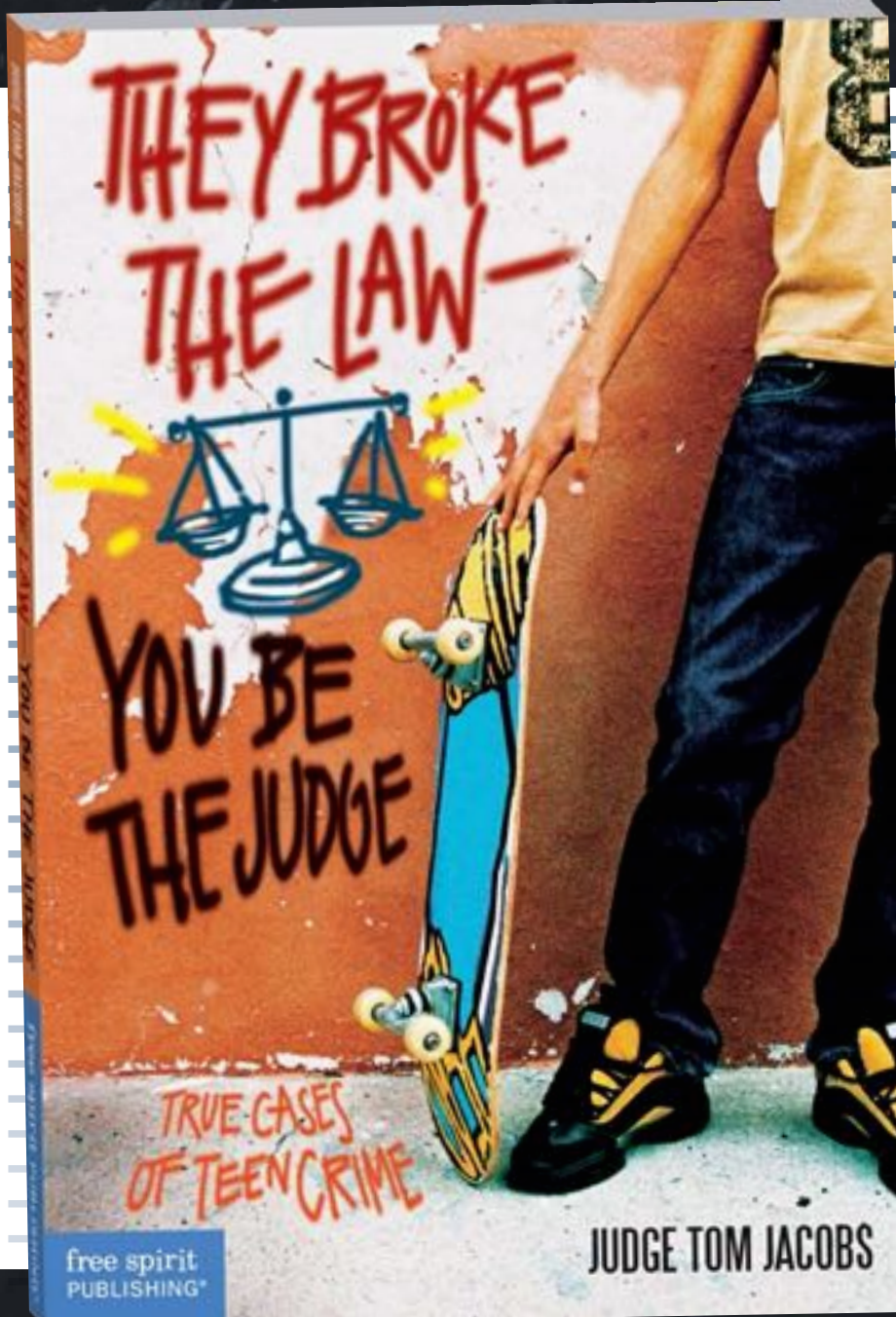


# They Broke the Law—You Be the Judge: Role Plays



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# They Broke the Law—You Be the Judge: Role Plays

The following role plays are for use in conjunction with the teen cases in *They Broke the Law—You Be the Judge*. When readers are asked to pass sentence, they can write down or discuss their thoughts. Another option is to conduct a role play of the sentencing hearing. One young person can play the judge, another can play the juvenile. Parents, family members, and victims can also be played as roles.

