

## **Brown v. Dellinger\***

George Brown was seven years old and his brother, Dan, was eight. Mr. Dellinger was their next-door neighbor. Both boys had played many times in Mr. Dellinger's house, yard, and garage. They also watched him burn leaves in a vacant lot. When they asked if they could help he said, "No, keep away from the fire."

One day Mr. Dellinger was out of town. The two boys pulled aside a sheet of canvas that covered the entrance to his garage. They went inside to play. After a while they felt cold. They noticed a small barbecue grill in the garage and decided to build a fire to keep warm. They moved the grill close to the canvas sheet at the garage entrance and went outside to gather leaves to make a fire. George insisted that Dan go home to get some matches.

The boys lit the fire and stood with their backs to it trying to get warm. They then noticed that the canvas sheet had caught fire. They tried to put the fire out, but failed. The fire spread from the garage to the house and caused \$28,000 in damages.

Both boys had average intelligence. Both had been told by their parents not to play with matches or fire.

\*Taken from *Foundations of Democracy: Justice*. Calabasas, CA: Center for Civic Education, 1997. Used by permission.