



Letter from Judge Parker to a Juror's Son Grade Level: 4-6

Includes curriculum standards for
Arkansas Social Studies, Language Arts and Mathematics

Lesson Overview

Students will read and analyze a letter written from Judge Isaac C. Parker to a young boy. Extended activities include discussion of jury duty and calculation of jurors' fees.

Objectives

The students will be able to:

- Analyze a historic letter
- Identify the parts of a letter
- Cite the reason for the letter
- Answer questions using information provided in the letter
- Recognize significance of primary documents in understanding history and identifying with people from past
- Describe the responsibilities of a juror
- Calculate jurors' fees

Teacher Background

In 1892 Judge Parker wrote a letter to a young boy, Argile Langston. Parker's letter was in response to a letter sent to him by Langston. In the 1960s, Argile Langston donated a copy of the letter he received from Parker to the Fort Smith National Historic Site with the hope that it could be viewed by interested people. Today the copy is on exhibit in the courtroom used by Judge Parker.

The letter was written on September 8 and while the postmark date is unclear on the front of the envelope, there is a PO stamp on the back of the envelope that says it was received in West Fork, Arkansas, on September 9. The letter most likely was sent by train as there were trains going from Fort Smith to West Fork daily.

In the letter Parker explains to Langston why he can not let his father return home. Langston's father was serving on the federal jury for the Western District of Arkansas. Jurors came from all over western Arkansas and stayed in Fort Smith for a court term that could last up to three months. The court met for four terms each year. The terms began on the first Monday in February, May, August, and November. Due to the court's heavy case load, the four terms often ran together without a break in between.

A petit jury, or trial jury, hears evidence in a trial. In federal courts, petit juries have twelve members for criminal cases. While most of the crimes tried in the federal court at Fort Smith occurred in Indian Territory, individuals from Indian Territory were not represented on the jury. The court compiled its jury pool from within its judicial district, the western part of Arkansas. Some came from as far away as Dallas, Arkansas, 120 miles from Fort Smith. The following information was included on court letterhead from 1881. "This District embraces the Counties of Benton, Washington, Crawford, Sebastian, Scott, Polk, Yell, Sevier, Little River, Howard, Montgomery, Logan, Franklin, Johnson, Madison, Newton, Carroll, Boone, Marion, and the Indian Territory."

Before ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920 allowing universal suffrage, only men could serve on federal juries. The 15th Amendment, ratified in 1870, gave the vote to all male citizens, age 21 or older. So, jurors in Parker's court were exclusively male and included both blacks and whites. Indians were ineligible to serve on the jury as they were not citizens of the United States.

Jurors were paid two dollars a day for jury duty in the early 1870s. Judge Parker appealed to raise the juror's per diem to three dollars. Some jurors took advantage of this fee and dragged out deliberations in order to collect more money. In the 1880s and 1890s the per diem rate of jurors reverted back to two dollars a day. The court paid jurors who lived beyond Fort Smith five cents a mile for their roundtrip travel to Fort Smith from their home. (Master Langston's family lived in West Fork, Arkansas.)

Information on the criminal case procedure is available in the handout "Criminal Case Procedure in Judge Parker's Court."

Supplies Needed

Copy of Parker's letter to Langston and envelope
Student Questions (worksheet)

Additional Resource Materials

"Criminal Case Procedure in Judge Parker's Court" (handout)
Petit Jurors, May 1876 Term (reimbursement worksheet)

Procedure

Have students read the short letter from Judge Parker to Argile Langston. Have students answer questions on handout in small groups or as a class. After they have dis-

cussed the content of the letter, provide them with the background information on court terms and jurors.

Additional Activities and Discussion

Students could write a short letter to Judge Parker as if they were Argile Langston, asking for their father to be allowed to return home.

Students can calculate the amount of money Master Langston's father would have received for traveling roundtrip from West Fork to Fort Smith. (use a map to locate West Fork and determine number of miles and then multiple by five cents a mile) Discuss transportation in 1892 between Fort Smith and West Fork and compare it to transportation today. Jurors were responsible for providing their own transportation and due to expense, were not able to commute between their residence and Fort Smith.