Acting out these parts can help teens connect emotionally with the issues, conflicts, and challenges faced by the judge and the teens. Role plays can also teach the importance of listening carefully and working cooperatively. No special training is needed, just a clear understanding of some basic guidelines:

- Explain the purpose of the role play to the group—to help them better understand the issues raised by each story. Mention that the volunteers will not be playing themselves, but will portray what the judge or young person would say at sentencing.
- Explain that the facilitator might ask for action to be frozen, or that the audience or facilitator might provide instruction or feedback while the role play is going on.
- Role plays can be done simultaneously in dyads or triads (groups of two or three young people). This can warm up the group to role plays with minimal embarrassment. When finished, the smaller groups can discuss their role plays. Then ask volunteers to repeat the role play in front of the larger group. For many of the role plays, we offer two or three different scenarios that can be acted out simultaneously.
- Review the story before beginning the role play.
- Ask teens to volunteer to play the judge and the young person. (For some stories, you can ask for volunteers to play family members or victims). If no one volunteers, one solution is to offer to play one part yourself. This will usually get one teen to join you.
- Once you've picked two (or more) volunteers, quickly review what they might say to each other. The characters should try to convince each other of their point of view, which is described as "what each character wants" in the descriptions below.
- You can list the judge's sentencing options on the board or flipchart, along with the young person's background and anything else that is relevant (such as worries the judge has or statements the young person has made in letters to the judge). For each role play below, we've provided brief background about the characters and some prompts to get the role play started.
- In some cases, the role play information we provide differs slightly from the stories. This is to heighten the conflict between the characters. Feel free to go beyond the information provided in the stories and add new information if you feel it will produce a better role play. For example, you can add new details about the young person's relationship with his family or attitudes toward school. Or if members of your group are dealing with specific issues—such as whether to go along with negative behavior of their friends—you can bring in new information to heighten the conflicts. You can ask for suggestions from the group in adding information to the role plays.

- The leader’s role is to let the teens act out the parts and gain some momentum. The actors should engage in a back-and-forth dialogue. However, if the actors get stuck, the leader or the audience can provide prompts or guidance. Remind the characters of their “wants” in the role play. The leader can also step into one of the roles to provide guidance.
- Tell the group to listen closely to what the characters say and to be ready to discuss the role play when it’s over.
- When the scene has played itself out, allow the group to respond. Ask the actors to discuss the emotions they felt while playing their respective characters. Summarize by asking the group if they see the issues faced by the judge or the young person in a new way or have any other reactions. It’s important to debrief after role plays. Otherwise, participants won’t have a chance to express feelings that came up.

## Role Plays

### ADAM, 15: A THREAT MADE IN SCHOOL

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**Characters:** Adam, the judge

**Background:** Adam made a threatening comment in school about killing other kids but claims he was joking. He has a bad temper and has made threatening comments before.

**What each character wants:** Adam wants to convince the judge that he was just kidding when he made the threat, that he doesn’t need counseling, and that he will not get in trouble again. The judge wants to convince Adam that threatening comments in school are not a joke, that his marijuana use and temper are a problem, and that he’s worried Adam may act on future threats.

**Prompts to get the role play started:**

*Adam:* “Your honor, I was just making small talk in class that day. I was just showing off in front of friends. I didn’t really mean what I said. It’s not such a big deal.”

*Judge:* “You threatened to kill students in your school. Those kinds of comments have to be taken seriously. Why should I believe you were only kidding?”

### ADELINA, 13: ROBBING A GIRL

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**Characters:** Adelina, the judge

**Background:** Adelina is charged with robbery. She also has been involved in two shoplifting incidents (at least one assault), belongs to a gang, and is using drugs. Adelina realizes she uses drugs to escape her pain, but she says she can’t stay away from them because all her friends do drugs.

