



HISTORICAL SOCIETY *of the* NEW YORK COURTS

YOU, THE JUROR Essay Prompts

1. Who has the right to serve?

The laws in force in 1777 required that jurors be male, over 21 years of age, and property owners. Gradually, the right to serve on a jury was extended to all New York citizens. Examine the State's long and arduous path to universal jury service and explain its importance in 21st century jurisprudence.

2. Your Role in a Criminal Trial

An important function of a jury in a criminal trial is to ensure community participation in the determination of guilt or innocence of a defendant. A jury is intended to provide a fair and unbiased review of the evidence in a criminal trial and thereby promotes the cause of justice. Examine the role of a jury in the context of criminal trials in New York and consider whether it promotes fair and equitable justice.

3. Your Role in a Civil Trial

Some maintain that civil jury trials guard against the arbitrary acts of public officials, offer redress to victims of civil rights violations, and result in improved safety standards for work conditions, consumer goods, industrial machinery, health care, etc. Other maintain that the civil jury is obsolete, a waste of time and money, and clogs the court calendar. Examine the value of civil jury trials in New York.