

Twelve Angry Men Study Guide

Twelve Angry Men by Reginald Rose

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Introduction

The play was inspired by Rose's own experience of jury duty on a manslaughter case in New York City. At first, he had been reluctant to serve on a jury, but, he wrote, "the moment I walked into the courtroom . . . and found myself facing a strange man whose fate was suddenly more or less in my hands, my entire attitude changed." Rose was greatly impressed by the gravity of the situation, the somber activity of the court, and the "absolute finality" of the decision that he and his fellow jurors would have to make. He also thought that since no one other than the jurors had any idea of what went on in a jury room, "a play taking place entirely within a jury room might be an exciting and possibly moving experience for an audience" ("Author's Commentary" on *Twelve Angry Men* in *Six Television Plays*). The result is a taut, engrossing drama in which eleven jurors believe the defendant in a capital murder trial is guilty, while one juror stands up courageously for what he believes is justice and tries to persuade the others to his way of thinking.



Author Biography

Nationality 1: American

Birthdate: 1920

Deathdate: 2002

Reginald Rose was born on December 10, 1920, in New York City, the son of William (a lawyer) and Alice (Obendorfer) Rose. Rose attended City College (now of the City University of New York) from 1937 to 1938 but did not graduate. During World War II and shortly after, he served in the U.S. Army, from 1942 to 1946, ending his army career as a first lieutenant. In 1943, Rose married Barbara Langbart, and they had four children.

After the war and continuing into the early 1950s, Rose worked as a clerk, publicity writer for Warner Brothers Pictures, and advertising copywriter. He also wrote short stories and novels, but he never had any luck selling his work until he turned to writing plays for television. CBS bought the first script he wrote, called *The Bus to Nowhere*, and it aired live in 1951. He then became a regular writer for CBS's *Studio One*, a weekly show that produced live drama. His plays for *Studio One* included *Dino*, *The Death and Life of Larry Benson*, *The Remarkable Incident at Carson Corners*, and *Thunder on Sycamore Street*, all of which aired in 1954. In the same year, Rose wrote *Twelve Angry Men*, the work for which he is best known. The play, which was inspired by his experience of jury service, was broadcast on September 20, 1954. It won an Emmy Award for best-written drama and a Writer's Guild of America Award. The teleplay was published in Rose's *Six Television Plays* in 1956.

Twelve Angry Men was published in an expanded form as a stage play in 1955 and made into a successful film in 1957, starring Henry Fonda and coproduced by Fonda and Rose. The film garnered Academy Award nominations for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium, and an Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Motion Picture Screenplay from Mystery Writers of America.

Rose continued to write television scripts during the 1960s and beyond. One of his best-known shows was the series *The Defenders* (1961-1965), about a father-and-son team of defense lawyers. Other shows included *A Quiet Game of Cards* (1959), the *Studs Lonigan* miniseries (1979), *Escape from Sobibor* (1987), and made-for-television movies of *Twelve Angry Men* and *The Defenders: Taking the First* in the 1990s.

Rose wrote five plays for the stage, including *Black Monday* in 1962 and *This Agony, This Triumph* in 1972, as well as several rewrites of *Twelve Angry Men* (1960, 1964, and 1996). He also wrote eleven screenplays besides *Twelve Angry Men*, including *Somebody Killed Her Husband* (1978), *The Wild Geese* (1978; based on a novel by Daniel Carney), and *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* (1981), starring Richard Dreyfuss.

Rose's first marriage ended in divorce. He married his second wife, Ellen McLaughlin, in 1963; they had two children. He died on April 19, 2002, in Norwalk, Connecticut.



Plot Summary

Act 1

Twelve Angry Men takes place in a jury room in the late afternoon on a hot summer's day in New York City. After the curtain rises, the judge's voice is heard offstage, giving instructions to the jury. He says that the defendant is being tried for first-degree murder, which carries a mandatory death penalty. The judge adds that if the jury has reasonable doubt about the guilt of the accused, they must acquit him. The verdict must be unanimous.