**What each character wants:** Adelina wants to convince the judge that she needs help giving up drugs—she can't stay away from them because they're so easy to get and all her friends do drugs. She also wants to convince the judge that if he gives her one more chance and doesn't send her to jail, she won't get in trouble again. The judge wants to help Adelina with her drug problem, but there are no spaces available in a drug treatment program right now. She has to participate in drug counseling while staying at home. He wants to keep her from committing more crimes. She's been involved in gang activity, shoplifting, robbery, and at least one assault, and the community has to be protected.

**Prompts to get the role play started:**

*Adelina:* "If you get me help for my drug problem, I'll stay out of trouble. But I need help because all my friends do drugs."

*Judge:* "There are no spaces in a residential drug program. I'll send you home, but you have to participate in drug counseling. You're only 13, you're in a gang, and you've already committed several serious crimes. You have to ignore what your friends are doing and stay out of trouble."

## ANDREW, 17: A FIGHT WITH A BROTHER

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**Characters:** Andrew, his mother, the judge

**Background:** Andrew is depressed about his parents' divorce and he has gotten into violent fights with his brother.

What each character wants: Andrew wants to convince the judge to send him home, not to jail, and that he'll control his temper once at home. The mother wants Andrew to stay in jail because she's worried about more fights between him and his brother. The judge doesn't want to keep Andrew in jail or send him to foster care. He wants Andrew to learn to control his temper at home and his mother to control him better.

**Prompts to get the role plays started:**

### Role play #1

*Andrew, to the judge:* "That last fight was a turning point, your Honor. I learned my lesson and won't fight with my brother ever again."

*Judge, to Andrew:* "You went after your brother with a knife the last time. What if you use a gun the next time?"

### Role play #2

*Mother, to the judge:* "He says the right things in court, your Honor, but at home he does whatever he wants no matter what I do. I don't want him at home."

*Judge, to the mother:* "There is no reason to keep him in jail or in foster care. You have to do a better job of preventing conflicts at home. This is a family problem that has to be worked out in the family."



## ASHLEY, 14: CAUGHT WITH A BAG OF MARIJUANA

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**Characters:** Ashley, her mother, the judge

**Background:** Ashley's parents are divorced and she lives with her mother. Ashley feels neglected by her mother and has been a regular drug user since age 12. Her mother recently caught her with a bag of marijuana, but was unaware of her previous drug use.

**What each character wants:** Ashley wants to stop using drugs but doesn't think she can do it on her own. She also wants her mother to know she feels neglected. Her mother wants to help Ashley but doesn't understand why she does drugs or why she is angry. The judge wants to find the right mix between helping and punishing a rebellious 14-year-old who has been using marijuana, LSD, and crystal meth, and who is becoming more dangerous and destructive.

**Prompts to get the role plays started:**

### Role play #1

*Ashley, to her mother:* "You neglected me when I was younger and I am very angry about that."

*Mother, to Ashley:* "I did the best I could. And besides, your anger is no excuse to do drugs."

### Role play #2

*Judge, to the mother:* "Your daughter has heavily abused drugs for many years, and you only recently found out about it. How could you not know? What are you going to do in the future to be a better parent and to be more aware of Ashley's feelings?"

*Mother, to the judge:* "A parent can't know everything that's going on. How can I know what she's feeling when she doesn't open up to me?"

### Role play #3

*Ashley, to the judge:* "I want to stay off drugs but I don't want to go to jail or a drug rehab program. But I'm also not sure I can stay off them at home."

*Judge, to Ashley:* "I'm not going to lock you up this time or send you to a drug program. I'm sending you home. If you want to stay out of jail, you have to participate in counseling at home and stay away from drugs. You can't just say you want to give them up—you have to prove to me you want to give them up."

## BRANDON, 14: BREAKING INTO A HOME

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**Characters:** Brandon, the judge

**Background:** Brandon is charged with burglarizing a house. He also threw a firecracker at some kids and assaulted a boy at school. He has a lot of bottled-up anger about his parents' divorce and has tried marijuana and alcohol. He is easily led into trouble by his friends.

