Magic Tree House: 
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Spring 2019

This abstract was not released in accordance to the timeline specified by the Students’ Association Constitution. The confronting party did not consent to the release of the abstract. The confronted party did not consent to the release of the abstract.

Content Warning: eating disorder

Key:
Confronted Party: Annie
Confronting Party: Professor Jack
Course: Time Travel 342

Summary/Pre-Trial:

[Annie] contacted Honor Council regarding a potential violation in [Time Travel 342] with Professor [Jack]. Both parties submitted statements, and Honor Council consented to send the case to an academic trial. The potential violation was centered around plagiarism on a summary assignment. Due to a heavy caseload during the academic year, this trial was run by a Summer Council.

Fact Finding:

The jury met with Annie and Professor Jack (via Skype) to discuss what had occurred. The parties seemed mainly in agreement: Annie had used an author’s words in a manner that was inappropriate when summarizing the author’s argument in her assignment. Professor Jack stressed that, while he was sympathetic to Annie’s situation, he does not believe in unintentional plagiarism and therefore felt this was a serious violation of the Honor Code. There was some confusion over the grade Annie had received on the assignment, as Annie said Professor Jack had given her full credit while Professor Jack said he intended to give her a zero. Both parties were focused on restoration, and, after Professor Jack hung up, Annie told the jury that she would not be taking any more classes in the [Time Travel] department, so she was no longer worried about future uncomfortable academic settings with Professor Jack, a [Time Travel] professor. The jury asked a few clarifying questions; Annie left and the jury began deliberating.
The jury unanimously felt that a violation had occurred, but wanted to stress the unintentional nature of the plagiarism. The jury ultimately consented to a statement of violation that reflected this.

**Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:**

[Annie] included passages in her assignment that were nearly identical to those present in the original paper she was summarizing. This is an act of plagiarism and violates the Honor Code. The jury believes that this instance of plagiarism was non-malicious in nature.

(9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

**Interim:**

Professor Jack called the chair of the trial to express some discomfort with the statement of violation. He had two main concerns: (1) that it implies plagiarism is about taking words and not ideas and (2) that “non-malicious” deals with intent and implies plagiarism must be proactive in other cases. He expressed wanting to meet with Annie as a resolution to discuss ways of approaching future assignments in the [discipline of Time Travel], and, while not in favor of the wording of the statement, felt that the jury shouldn’t have to change it and would be comfortable writing a letter to the community to be appended to the abstract that expresses his concerns.

**Circumstantial Portion:**

The trial chair relayed Professor Jack’s concerns to the jury, and asked Annie about Professor Jack’s proposal to have the jury craft a resolution that mandated a meeting between the two. Annie said she did not think this would be useful, as the two had met multiple times during the prior academic year. Annie also disclosed that she had been going through some tough emotional periods during the previous semester, and had been in intense treatment for an eating disorder at the time of the violation. Annie expressed trust in the jury to make appropriate decisions when crafting resolutions.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:**

1. The jury recommends that Professor [Jack] write a letter to [Annie] expressing his understanding of plagiarism, particularly how to avoid representing another’s ideas as one’s own. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

2. The jury recommends that [Annie] write a reflection on her conversations with Professor [Jack] from the [previous] semester, the trial process, and the letter from Professor [Jack]. [Annie] will have the option to send this reflection to Professor [Jack] if she so chooses. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

3. The jury recommends that [Annie] meet with a Writing Center tutor at the beginning of the [following] semester to discuss methods for avoiding plagiarism when summarizing
and note-taking. If [Annie] finds this meeting helpful, the jury encourages her to schedule future meetings with the Writing Center. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

4. The jury recommends that [Annie] receive a grade of 0.0 on the plagiarized assignment. This recommendation is based on the prior understanding between the parties and is intended to be restorative rather than punitive. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Resolutions as a Whole: (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Statement on Reporting:
The jury feels that this proceeding should not be reported to other institutions of higher learning because we do not feel it would require a disciplinary hearing at other colleges. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Finalizing:
Annie asked a few clarifying questions about resolutions 3 and 4, and left once they were answered. The jury returned to deliberating, and changed the wording of a few resolutions to clarify their intentions and altered the order of the final set. They also simplified the statement on reporting to be such that everyone could consent to it.

Final Resolutions:
1. The jury recommends that [Annie] receive a grade of 0.0 on the plagiarized assignment. This recommendation is based on the prior understanding between the parties. (8 jurors consent; 2 stand outside in absentia)
2. The jury recommends that Professor [Jack] write a letter to [Annie] expressing his understanding of plagiarism, particularly how to avoid representing another’s ideas as one’s own. (8 jurors consent; 2 stand outside in absentia)
3. The jury recommends that [Annie] write a reflection on her conversations with Professor [Jack] from the [previous] semester, the trial process, and the letter from Professor [Jack]. [Annie] will have the option to send this reflection to Professor [Jack] if she so chooses. (8 jurors consent; 2 stand outside in absentia)
4. The jury recommends that [Annie] meet with a Writing Center tutor at the beginning of the [following] semester to discuss methods for avoiding plagiarism when summarizing and note-taking. If [Annie] finds this meeting helpful, the jury encourages her to schedule future meetings with the Writing Center. (8 jurors consent; 2 stand outside in absentia)

Resolutions as a Whole: 8 jurors consent; 2 stand outside in absentia
**Statement on Reporting:**
*The jury feels that this proceeding should not be reported to other institutions of higher learning (8 jurors consent; 2 stand outside in absentia)*

**Post-Trial:**
The trial was not appealed.

**Discussion Questions:**
1. How can the confronting/confronted parties’ definition of plagiarism affect the Honor Council Trial process? How should their definitions be taken into account?
2. How should juries take into account how a confronted party feels about meeting with the confronting party?
3. How should juries approach inconsistencies in information, i.e. the confusion with Annie’s final grade on the project?