Locate residences of 1876 jurors on a map of Arkansas and calculate their total mileage and mileage reimbursement. (use activity sheet) Also calculate their per diem amount and add the per diem and mileage reimbursement to get their total fee. Ask students to determine who served the most days on the jury and who traveled the furthest distance. You can develop other questions and activities using the Petit Jurors Activity Sheet. (Note: There are some differences in mileage for jurors listing the same residence. Court records do not explain the reason for these differences.)

Ask students if they can think of people today who are doing their duty as citizens (serving their country) and are sometimes required to be away from their families. How does this affect the families? How do families communicate with each other? How is this probably different from the way jurors families communicated with each other?

Have students find primary documents (letters) at home to share with class.

Letter to Argyle Langston, 1892

This letter to the son of a juror in 1892 provides a glimpse of the softer side of Isaac Parker. A copy of this letter was donated to the park in the 1960s by Argyle Langston. (note: Parker misspells the boy's first name in the letter.)

United States Court At Chambers

I.C. Parker, District Judge

Fort Smith, Ark. September 8, 1892

My Dear Master Langston,

I have received your very nice note, asking me to let your papa come home. I will be pleased to do so as soon as we can spare him. You know your father is a good man, and we need good men to make up the juries which are to try cases where men are charged with great crimes such as murder which men commit when they kill others. I hope I may live long to see you become a useful good man like your father. I was very glad to get your note and you will give my most kind regards to your mother and you will believe me to be most truly your friend.

I.c. Parker

To
Master Argyle Langston

Parker Letter to Langston: Student Worksheet

1. When was the letter written?
2. The post office stamp on the back on the envelope shows that it was received at West Fork, Arkansas on September 9, 1892. How long after Parker wrote the letter did Master Langston receive it?
4. How did Judge Parker sign his name?
3. The letter is addressed to Master Langston. Is he a child or an adult? What do you read that makes you think that? (Look at the envelope as well.)
4. Why is Judge Parker writing Master Langston?
5. What did Master Langston want Judge Parker to do for him?
6. What was Master Langston's father doing that Judge Parker needed him to do?
7. What can you learn about jurors from this letter?
8. How did Judge Parker describe Master Langston's father?
9. Was Judge Parker at the time he wrote the letter able to do what Master Langston wanted him to do? Why or why not?
10. What can you learn about Judge Parker from this letter? How does this compare to what you already knew about him?

Curriculum Standards

Arkansas Social Studies Curriculum

Strand: Geography
Standard: Physical and Spatial

G.1.6.9 Compare the location of specific places on both maps and globes

Strand: Geography
Standard: Interaction of People and the Environment

G.3.4.1 Examine different types of transportation and communication links between communities in Arkansas

G.3.5.3 Identify the various forms of technology and methods of transferring ideas and information

G.3.6.3 Compare methods of communication through present day technology

Strand: Civics
Standard: Government

C.4.4.1 Compare and contrast the purpose and function of government at the local, state, and federal levels

C.4.4.3 Identify the three branches of government: executive, legislative, judicial

C.4.4.4 Describe how United States citizens apply fundamental principles of democracy (e.g., people rule themselves, power of government limited by law, people exercise their authority directly through voting and indirectly through elected officials)

C.4.5.1 Recognize that the Arkansas and the United States governments are composed of three branches: executive, legislative, judicial

C.4.5.5 Identify and describe the roles of the judicial branch (e.g., local, state, and federal)

C.4.6.1 Compare and contrast the three branches of government at the state and national levels of government: executive, legislative, judicial

C.4.6.5 Compare and contrast the roles of the judicial branch (e.g., local, state, and federal)

Strand: Civics
Standard: Citizenship

C.5.4.4 Examine characteristics needed for active citizenship

C.5.5.9 Identify the rights and responsibilities of United States citizenship (e.g., voting, obeying laws, volunteerism)

C.5.6.8 Evaluate ways being a good citizen is important for every individual (e.g., voting, obeying laws, volunteerism)