**What each character wants:** Brandon wants to do the right thing, but he also wants to be close to his friends. The judge wants to get at the heart of what's bothering Brandon, so he doesn't just follow his friends and commit more crimes.

**Prompts to get the role play started:**

*Brandon:* "I want to do the right thing, but when my friends talk me into doing something, I find it hard to just walk away. My friends are important to me."

*Judge:* "You can't just follow what someone else does without thinking about it. Are these people really your friends? And I think you have a lot of anger about your parents' divorce that you're not dealing with."

## BRIANNE, 17: A STOLEN CAR, A STOLEN CREDIT CARD, AND FORGERY

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**Characters:** Brianne, the judge

**Background:** Brianne has been using drugs since elementary school and has been in court numerous times over the years on various charges. She's been in residential drug treatment programs and received counseling. But she's either run away from or been kicked out of these programs. She's also been in jail many times. Nothing seems to work. She is now charged with car theft, credit card theft, and forgery.

**What each character wants:** Brianne is very aware of her problems, is sorry for what she did, and has given up drugs. She wants the judge to give her one more chance and send her home. The judge wants Brianne to understand that she's running out of chances. She's been in jail many times and has tried every program, but nothing seems to work. He wants to make an impression on her that will really sink in.

**Prompts to get the role play started:**

*Brianne:* "Your honor, I know nothing has seemed to work in the past. But I have given up drugs. I beg you for one more chance to prove that I can get a job, my GED, and live a normal life with my parents."

*Judge:* "Brianne, I've heard the same promise many times before. You've run away from or been kicked out of every program I sent you to. Even jail doesn't seem to work. Why should I give you one more chance? If you were in my shoes, what would you do?"

## CARLA, 15: A FIGHT WITH MOM

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**Characters:** Carla, her mother, the judge

**Background:** Carla assaulted her mother after her mother threw water in her face to wake her up. This is not the first time this has happened. Carla's mother was locked up as a child, and therefore she believes in being very strict.

**What each character wants:** Carla feels her mother is too controlling and wants more independence; she also wants her mother to find better ways of waking her up. Carla's mother wants Carla to do what she says, to control her temper, and to get herself up in the morning on her own. The judge is worried that if Carla goes home, she and her mother will fight again. He wants Carla and her mother to work together to prevent conflicts.

**Prompts to get the role plays started:**

### Role play #1

*Carla, to the judge:* "I've learned a lot in jail. I feel I can control my temper now and I want to go home."

*Judge, to Carla:* "What are you going to do to control your temper? Remember, your mother spent time in jail when she was young. She may seem strict, but she's just trying to prevent you from ending up the same way. You can't go crazy every time she tells you to do something."

### Role play #2

*Carla, to her mother:* "You've got to be a better mother. You have to allow me freedom, and you can't throw water in my face to get me up."

*Mother, to Carla:* "You have to be a better daughter. You have a terrible temper. If you act like that at home, how are you going to act on the streets if I give you more freedom? And if you don't wake up on your own to go to school, what am I supposed to do?"

### Role play #3

*Mother, to the judge:* "I can't control her. It's up to Carla whether things get better. If she doesn't get up after I call her ten times, what am I supposed to do? We also live in a terrible neighborhood, your honor. There are too many negative influences on the streets. That's why I have to be strict with her."

*Judge, to the mother:* "I understand why you want to be strict, but you need to improve your parenting techniques. Throwing water in someone's face to wake them up is not the best thing to do. And a teenager needs some freedom."

## CHARLES, 16: COCAINE AND A GUN

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**Characters:** Charles, his grandmother, the judge

**Background:** Charles is caught with cocaine and a gun. He says the cocaine is for his personal use and that he didn't plan to sell drugs.

**What each character wants:** Charles knows he has a drug problem and wants to get it under control, but he's not sure he can. His grandmother wants Charles to behave himself, but she doesn't know how to control him when he isn't home. The judge wants to send a strict message because he is worried that Charles can't control himself and the grandmother can't control Charles.

## **Prompts to get the role plays started:**

### **Role play #1**

*Charles, to his grandmother:* "I know I've disappointed you. I want to give up drugs but they're not easy to give up. The world is different than when you were growing up."

