

## Erin Brockovich and Civil Law

There are several references to the legal process throughout this movie. Many you have learned about in class, **while others, you have to deduce meaning using context clues**. Remember, in the movies, the directors understand the “average” person may not understand the law...so many clues visually and verbally are given. Use these to answer the questions below.

1. Would Erin's **first** court case at the opening of the movie be considered **property, tort, family, or estate law**? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Justify your answer by telling me what clues the movie gives you to hint at this.
  
3. After seeing Erin lose this lawsuit, explain in the space below why this scene is a great example of why people are usually advised by lawyers to “**plead the 5<sup>th</sup>**”. Explain how this scene is a great example of **self-incrimination**.
  
4. Why does PG&E (Pacific Gas and Electric) want to buy people's homes in Hinkley?
  
5. Explain why it is suspicious that Erin finds medical records in with the real estate offers PG&E made to the residents of Hinkley: (doctor visits paid for by PG&E)
  
6. Why do Erin and Ed need to get as many of the past and present residents of Hinkley to sign on to the **lawsuit** as possible? (multiple plaintiffs in one lawsuit is known as a “**class action**” lawsuit)
  
7. Ed says they hope to win “**punitive damages**”. What is the purpose of punitive damages? (hint: punitive comes from the same root word as “punishment”)
  
8. At one point, Erin and Ed meet in front of a judge to address the many **demurrers** the PG&E lawyers' request. Using *context clues*, what is the purpose of a **demurrer**?

9. Ed says the best chance for winning is in **binding arbitration**. He explains the reasons for this to Erin and later, to the residents of Hinkley in a town meeting. Summarize WHY most civil class actions lawsuits usually go to “binding arbitration” in your own words.
10. Why do so many of the plaintiffs WANT to go to a **jury trial**? (Jury trials are risky, but why do these people seem to want to take that chance?)
11. In civil lawsuits, the right to a jury trial is protected under which Amendment? \_\_\_\_\_
12. The “mystery man” Erin finally meets with in the bar, tells her he what **evidence** to help settle this case?
13. Ed says he is working “**pro bono**” on this case. What do you think “pro bono” means?
14. What **incentives** (motivation) does Ed have to working on this case “pro bono”?
15. How much money is Donna Jenson awarded? \_\_\_\_\_
16. How much money does Erin get as a bonus? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Summarize the ending in this in a few complete and concise sentences. **Use the following vocab words in your summary (trial, settlement, civil, plaintiffs, defendant, lawsuit, damages)**