The rats on trial in 16th century France

Have you ever seen a rat?

Vocabulary

1. accused 2. barley 3. predators 4. summoned 5. perspectives 6. legal

True Story

In the early 16th century, in Autun, France, a court case involved a group of rats _____ of eating _____ crops. The court _____ the rats to explain themselves, but they never appeared.

Their lawyer argued that the rats did not attend because they had not been properly informed of the court date and were afraid of _____ like cats. This story highlights how people in the past sometimes applied human laws to animals, even expecting them to participate in _____ processes.

It invites us to think about historical _____ on animals and justice. It's a fascinating example of how differently people used to interact with the natural world and the laws they lived by.

Quiz

1. Where did the court case take place?
2. Who were accused in the court case?
3. Why did the rats not attend the court?
4. What does the story highlight about people in the past?

True or False

1. The court case happened in autumn. True | False
2. The rats were accused of eating wheat crops. True | False
3. The rats were represented by a lawyer. True | False

Conversation

A: Can you believe we're representing rats in court?
B: It's a first for me too! But everyone deserves a fair trial.
A: They didn't even show up. What's our defense?
B: We'll say they were scared of the cats. It's a valid point.
A: You think the court will buy that?
B: Well, it's worth a try. It's not like we can ask the rats!

Discussion

1. Should animals follow human rules? Why or why not?
2. In what ways do we treat animals like humans in modern times?
3. How would things change if animals could understand us?
4. What punishment would you give a pet for breaking house rules?

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