*Grandmother, to Charles:* "I don't understand why you do drugs. And if you put your mind to it, if you really wanted to give them up, you could. We had temptations back then, but we avoided them. You just have to be strong."

### **Role play #2**

*Charles, to the judge:* "I'm going to go straight and give up drugs. I also made a mistake carrying that gun."

*Judge, to Charles:* "Why should I believe you're going to give up drugs? Aren't you just saying this so you can stay out of jail?"

### **Role play #3**

*Judge, to the grandmother:* "You don't seem to know what Charles is up to. You have to have better control over him."

*Grandmother, to the judge:* "He's perfectly fine at home. How can I control him once he leaves the house? I can't follow him around, your honor, can I?"

## **ERICA, 14: ASSAULT AND POSSESSING A MARIJUANA PIPE**

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**Characters:** Erica, her parents, the assault victim, the judge

**Background:** Erica comes from a very poor family. In the 7th grade she was raped and had an abortion. She is charged with assaulting a girl whom she suspected of stealing her money, and possession of a marijuana pipe.

**What each character wants:** Erica is feeling very depressed over her personal and family problems, and is still suffering from the aftereffects of the rape and abortion. She wants help for her depression. The victim wants to know why Erica assaulted her. Erica's parents want what's best for her, but they are too preoccupied with their own problems. The judge wants to find a balance between helping Erica with her personal and family problems, and holding her responsible for her actions.

## **Prompts to get the role plays started:**

### **Role play #1**

*Erica, to her victim:* "I'm sorry I assaulted you. I thought you stole my money. I've had a lot of problems recently."

*The victim, to Erica:* "I still don't understand why you did it. I have problems, too, but I don't go around beating up people."



## Role play #2

*Erica, to the judge:* "I've had a lot of problems in my family and in my life and I'm very depressed. That's no excuse, but I've turned to drugs to deal with the pain."

*Judge, to Erica:* "If you hide from the pain through drugs and don't face it, things will only get worse. I know you've had many problems, but you are also responsible for your actions. You and no one else."

## Role play #3

*The parents, to the judge:* "She's had a lot of problems, and we've tried to help her, but we're struggling with so many problems of our own that we're not always the best parents."

*Judge, to the parents:* "What do you need help with the most to be better parents?"

## Role play #4

*The parents, to Erica:* "We know you've been through a lot of pain."

*Erica, to her parents:* "I know you have problems, but I need someone to be there for me. I need your help, whether you have problems or not. I'm the child, you know."

## JENNIFER, 13: STOLEN CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

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**Characters:** Jennifer, her mother, the judge

**Background:** Jennifer has been a heavy drug user and was previously involved in shoplifting. She is now charged with burglarizing a home.

**What each character wants:** Jennifer wants to start over and stay out of trouble but finds it hard to resist her friends and their negative activities. Her mother wants to help her, but struggles with paying the bills and being a single mother. The judge wants to help Jennifer with her personal and family problems but is also worried that she has a serious drug problem and will get into more trouble if she's not held accountable in some way. He also wants her mother to pay more attention to Jennifer.

**Prompts to get the role plays started:**

### Role play #1

*Jennifer, to the judge:* "I want to stay out of trouble, but my friends always get me into trouble."

*Judge, to Jennifer:* "Can't you just say no when they say they're going to do bad things? Or get new friends?"

### Role play #2

*Mother, to the judge:* "I'm struggling to pay the bills as a single mother. For a time we lived in a motel and had no car. I can't always be there for Jennifer. It's impossible."

*Judge, to the mother:* "I know you're having hard times and being a single parent isn't easy. But Jennifer's been using drugs since elementary school and you should have known about it."

### Role play #3

*Mother, to Jennifer:* "You know how hard I struggle. You have to take more responsibility for behaving yourself."

*Jennifer, to her mother:* "I have taken responsibility. Haven't I worked to help you out? Sometimes I miss school because I have to work."