Strand: History
Standard: History

- H.6.2.6 Determine how photos and documents are used to gather information about the past
- H.6.4.10 Examine artifacts relating to events in Arkansas history
- H.6.4.11 Discuss advances in technology (e.g., communications, space travel, medical)
- H.6.4.16 Describe how new forms of transportation and communication impacted the Westward Expansion of the United States (e.g., pony express, railroads, telegraphs)

Strand: Economics
Standard: Choices

- E.7.5.6 Identify why federal, state, and local governments have to make choices because of limited resources
- E.7.6.5 Identify why federal, state, and local governments have to make choices because of limited resources

English Language Arts Curriculum (Arkansas)

Strand: Reading
Standard 9: Comprehension

- R.9.3.3 Make connections from text to world during reading
- R.9.4.1 Organize prior knowledge and new information to make meaning of the text
- R.9.4.2 Make connections that demonstrate a deeper understanding of text related to self, text, and/or world
- R.9.2.5 Locate information within the text to answer literal and inferential questions
- R.9.3.6 Question the author's purpose
- R.9.4.6 Use additional resources to support answers to questions formulated before, during, and after reading
- R.9.2.4 Discuss how, why, and what-if questions about texts
- R.9.3.8 Discuss why an author may have selected particular words or phrases
- R.9.4.7 Infer the purpose of the text to expand comprehension

English Language Arts Curriculum (continued)

- R.9.3.9 Draw inferences, such as conclusions or generalizations, and support them with text evidence and/or personal experiences
- R.9.3.13 Summarize major points found in nonfiction materials
- R.9.4.11 Read a text for a variety of purposes
- R.9.5.6 Connect own background knowledge and personal experience to make inferences and to respond to new information presented in text
- R.9.5.7 Make inferences supported by a character's thoughts, words and actions, or the narrator's description
- R.9.6.6 Connect own background knowledge and personal experience to make inferences and to respond to new information presented in text
- R.9.5.12 Identify main ideas and supporting evidence in short reading passages
- R.9.6.12 Identify main ideas and supporting evidence in short reading passages
- R.9.5.19 Summarize information including main idea and significant supporting details
- R.9.6.18 Summarize the content of a text
- R.9.5.21 Evaluate personal, social, and political issues as presented in text
- R.9.6.20 Evaluate personal, social, and political issues as presented in text
- R.10.5.5 Identify cause/effect and problem/solution relationships

Mathematics Curriculum Frameworks (Arkansas)

Strand: Numbers and Operations

Standard 1: Number Sense

- NO.1.3.6 Use the place value structure of the base ten number system and be able to represent and compare decimals to hundredths in money (using models, illustrations, symbols, expanded notation and problem solving)
Ex. \$193.76 _____ \$139.67
- NO.1.5.4 Round and compare decimals to a given place value (whole number, tenths, hundredths)

Standard 2: Properties of Number Operations

- NO.2.5.5 Model addition, subtraction, and multiplication of fractions with like and unlike denominators and decimals
- NO.2.6.5 Model multiplication and division of fractions (including mixed numbers) and decimals using pictures and physical objects Ex. weight, money and measuring cups

Standard 3: Numerical Operations and Estimation

- NO.3.3.2 Develop, with and without appropriate technology, fluency with basic number combinations for multiplication and division facts (10 x 10)
- NO.3.3.3 Develop, with and without appropriate technology, computational fluency in multiplication and division up to two-digit by one-digit numbers using two-digit by one-digit number contextual problems using: strategies for multiplying and dividing numbers, performance of operations in more than one way, estimation of products and quotients in appropriate situations, and relationships between operations
- NO.3.4.3 Attain, with and without appropriate technology, computational fluency in multiplication and division using contextual problems using: two-digit by two-digit multiplication (large numbers with technology), up to three-digit by two-digit division (larger numbers with technology), strategies for multiplying and dividing numbers, performance of operations in more than one way, estimation of products and quotients in appropriate situations, and relationships between operations

United States Court

AT CHAMBERLAIN

J. C. PIKKEK, District Judge

FORT SMITH, ARK.

