

Step 2 Go further  

Making big money!

The True Stella Awards recognize the most frivolous civil lawsuits from the United States, such as a diabetic obese man with high blood pressure and heart disease who sued the fast-food industry for not telling him that it just might not be healthy for him to eat at Mac Donald's everyday as if having two heart attacks weren't enough to convince him. And yes, this is real! Most people simply blame lawyers for that, which only recognizes part of the problem. Yet, most people hate lawyers even then. Is that fair? You bet. Lawsuits can accurately be called an industry in the United States. The lawsuit industry is estimated to bring in more than \$50 billion per year in legal fees to lawyers out of over \$250 billion in total cost to the litigants¹. That's a huge drain² on the country's economy: it represents well over 2% of the US Gross Domestic Product³. By comparison, the United Kingdom "lawsuit load" is less than 1% of its GDP. And it's a growing and accelerating industry.

Randy CASSINGHAM, *The True Stella Awards*, 2006

1. the person who files a lawsuit 2. it affects the economy 3. PIB



- Read the text and explain in your own words the purpose of the True Stella Awards.
- Which problem do these awards point to?
- What vision of lawyers is presented here?
- ROLEPLAY:** You want to start handing out True Stella Awards again. Explain your motivation.

Prepare your task

Did you know?

The True Stella Awards rewarded frivolous cases from 2002 to 2007. The whole purpose was to be entertaining, but beyond that, it meant to question the judicial system itself: are the people who file these suits using the court looking for justice or extortion?

Help yourself

Nouns

— crook: *escroc*

Adjectives

- crucial: *'kru:ʃəl/*
- frivolous: *'fɪvəl/*
- greedy
- opportunistic
- profit-making

Verbs & expressions

- cheat /tʃi:t/ on sb = deceive sb: *duper qqn*
- reward /rɪ'wɔ:d/ = prize
- distort: *dénaturer*

Notion Focus

Places and forms of power

- Why are some of today's lawsuits regarded as a business?
- Think of the situations that can be taken to court: what do we mean by "frivolous lawsuits"?
- Money and justice: which one should come first according to you? Justify.

A daily reality

Text 1 A justice-minded family

Theodore Boone was an only child and for that reason usually had breakfast alone. His father, a busy lawyer, was in the habit of leaving early and meeting friends for coffee and gossip at the same downtown diner every morning at seven. Theo's mother, herself a busy lawyer, had been trying to lose ten pounds for at least the past ten years, and because of this she'd convinced herself that breakfast should be nothing more than coffee with the newspaper. So he ate by himself at the kitchen table, cold cereal and orange juice, with an eye on the clock. The Boone home had clocks everywhere, clear evidence of organized people. Actually, he wasn't completely alone. Beside his chair, his dog ate, too. Judge was a thoroughly mixed mutt¹ whose age and breeding would always be a mystery. Theo had rescued him from near death with a last-second appearance in Animal Court two years earlier, and Judge would always be grateful. He preferred Cheerios, same as Theo, and they ate together in silence every morning.

At 8:00 a.m., Theo rinsed their bowls in the sink, placed the milk and juice back in the fridge, walked to the den², and kissed his mother on the cheek. "Off to school", he said.

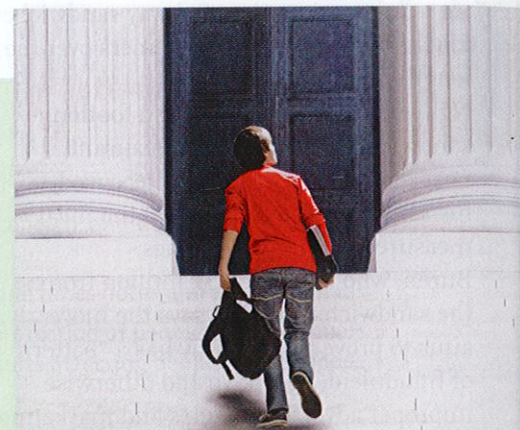
"I'll stop by the office after school." Theo stopped by the office every day after school, without fail, but Mrs. Boone always asked.

The county courthouse was the largest building in downtown Strattenburg. Theo loved the courthouse, with its air of authority, and people hustling³ importantly about, and somber notices and schedules tacked⁴ to the bulletin boards. Most of all, Theo loved the courtrooms themselves. There were small ones where more private matters were handled without juries, then there was the main courtroom on the second floor where lawyers battled like gladiators and judges ruled like kings.

At the age of thirteen, Theo was still undecided about his future. One day he dreamed of being a famous trial lawyer, one who handled the biggest cases and never lost before juries. The next day he dreamed of being a great judge, noted for his wisdom and fairness. He went back and forth, changing his mind daily.

John GRISHAM, *Theodore Boone, Kid Lawyer*, 2010

1. dog (colloquial) 2. living-room (colloquial) 3. running around 4. pinned



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John
Grisham

THEODORE BOONE

HALF THE MAN, TWICE THE LAWYER

Text 1



- How is the parents' job affecting their family life?
→ WB p. 49
- What vision of justice does Theo have?
- What is your reaction to the anecdote about the dog?

Help yourself

Nouns

- satire /'sætəɹə/
- schedule /'ʃedju:l/
- = programme

Adjectives

- absurd /əb'sɜ:d/
- critical
- excessive
- humorous

Verbs & expressions

- admire /əd'maɪə/
- exploit = take advantage of
- picture = draw the portrait of
- take proceedings against:
engager des poursuites contre