## JERRY, 15: HOME BREAK-IN AND THEFT

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**Characters:** Jerry, his mother, the judge

**Background:** Jerry misses a lot of school, has never held a steady job, and has been drinking and smoking marijuana since age 13. He's been in drug treatment and jail numerous times, but nothing seems to work. He is now charged with burglary and theft.

**What each character wants:** The mother loves Jerry but can't control him; she wants him punished, but not sent to jail for a long time. Jerry wants to do the right thing, but can't always control himself. The judge wants to help Jerry, but isn't sure whether to give him another chance or send him to jail.

**Prompts to get the role plays started:**

### Role play #1

*Jerry, to the judge:* "Give me one more chance, your honor. Jail won't help me. Give me one more chance at home to do the right thing."

*Judge, to Jerry:* "You've already been in jail many times, and keep getting in trouble. Why shouldn't I give you a long sentence to straighten you out?"

### Role play #2

*Mother, to the judge:* "I can't control him, your honor. But I don't want to see him locked up for a long time."

*Judge, to the mother:* "Your son does whatever he wants. What other choice do I have besides jail?"

## JOSHUA, 15: CUTTING SCHOOL

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**Characters:** Joshua, his mother, his brother, the judge.

**Background:** Joshua is upset because his mother has become more distant as the result of taking pain medication after surgery. He gets into fights with her and is now charged with truancy.

**What each character wants:** Joshua wants his mother to stop taking medication and return to her "old self." The mother wants Joshua to understand that she has to take medication because of health problems, even though she knows the medication affects her ability to be a good parent. The brother wants to convince the judge that Joshua should live with him, even though the brother is on

probation for a drug offense. The judge knows Joshua is independent and likes to take risks. He is not a hard-core delinquent or a threat to society. He wants to help Joshua, but isn't sure whether to send to him to jail, send him home and hope he doesn't run away, or send him to live with his brother, who may not be the best role model.

**Prompts to get the role plays started:**

**Role play #1**

*Joshua, to his mother:* "I don't want you to take drugs anymore. You're a different person since you've been taking drugs."

*Mother, to Joshua:* "Joshua, the drugs I take are painkillers. I have to take them. I know the medication has changed our relationship, but I have no other choice."

**Role play #2**

*Brother, to the judge:* "I'll take him, your honor, if things can't be worked out at home."

*Judge, to the brother:* "Can you be a good role model for Joshua? You're on probation for drug-related crimes. What kind of message does that send to Joshua?"

**Role play #3**

*Joshua, to the judge:* "I'll try to work things out at home with my mother."

*Judge, to Joshua:* "But she still has to take medication. Why does that bother you so much? And how are you going to handle the feelings and conflicts that come up? How can I be sure you won't fight again?"

## MARCUS, 14: STEALING A TELEPHONE CORD

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**Characters:** Marcus, his mother, the judge

**Background:** Marcus is a model teenager who has never gotten into trouble before. But one day he shoplifts. He insists he's innocent until his hearing five months later, to keep his mother from being disappointed in him.

**What each character wants:** Marcus wants to repair his relationship with his mother. The mother wants to understand why Marcus shoplifted and then lied about it. The judge wants to make sure Marcus doesn't come back to court.

**Prompts to get the role plays started:**

**Role play #1**

*Marcus, to his mother:* "I lied about the shoplifting to protect your feelings."

*Mother, to Marcus:* "I don't understand two things: why you shoplifted in the first place, and why you lied about it later. You never got into trouble before. Why did you do it?"

## Role play #2

*Marcus, to the judge: "I'm sorry for what I did."*

*Judge, to Marcus: "What have you learned from this whole experience? How can I be sure you won't do it again?"*

## NATALIE, 14: CAUGHT WITH BEER AT A PARTY

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**Characters:** Natalie, her parents

**Background:** Natalie rarely gets into trouble but is caught with beer at a party.

**What each character wants:** Natalie wants to convince her parents that her drinking was a one-time thing and she won't do it again. Her parents are very disappointed in her and don't know if they can trust her in the future.

