Courtroom Analogy

For writing an Argumentative Essay

Writing an essay is a lot like a court case, specifically a jury trial. Consider the following elements of court. Some of the principles might help you understand expectations and help you improve the argument in your essay.

The Case	The Thesis

Your case is the **thesis statement** of your paper. In the thesis, you directly state what you will be arguing and trying to prove throughout the rest of the paper.

The Judge	The Instructor

Your **instructor** is the judge. The judge is responsible for making sure the rules of the courtroom are followed and to call out anyone who is out of line. In a jury trial, the judge is not the one that needs to be convinced but is just the one who oversees the process.

The Jury	The Audience

The **audience** you are writing for is like a jury of your peers. When you write, don't talk to your teacher. Instead, imagine other college students with similar age and education level as yourself reading your paper. Don't limit the audience to your class because then you might get too

comfortable or casual or will assume that they know the assignment. In court, someone who already knows you would not be put on the jury. Your audience is your peers, but not people you know. They are the ones you need to convince that your claims are true.

The Lawyer | The Author (You)

You are the lawyer! You might be a defense lawyer or you might be the prosecution depending on the argument you are making, but either way, your role is much like the lawyer's because you are collecting and presenting the evidence and filling in the narrative in a way that will hopefully convince the jury of your side.

Defendant or Plaintiff | The Topic

The **topic** of your paper is either the defendant or plaintiff - your client that you are representing! It is your job to convince your jury (audience) of it's innocence or guilt... or of whatever you are trying to persuade them of regarding your topic.

Evidence and Witnesses | Sources

No lawyer will win a case without evidence. The **sources** you bring in serve as your evidence, or if it helps to think of them as expert witnesses, that works too! The lawyer does not convince the jury by sharing his or her own opinions or sharing personal stories. The lawyer convinces the jury by sharing evidence and explaining the significance of the evidence.

Cross Examination | Discussion

In court, each piece of evidence can be addressed by the other side and every witness can be cross examined. Whichever lawyer is more convincing will win because they will persuade the jury to believe them. Never assume that any evidence (quote, etc.) is self explanatory because it can always be twisted to fit the narrative of the other side. If you can't explain why it matters to your own case, the other side will make what they want of it for their own case. This is why it is so important to **discuss** your evidence.

Opening Statements | Introduction

The opening statements of your paper is your **introduction**, which includes but is not limited to the thesis statement. In court, each lawyer gets to share opening statements at the beginning to set the stage for what they will be sharing and prepare the jury in a way that will help them understand what is shared. The introduction of your paper serves the same purpose. It is your opportunity to prepare the audience for what you will be sharing and give them the information needed to understand your case.

Closing Statements | Conclusion

No lawyer would ever forfeit the opportunity to give a closing statement. That's the last opportunity to convince the jury that they are right. In the closing statement, they remind the jury of what evidence was presented and why it all works together to prove their case. The closing statements in your paper is your **conclusion**. It is an important part of the essay that should be used to give you an advantage in convincing the reader. Use it to remind the reader of what was presented and help them see how it all works together to prove your point.