT HAWK enters and goes to stand.

KNIGHT HAWK: My name is

MITSY: *(Emerges and says to audience.)* Is it safe yet? *(Sees Nighthawk and dives for cover, yelling to audience)* You didn't warn me!

KNIGHT HAWK: I've written a little poem for the occasion.

On moonlit nights
When you want to eat,
Beaks full of mosquitoes
Are a great treat.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY claps and encourages others to do so. KNIGHT HAWK bows.

BAILIFF enters.

BAILIFF: Here, now, order in the court! *Exits.*

KNIGHT HAWK: (clears throat) Nighthawks, like me, and other birds eat lots of mosquitoes. If there were none, I guess we'd be goners.

Without mosquitoes we would cry
Without mosquitoes, we might die.
Without ...

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Thank you Sir Knight Hawk.

KNIGHT HAWK exits.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Finally, your honor, I call Mitsy-Bitsy Mosquito. (*Looks around and doesn't see her.*) Mitsy-Bitsy! Mitsy-Bitsy! Where is that mosquito?

JUDGE: Bailiff, will you please call Ms. Mosquito.

BAILIFF: (*entering*) The court calls Mitsy-Bitsy Mosquito! (*No answer.*) Mitsy-Bitsy Mosquito. (*No answer. Says to audience*) Have you seen Mitsy-Bitsy? (*No, says audience. BAILIFF continues looking and calling.*)

MITSY: (*Appears where Bailiff is not looking.*) Is it safe yet? Have that bat and bird gone?

As DEFENSE ATTORNEY and Audience say 'YES', BAILIFF, in exasperation, shakes his leg at Mitsy and exits.

JUDGE: Miss Mosquito, will you please take the stand?

MITSY: Your honor, I don't understand what's wrong. Most kinds of mosquitoes don't carry disease. None of us mean harm. We just need blood to have baby mosquitoes. That's the way we're made. (*Sits down.*)

JUDGE: Do you attorneys have any questions of Ms. Mosquito? (*BOTH ATTORNEYS shake their heads.*) All right, you may give your closing arguments.

PLAINTIFF'S ATTORNEY: Mosquitoes not only annoy people and animals, but also can make them sick. Some kinds of mosquitoes carry deadly diseases. Why should you (*looking at jury and/or audience*) have to suffer and even die because of mosquitoes? Who needs them? I hope you will agree that it would be a better world with no mosquitoes.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Many animals depend on mosquitoes for food. Scientists don't even know how many. Without mosquitoes, many fish and frogs and bats and birds would starve and

die. What would then happen to people? Think of that! We may not like them, but we need mosquitoes.

JUDGE: Jurors: What do you think? Is the mosquito a friend? An enemy? Or both? Do we need them? Let's have a vote.

Raise your hands if you think mosquitoes are friends. *Counts and says number.*

Raise your hands if you think mosquitoes are enemies. *Counts and says number.*

Raise your hands if you think mosquitoes are both. *Counts and says number.*

MITSY disappears during vote.

JUDGE: It seems that.... Where did that mosquito go?

BAILFF: *(enters, chewing)* You needn't worry about her any more.

JUDGE: *(horrified)* You didn't eat ...

MITSY reappears and waves goodbye to all before exiting.

JUDGE: This case is dismissed.