

# The Cupcake Thief

By Ellen Jackson, illustrated by Blanche Sims  
(New York: Kane Press, 2007)

## SUMMARY:

When Zack's missing cupcake turns up in Tyler's desk, Ms. Baker sends the case to Student Court. At student court, sixth-graders act as attorneys for Tyler and Zack, as well as the judge and jurors. Eventually, Tyler's friend Erin figures out that the "crime" was really just an accident, the result of desks being moved, but readers learn a lot about the trial process through the story and "sidebars" that present definitions and background information about legal terms. The book is part of the "Social Studies Connect" series and includes activity suggestions that focus on rules; thus, it ties in particularly well when teaching about conflict resolution since the court system is one way of resolving conflicts.

## LINKS TO STATE/DISTRICT GOALS

### Common Core Standards in English Language Arts:

*Reading: Key Ideas and Details*

2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

*Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration*

1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

*Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use*

6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.

### Chicago Public Schools Social Science Goal 14A:

B5: Demonstrate examples of honesty and fairness when playing or working with other students.

### Chicago Public Schools Social Emotional Learning Standards:

1B: Recognize personal qualities and external supports

2A: Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.

## Classroom Ready Resource

- 2B: Recognize individual and group similarities and differences
- 2C: Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.
- 2D: Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.
- 3A: Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.
- 3B: Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations.

### STRATEGIES

- Brainstorming
- Discussion/Deliberation

### TIME REQUIRED

- 45-60 Minutes

### INITIATING ACTIVITIES

Tell students: An important rule is not to take things that don't belong to you. You may have had one of your belongings disappear and you suspected that someone else took it. Or you may have been accused of taking something. In either case, you probably felt upset. When people are upset about something like this, how can they resolve the conflict? (*Accept all student answers.*) Tell students that the book you are going to read presents one way of resolving a conflict. Show students the cover of the book and ask them what property they think is missing in this story? (*A cupcake*) Let students speculate on how the conflict over the cupcake might be resolved.

### Discussion Questions

1. What is the "crime" in the story? Who is accused of taking the cupcake? Do you think he did it? Why or why not?
2. What does Ms. Baker decide to do? Why does she send Zach and Tyler to student court?
3. What were Leo and Jen's jobs in the court? What steps did they take to do their job as lawyers? Who do you think did a better job? Why?
4. What was the most important evidence in the case?
5. Do you think the trial was a fair way to figure out what happened? Why or why not?

### FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY

## Classroom Ready Resource

Several activity suggestions are provided in the book. You could also use the “Trial Cast of Characters” worksheet after students have read and discussed the story. They could identify who in the story played each “role” shown on the worksheet. Using CRFC’s multimedia mock trial *State v. Wolf* would also be a logical follow-up to the story. On page 10 of the book, a sidebar lists the day’s cases in student court. Students could write stories about the other two cases on the docket: (1) Did Sam Skol put paint in Linda Gee’s hair? and (2) Did Jake Ryan put yogurt in Room 4’s pencil sharpener?