



BUD, NOT BUDDY

by Christopher Paul Curtis



Winner of the John Newbery Medal, 2000

The Trial of Mr. and Mrs. Amos and Todd Amos

Objectives: ...use dramatic forms to communicate ideas effectively
...describe important due process rights including trial by jury and the right to an attorney
...connect his/her own experiences, information, insights, and ideas with those of others through listening and speaking
...understand the major ideas and supporting evidence in spoken messages
...distinguish between the speaker's opinion and verifiable fact

(Everyone is in place in the courtroom except the judge.)

Clerk: (enters and stands to face the court) All rise.. (Judge enters.) Be seated. Court is now in order and in session. All persons having business before the court come to order. The jurors will rise, raise your right hands, and be sworn in. Do you solemnly swear that you will faithfully try the issues now to be given you? That you will speak nothing to anyone of the business matters you have at hand, but among yourselves--nor will you suffer anyone to speak to you about the same, but in court? Do you all so swear?

Jurors: (together) I do.

Judge: Mr. and Mrs. Amos and Todd Amos, you are charged with cruelty to a child and attempted murder. How do you plead?

Amoses: (stand together) Not guilty, your honor.

Judge: Very well. The attorneys will make their opening remarks.

Plaintiff's Attorney 1: (rises and approaches jury) Your honor, members of the jury, I stand here before you to tell you that a terrible crime has been committed, one of the worst, most heinous crimes I have ever heard of! An orphan 10-year-old child has suffered unbelievable pain and torment at the hands of two adults (Mr. and Mrs. Amos) and their 12-year-old son (Todd) in whose care he was entrusted. I will prove to you that Bud not only suffered emotional harm from threats, but also was tortured with a pencil, was beaten by Todd, was locked in a cold shed and left alone with dangerous--life threatening evil. I will prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Amos Family is guilty of child abuse and attempted murder. (sits down)

Defense Attorney 1: (rises and approaches jury) Your honor and honorable members of the jury, times are hard for us all. It gets harder and harder to put bread on the table. The depression has robbed many of us of our jobs. It has even robbed some of us of our parents.

Bud Caldwell is one of those. This young man has been raised in an overcrowded orphanage for four long years, has been thrown out of two other foster homes, and has become a mean, incorrigible bully. I will prove to you that this generous, loving family, the Amoses, attempted to help a poor little orphan boy, only to be attacked themselves and their property threatened by this scalawag. It is HE who should be on trial today, not the Amoses. After you hear the evidence, I am sure you will find the Amos Family NOT GUILTY of the crime with which they are charged. (Sits down)

Judge: You may call your witnesses.

Plaintiff's Attorney 2: Your honor, I call the case worker to the stand. (Case Worker comes to the witness stand and faces the clerk.)

Clerk: (holds up a Bible) Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Case Worker: I do.

Plaintiff's Attorney 2: How do you know Bud Caldwell?

Case Worker: I have been his case worker for four years.

Plaintiff's Attorney 2: Did you place Bud into the foster home of Mr. and Mrs. Amos?

Case Worker: Yes, I did.

Plaintiff's Attorney 2: Before placing him in their home, how did you check to see if this family would be a compassionate, loving family for this youngster?

Case Worker: You have to understand. Times are hard. We have so many children. The orphanage is so overcrowded. We case workers are very busy...

Plaintiff's Attorney 2: So, did you check to see if this would be a good foster family?

Case Worker: No.

Plaintiff's Attorney 2: Are you aware that other children in their care have been abused before you placed Bud in their home?