

## Court Script

This play script can be used as it stands or used as a skeleton script to which additional characters can be added (more accused, witnesses, court stewards etc.)

### First Case

*Judge and officials enter the stage. (There could be other people who have turned up to observe the proceedings- town's folk, members of the accused families. These characters would react to sentencing, cheering, showing shock etc.)*

*First accused is marched in.*

#### Judge:

This man/woman is accused of the horrible crime of stealing a loaf of bread from Mr. .... bakers shop in the village/town of ..... How do you plead, guilty or not guilty?

#### The accused man:

*(character to choose- guilty/ not guilty) opportunity here to give account of him/herself*

#### Judge:

Well it doesn't really matter what you say. I find you guilty of this crime for which I will sentence you to the maximum punishment which will be a public whipping. You will be chained to the post in the center of the village/town at three o'clock tomorrow where you will receive ten lashes.

#### The accused man:

*(Show shock, make outburst.....)*

#### Judge:

*(ignores the accused who is dragged out of the room)*

Next case!

### Second Case

*(Woman is pushed into the room)*

#### Judge:

This is one of the most serious crimes possible in our times. You were seen by Mr. Proctor on the hill at night dancing round a fire and casting spells. How do you plead, guilty or not guilty?

#### Woman:

*(mumbles)*

*(At this point additional witnesses could be called)*

#### Judge:

So you don't admit to this wicked crime of witchcraft. Well we will find out the truth.

You will be taken down to the River Hodder tomorrow morning and placed in a sack which will be tied and you will be thrown into the water.

If you float, you are most certainly a witch and we will have to hang you.

If you sink, well you are innocent and we will make it known to your family of this.

Good day to you. Next!

*(Accused witch is dragged out screaming - reaction from town-folk.)*

## Third Case

*(Accused is ushered in)*

### Judge:

You were seen by Miss. .... falling over in a puddle yesterday.  
What have you to say for yourself?

### Man/woman

Well I.....

*(make up your own excuse here)*

### Judge:

I'm not interested in your excuses; this is a most serious crime indeed!

I find you guilty of the terrible crime of being drunk in public and this is not your first time!

You will be put into the 'drunkard's cloak', a large barrel which you will wear on yourself as people in the village/ town, laugh, jeer and throw things at you. I hope that this will be embarrassing enough for you not to do it again, Have a nice day, and do NOT come again!

### Man/woman:

Yes Sir. Sorry Sir.

*(The sentenced man/woman is removed from the court.)*

## Fourth Case

*(Accused is pushed into the court looking very scared)*

### Judge

This is the final case of the day and the most serious one.

William Marsden, you my lad killed a fallow deer in the Leagram Deer Park, with two of your friends with the intention of taking it home to feed your parents and brothers. How do you plead?

### William/Youth:

(hangs head)

It's been a very cold, miserable winter sire. My family's bellies ache with hunger. *(Add additional statements)*

We starve sir.

### Judge:

What of it!

*(Marsden family can be heard crying)*

You were seen with the King's deer hung over your shoulders. You chose a time when the park keeper was away fighting in France.

You have stolen from King Henry and your employer Sir Edward Stanley.

A SERIOUS CRIME INDEED AND ONE THAT BRINGS SHAME ON YOUR FAMILY.

As you have no means of paying the fines that would normally be imposed for this offence, I have no choice but to sentence you and your friends to six months imprisonment. Tomorrow you will all be taken to Lancaster prison. This will be a stern warning to others.

*(Think of how the court scene would finish)*

## Notes: Crime and Punishment

- People who committed minor crimes could be put in the stocks or pillory. They always stood where lots of people would pass and they would throw things at the criminals.
- Beggars were a big problem people were afraid of them. If they became a nuisance they were dragged through the streets being whipped.
- Most towns/villages had a ducking chair to punish women who were "scolds". The chair was kept near a pond or river and was hung on a see-saw. The woman was tied into the chair, dipped into the water and pulled out again.
- If people thought that a woman was a witch she would be tied up in a sack and thrown into the water. If she floated it meant she was guilty.
- In England no one was burnt for being accused of being a witch although this did happen in Scotland and in Europe.
- Other people could be hung.



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