The jurors, all men, file into the jury room and sit in straight-backed chairs around a long conference table. The weather is hot, and there is no air-conditioning; some of the men are irritable. From the initial chitchat, it is clear that most members of the jury regard the man as guilty. Jurors Seven and Ten ridicule the defendant's story. Apparently, a young man has stabbed his father to death with a knife. He admits that he bought a knife that night but claims that he lost it.

The jury takes a vote. Eleven jurors vote guilty, and one juror, Juror Eight, votes not guilty. Jurors Three, Seven, and Twelve criticize him, but Juror Eight says that he does not know whether the man is guilty or not but that it is not easy for him to send a boy to his death without discussing it first. After some argument, they agree to discuss the facts of the case. Juror Three reviews what they know. An old man who lives underneath the room where the murder took place heard loud noises just after midnight. He heard the son yell at the father that he was going to kill him. Then he heard a body falling and moments later, saw the boy running out of the house. Juror Four says the boy's story is flimsy. He said that he was at the movies at the time of the murder, but no one remembers seeing him there. Also, a woman living opposite looked out of her window and saw the murder through the windows of a passing elevated train. During the trial, it was verified that this was possible. Further facts emerge: the father regularly beat his son, and the son had been arrested for car theft, mugging, and knife fighting. He had been sent to reform school for knifing someone.

Juror Eight insists that, during the trial, too many questions were left unasked. He asks for the murder weapon to be brought in and says that it is possible that someone else stabbed the boy's father with a similar knife. Several jurors insist the knife is a very unusual one, but then Juror Eight produces from his pocket a switchblade that is exactly the same. He says that it is possible the boy is telling the truth. The other jurors scoff at this, but Juror Eight calls for another vote, a secret one this time. He says that he will abstain. When the votes are counted, there are ten guilty votes and one not guilty.



Act 2

Juror Three is angry with Juror Five because he thinks that Juror Five is the one who changed his vote. It transpires that the not-guilty vote was cast by Juror Nine. This juror says that he wants to hear more discussion of the case, even though there is still a strong feeling among the other jurors that the defendant is guilty. Jurors Three and Twelve start to play a game of tic-tac-toe to pass the time, but Juror Eight angrily snatches the piece of paper away, saying that jury deliberations are not a game. Pressured by Juror Eight, the jury agrees that it would take about ten seconds for the train to pass by the apartment. Juror Eight also establishes that the train is noisy, so the old man could not have heard the boy yell that he was going to kill his father, as the old man testified. Juror Nine suggests that the old man may have convinced himself that he heard the words because he has never had any recognition from anyone and has a strong need for attention. Juror Three responds to this with hostility, but Juror Eight argues additionally that even if the boy had said he was going to kill his father, that does not mean he intended to do so, since people often use that or similar phrases without meaning them. Convinced by these arguments, Juror Five changes his vote to not guilty, making the vote nine to three.

Juror Eight then questions the old man's testimony that he took only fifteen seconds to get downstairs, open the front door, and see the boy fleeing. He says that bearing in mind that the man cannot walk well, it probably took longer. Using a diagram of the apartment, Juror Eight acts out the old man's steps and is timed at thirty-nine seconds. He says that the old man must have heard, rather than seen, someone racing down the stairs and assumed it was the boy. An argument erupts between Jurors Three and Eight, as Juror Three insists the boy is guilty and must be executed. Juror Eight accuses him of being a sadist. Juror Three lunges at him, screaming that he will kill him. Juror Eight replies softly, suggesting that perhaps Juror Three does not really mean what he is saying.

