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OWP 2010

## Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill On Trial LESSON PLAN

### **Essential Questions:**

To what extent are BP, the people of the Gulf states, the American public, the Federal Government, and Capitalism guilty of the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill and the destruction it caused?

**Objectives:** Students will be able to understand multiple perspectives in the “Gulf Oil Spill,” the effects of the spill on the environment and communities in the gulf, and evaluate who is responsible for causing the damage.

### **I. Freewrite -- 2-3 minutes**

Students will watch a brief slideshow and live footage of the oil gushing from the ocean floor while they freewrite. Prompt: What are your thoughts and feelings about the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill.

### **II. Overview of Trial (3-5 min)**

Teacher will show slideshow to class how the trial process will work, and give instruction as to what preparation work will look like.

### **III. Role Assignment/ Defense Prep (20 min) \*—**

- Teacher passes out role sheets.
- Students read roles/indictments out loud in their groups.
- Groups discuss and write three to five best arguments in defense of your role.
- Groups prepare a defense presentation/speech, making sure to give every group member a speaking role.
- Students may use other groups’ roles in developing their defense arguments if they want.

### **IV. Defense Presentations (35 minutes)**

- Groups present their defenses one at a time.
- At the end of each presentation, if another group was attacked, they may ask one pointed question to the presentors.

### **V. Closing Statements (10 minutes)**

- Now that all the groups have presented their defense, the class will have five minutes to prepare a one-minute closing statement. These closing statements should incorporate and/or discredit information that has come up from other groups during the defense presentations and questioning.
- Each group gets one-minute to make an un-interrupted closing statement.

#### **VI. Jury Deliberation and Assigning guilt (5 minutes)**

- After closing statements, the jury, which is made up of teachers or parents who are willing to participate, take two minutes to decide which group is guilty.
- Meanwhile, students take off their “role hat” and think about who is most guilty for the oil spill and its destruction.
- Students write for two minutes about this: they can divide it into percentages of guilt; they can make symbolic drawings; or whatever format they think is appropriate.
- Students then do a brief one-minute pair share (this work will eventually lead to student-created theses for a final persuasive essay on the topic).
- After students pair-share, the jury announces their decision

#### **VII. Assigning Guilt Discussion (5 minutes)**

- As a whole class, de-brief the trial. What went well? What did not go so well? What did you notice about the defenses? What questions still remain?

#### **VI. Writing Next Steps (10-12 minutes)**

- Teacher passes out Essay Prompt\* or Poem Prompt\* (see attached)
- Students write about the spill in either an essay or poem, depending on the unit and needs of teachers’ particular class.

#### **Additional Resources:**

“The Spill, The Scandal, and the President,” Tim Dickinson in Rolling Stone, June 24, 2010

“Gulf Oil Spill: A Hole in the World,” Naomi Klein in CommonDreams.org, June 20, 2010

Live Video Feed of Oil Spill: <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/7747047>