**Prompts to get the role play started:**

*Natalie: "Everyone was drinking at the party, so I just joined in. I've learned my lesson, though, and won't do it again."*

*Parents: "How can we believe that you won't follow your friends again in the future?"*

## OLIVIA, 14: A STOLEN CAR

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**Characters:** Olivia, her mother, the judge

**Background:** Olivia runs away frequently and does what she wants. She's charged with stealing a car.

**What each character wants:** Olivia wants to convince the judge to send her home, that this time she will behave herself. The mother wants Olivia to behave herself because she's making a bad impression on her younger sister. The judge wants to keep Olivia from running away and get at the root of her problems.

**Prompts to get the role plays started:**

## Role play #1

*Olivia, to the judge: "I've run in the past, but now I'm a new person. Send me home."*

*Judge, to Olivia: "You just stole a car and you're only 14. I think there's something going on at home that you're not telling me about. Why do you keep running away?"*

## Role play #2

*Mother, to the judge: "I don't understand why she's so rebellious. We're poor, but I give her a good home, your honor. Some kids just don't listen, no matter what the parents do. I don't know what else to do."*

*Judge, to the mother: "Is there something going on at home that makes this girl run away?"*

## PHILIP, 9: ASSAULT AGAINST HIS MOTHER

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**Characters:** Philip, his mother, the judge

**Background:** Philip's parents are divorced, he has little contact with his father, and lives with his mother. One night Philip swears at his mother and when she tries to wash his mouth out with soap, he spits in her face.

**What each character wants:** Philip wants his mother to be a better role model. She used drugs in the past and he think she's going to use them again. The mother wants Philip to go to school, stop using bad language, learn to control his temper, and be more respectful. The judge wants to find ways to stop conflicts between Philip and his mother.

**Prompts to get the role plays started:**

### Role play #1

*Philip, to his mother:* "You could be a better mother. I'm worried you're going to go back to using drugs."

*Mother, to Philip:* "You need to be a better son. You have a terrible temper and you have to learn to speak to people the right way."

### Role play #2

*Philip, to the judge:* "I'm sorry for what I did. Send me home and it won't happen again."

*Judge, to Philip:* "You and your mother have to learn how to get along better. What is causing the problems between you, and what can be done about it?"

## RONALD, 16: CAUGHT WITH BEER AND WINE IN A CAR

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**Characters:** Ronald, the judge

**Background:** Ronald misses school a lot, was suspected of breaking into a truck (although not charged), and now has been caught drinking in a car with other teens.

**What each character wants:** The judge wants to send a strict message to Ronald, but he worries that no matter what sentence he gives, Ronald will do whatever he wants. Ronald wants to do whatever he wants, but wants to convince the judge that he'll behave himself in the future.

**Prompts to get the role play started:**

*Judge:* "I need you to settle down and go to school, but I don't think you want to settle down."

*Ronald:* "I'm going to settle down this time, you'll see."



## SAMANTHA, 14: UNPAID CAB FARE AND LYING TO POLICE

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**Characters:** Samantha, the judge

**Background:** Samantha's parents are suspected of abusing and neglecting Samantha, although no evidence has been found or charges filed. The father is also an alcoholic who has committed domestic violence against Samantha's stepmother. Samantha runs away from home and is arrested for not paying the cab fare.

**What each character wants:** The judge wants to find out if Samantha is being abused or mistreated at home before he sends her back. He's worried she might be abused and then run away again. Samantha doesn't want to go to jail or into foster care—she wants to return home and receive individual and family counseling.

**Prompts to get the role play started:**

*Judge:* "I don't want to send you home because it sounds like a bad situation there and you keep running away."

*Samantha:* "It may be a bad situation, but I want to go home. At least it's better than jail or foster care."

## SEAN, 16: A PIPE BOMB IN A BEDROOM DRAWER

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**Characters:** Sean, the judge

**Background:** Sean lives alone with his father, who used to have a drinking problem, and who physically and emotionally abused Sean as a child. The father discovers that Sean is smoking marijuana and then finds a pipe bomb in his son's bedroom.

**What each character wants:** The judge wants to make sure that Sean was not going to hurt people or property with the bomb and doesn't use more serious weapons or drugs in the future. Sean wants to convince the judge that neither the bomb or the marijuana are a big deal.

