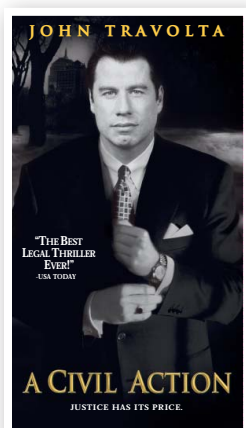




A CIVIL ACTION



Synopsis

The small town of East Woburn, Massachusetts, suffers from an unusually high rate of leukemia among its child population. The source of the epidemic is the carcinogenic solvents in the town's water supply, suspected to be the doing of two large factories in the area. One of the mothers of a leukemia-stricken son decides it is time to bring these corporations to justice, but the defendants have no shortage of money, power and influence.

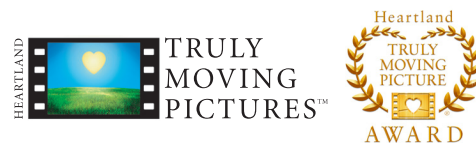
Discussion Questions

- At the beginning of the film, Jan insists that his firm cannot take the case. What were his reasons against taking the case? What changed his mind? If you were the lawyer and you had the same information, would you have taken the case? Why or why not?
- Throughout the film, glasses of water are shown repeatedly as a motif. Think about the specific times when this motif was used. What was the point of using drinking water as a thematic symbol? How did you feel as you watched people drinking water after you learned about the contamination?
- When Jerry (Beatrice's lawyer) met with the parents of the victims, why did he say to his team that the parents could never be allowed to testify?
- Who were the whistleblowers in the film? What led to them telling the truth about what they saw or did?



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A CIVIL ACTION

Do your own research

- At the end of the film, we learn that Jan becomes an environmental lawyer and begins working a case in the Toms River area of New Jersey. Find out what happened in Toms River. Who were the players? What were the circumstances? Was there a settlement? Did the case ever go to trial?
- The EPA passed the Clean Water Act in 1972 and then amended it in 1977. Find out why the Clean Water Act was passed. What led to this legislation?
- Find out what a Brownfield and Superfund site are. These two terms are extremely important in understanding contamination.

Get Involved

You don't need to be a lawyer to help with environmental clean-up. You can help clean up your community and insist on a safe and clean environment just by being an active citizen.

- Work with groups like Keep America Beautiful or your local affiliate, which not only beautifies but does so while maintaining environmentally sound practices. These groups ALWAYS need volunteers to continue their work. Visit www.KAB.org to learn more.
- What happens to contaminated land when a company abandons it? Often it is left vacant because cleaning up a Brownfield site can be very costly. Often sites that are Brownfields are only perceived to be contaminated. Hold a fundraising event to earn money to test for environmental contaminants on a Brownfield site that the owner can't afford to complete.



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