

Brooks v. Massachusetts

Legal Team- Questions to Consider:

1. **How did the public defender's failure to object to the courtroom closure during jury selection impact the fairness of Brooks's trial?**

Consider how the absence of family or community support in the courtroom might affect how a defendant is perceived by the jury, and whether that could influence the outcome of a case.

2. **Why do you think the jury selection process is supposed to be public, and how might it have helped Brooks to have his mother and others present?**

Explore how the presence of supporters in the courtroom can shape the emotional tone and fairness of a trial, especially for young or vulnerable defendants.

3. **Should a lawyer's single failure to object (even if it's a constitutional violation) be enough to say the whole defense was ineffective?**

Discuss whether a single error, like not challenging the courtroom closure, can be considered serious enough to justify a new trial. Why might the courts disagree on this?

4. **Based on the Strickland Test, did Brooks receive effective assistance of counsel?**

Apply both prongs: (1) Was the attorney's performance deficient? and (2) Did that deficiency prejudice the outcome of the case? Use evidence from the case to support your reasoning.

The Strickland Test:

To prove ineffective assistance of counsel, a defendant must show:

1. **Deficient performance** – that the attorney made serious errors falling below professional standards.
2. **Prejudice** – that these errors affected the outcome of the case.