**Prompts to get the role play started:**

*Judge:* "You say you were going to set off the bomb in a field, not near people. How can I believe that? Also, you smoke marijuana. Drugs and weapons aren't a good combination."

*Sean:* "The police checked it out and found no evidence I was going to set it off near people or property. I don't understand why everyone's making a big deal about it. And I just smoke a little pot now and then. What's so bad about that?"

## STARLETT, 14: CUTTING SCHOOL AND VIOLATION OF PROBATION

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**Characters:** Starlett, her mother and father, the judge

**Background:** Starlett's parents are divorced and she moves back and forth between both parents. Neither parent likes her boyfriend, who is two years older and has a juvenile record. They want her to stop seeing him. She runs away from home, stops going to school, and is charged with truancy.

**What each character wants:** Starlett wants to continue to see her boyfriend, because she feels it's her decision to make. Her mother and father want her to break off the relationship. The judge wants to bring Starlett closer to her parents, but also make sure she stops running away and goes to school.

**Prompts to get the role plays started:**

### Role play #1

*Starlett, to her parents:* "I'm old enough to go out with whoever I want."

*Her parents, to Starlett:* "He's two years older than you and has a juvenile record. It's our right to decide who you can see and who you can't."

### Role play #2

*Judge, to Starlett:* "I'm putting you on probation for a year. You have to go to school. Also, you can't see your boyfriend while you're on probation. I'm removing the source of conflict between you and your parents, for your own good."

*Starlett, to the judge:* "Your honor, that's totally unfair. If I can't see my boyfriend, I'll probably keep running away to see him."

## TANYA, 14: A STOLEN PREGNANCY TEST KIT

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**Characters:** Tanya, the judge

**Background:** Tanya's parents are separated and she lives with her mother. By 9th grade, Tanya starts cutting classes and doing drugs. She gets into a violent fight with her mother and violates curfew. When she's 14, she's arrested for shoplifting a pregnancy test kit. She says she tried to steal it for a friend.

**What each character wants:** Tanya wants to go home; she says she's learned to get along with her mother since she's been in jail awaiting sentencing and will now obey her rules. While she agrees to accept responsibility for shoplifting, she thinks what she stole—a pregnancy test kit—is no one's business. The judge thinks Tanya tried to steal the pregnancy test kit for herself. He wants Tanya to talk with her mother about the physical and emotional risks of being sexually active.

**Prompts to get the role play started:**

*Tanya:* "I have a new relationship with my mother, and I'm ready to go home."

*Judge:* "I don't think things change that fast. Also, I worry you took that pregnancy test kit for yourself."

*Tanya:* "I agree I should be punished for stealing, but it's none of your business what I tried to steal."

*Judge:* "If you had a daughter and she tried to shoplift a pregnancy test kit, you're telling me that you wouldn't be concerned about what she tried to steal? You need to start talking to your mother about the risks involved in being sexually active and how to protect yourself."



I'd like your feedback about the role plays and *They Broke the Law—You Be the Judge*. If you have any comments you'd like to share, please send them to me in care of Free Spirit Publishing:

217 Fifth Avenue North, Suite 200  
Minneapolis, MN 55401-1299

or email me at [help4kids@freespirit.com](mailto:help4kids@freespirit.com).

*Tom Jacobs*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**Thomas A. Jacobs, J.D.**, was an Arizona Assistant Attorney General from 1972–1985 where he practiced criminal and child welfare law. He was appointed to the Maricopa County Superior Court in 1985 where he served as a judge pro tem and commissioner in the juvenile and family courts until his retirement in 2008. He also taught juvenile law for ten years as an adjunct professor at the Arizona State University School of Social Work. He continues to write for teens, lawyers and judges. Visit Judge Jacobs’s website, [www.askthejudge.info](http://www.askthejudge.info), for free interactive educational tools that provide current information regarding laws, court decisions, and national news affecting teens. It’s the only site of its kind to provide legal questions and answers for teens and parents with the unique ability to interact with Judge Jacobs and other teens.

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