July 8 1892

My dear Master Langston
I have received your
very nice note asking me to let
your papa come home. I will be
pleased to do so as soon as we can
spare him. You know your father
is a good man and he has good
men to make up the jury which
are the very cases where men are charged
with great crimes but at present
I am unwilling to let them

United States Courts,
AT CHAMBERS.

J. C. FINKER, District Judge.

FORT SMITH, ARK.

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Dear Mother. I hope I may live
long to see you become a useful
good man like your father. I was
very glad to get your note
and you will give my kind regards
to your mother and you will show
me to be most truly,
Yours,
J. C. Finker

Mr
Mother Aggie Langston

I. O. PARKER,
U. S. DIST. JUDGE,
FORT SMITH, ARK.



Master Argyle Langston
care of Mr J. M. Langston
West Fork
Washington Co. Ark.

PETIT JURORS, MAY TERM, 1876 -- FEDERAL COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS

Jurors in 1876 were paid three dollars for every day they heard a trial. This is referred to as a “per diem.” The court also paid jurors who lived beyond Fort Smith five cents a mile for their roundtrip travel to Fort Smith from their homes. Calculate how much these jurors were paid for their per diem and mileage.

Name	Residence	Days @ \$3	Per Diem Amount in \$	Miles (roundtrip)	Mileage @ \$.05	Total in \$ (per diem plus mileage)
Edward C. Brogan	Fort Smith	4				
William H. Seewald	Fort Smith	4				
William Shelly	Fort Smith	4				
Cornelius Akin	Fort Smith	4				
Joseph W. Brown	Fort Smith	4				
Stephen Hight	Fort Smith	4				
William Hicks	Fort Smith	4				
Benjamin Holmes	Fort Smith	4				
Felix Helbing	Fort Smith	4				
Robert Fitzhenry	Fort Smith	4				
Adelbert Purler	Fort Smith	4				
Edward H. Devany	Fort Smith	1				
D.B. Sparks	Fort Smith	1				
P. Berman	Fort Smith	1				
J.B. Cornington	Fort Smith	1				
Thomas Vernon	Fort Smith	1				
Henry Pape	Fort Smith	1				
Samuel Bollinger	Fort Smith	1				
Neal Reed	Fort Smith	1				
J.S. Goss	Fort Smith	1				
S.J. Scott	Fort Smith	1				
John Vaughn	Fort Smith	1				
Thomas Quinn	Fort Smith	4				
John G. Ellig	Fort Smith	1				
Jas. A. Davie	Fort Smith	1				

Name	Residence	Days @ \$3	Per Diem Amount in \$	Miles (roundtrip)	Mileage @ \$.05	Total in \$ (per diem plus mileage)
Benjamin Holmes	Fort Smith	1				
Prior U. Lee	Fayetteville, Arks	52		130		
George W. Pillars	Roseville, Arks	51		94		
George U. Spaulding	Greenwood, Arks	49		32		
David W. Hanna	Evansville, Arks	51		94		
John L. Maxwell	Bentonville, Arks	53		180		
Marion Davidson	Van Buren, Arks	49		20		
Nathaniel Carter	Fort Smith	48				
John Sengle	Fort Smith	48				
Samuel G. McClellan	Boonsboro, Arks	51		106		
Frederick Luther	Locksburg, Arks	58		334		
Joshua P. Clark	Fort Smith	48				
John M. Caldwell	Huntsville, Arks	51		90		
Henry G. Rinds	Dallas, Arks	55		240		
Daniel Harrison	Fort Smith	48				
Mark Jackson	Alma, Arks	49		42		
Robin P. Williams	Cove P.O., Arks	55		234		
R.M. Johnson	Fort Smith	48				
William P. Broodie	Boonsboro, Arks	51		106		
Richard T. O'Bryan	Van Buren, Arks	48		12		
Henry J. Hays	Huntsville, Arks	54		200		
Beruhard Shoeppe	Fort Smith	34				
John R.A. Hendry, Jr.	Fort Smith	48				
Jesse Stewart	Van Buren, Arks	49		22		
George W. Hays	Huntsville, Arks	20		100		
Edward H. Payton	Fort Smith	3				