Act 3

The jurors take another vote, this time an open one, which is evenly split, six to six. Jurors Two, Six, and Eleven have switched their votes, to the annoyance of Jurors Three and Ten. The possibility of being a hung jury is brought up, but Juror Eight refuses to accept the possibility. They take a vote on that, too. Six jurors vote in favor of declaring themselves a hung jury; six vote against. Juror Four changes his vote, so it is seven to five against declaring a hung jury. Juror Four then argues persuasively for a guilty verdict, based on the evidence. He raises the possibility that although the old man may have taken longer to get to the door than he testified, the murderer might also have taken longer to escape. Reenacting the actions of the murderer, the jurors time it at twenty-nine and a half seconds. This suggests that the old man's testimony that he saw the boy fleeing may be correct after all. As a result, three jurors change their votes back, leaving the tally at nine to three in favor of guilt.



Juror Two raises a question about the fact that the fatal wound was caused by a downward thrust of the knife. How could that be, since the son is six inches shorter than his father, which would make such an action very awkward? Juror Three demonstrates on Juror Eight how it could be done, crouching down to approximate the boy's height and then raising the knife and making a downward stabbing motion. But Juror Five, who has witnessed knife fights, says that anyone using a switchblade would use it underhand, stabbing upward, thus making it unlikely that the boy, who was an experienced knife fighter, could have caused the fatal wound. Another vote is taken, and it is nine to three in favor of acquittal. Juror Ten goes off on a prejudiced rant about how all people from the slums are liars and violent and have no respect for human life. Disgusted with his views, most of the other jurors get up and walk to the window, where they turn their backs on Juror Ten.

Juror Four still insists that the boy is guilty. He says the most important testimony is that of the woman who says she saw the murder. She was in bed, unable to sleep, when she looked out the window and saw the boy stab his father. Juror Eight reminds them that the woman wears glasses, but she would not wear them in bed and would not have had time to put them on to see what she claims to have seen. He contends that she could have seen only a blur. At this, Jurors Four and Ten change their votes to not guilty, leaving the tally at eleven to one. Only Juror Three insists on a guilty verdict, but when he sees that he stands alone and cannot change anyone else's opinion, he begrudgingly votes not guilty. The jury has reached a unanimous decision, and the defendant is acquitted.

Act I

Act I Summary

Twelve jurors enter the jury room to deliberate a murder case. The defendant's life hangs in the balance of this death penalty case. It is summertime in an era when a courthouse does not have air conditioning. The trial has taken six days—four too many for some of the impatient jurors. The evidence of guilt seems overwhelming. The defendant has a fight with the victim, his father, earlier in the evening of the murder. He purchases a switchblade identical to the murder weapon immediately after the fight. He screams out, "I'm gonna kill you!" just prior to the stabbing, loud enough for most of the neighborhood to hear. An old man who lives in the apartment underneath the victim hears this and hears the father's body hit the floor one second later. He rushes to his door to see the defendant running down the stairs. A woman who lives across the street looks out her window to see the young man stab his father. The defendant has a criminal record, including a conviction for stabbing someone in the arm. He is a minority who grew up in a tenement with regular abuse by his father.

A judge gives the jury its final instructions before sending them off for deliberations. They are to determine the guilt or innocence of a man charged with first degree murder. If he is found guilty, he will be executed. The twelve jurors are uncomfortably hot as they enter the deliberation room. The jurors are tired and restless after sitting through six days of trial. Several feel the trial could have been finished in two. Before engaging in any deliberation, they decide immediately to take a vote. In a show of hands, eleven of the twelve jurors vote "guilty." No. 8 is not sure that the defendant is guilty and thinks they should talk about it. The other jurors are stunned that No. 8 does not believe this is an open and shut case.

The defendant is a young man who stands accused of killing his father by stabbing him with a knife in the chest. He is an undisclosed who lives in a tenement in the ghetto. The defendant is tough and angry. His mother died when he was nine years old. He has been kicked around by society and has had a difficult life.

Nos. 3, 4, 11 and 12 all comment that they had difficult upbringings as well, but that never caused them to kill anyone. No. 10 interjects that the kid had a fair trial and he is lucky he had that. He has lived among this minority group all his life and believes that they cannot be trusted. No. 9 immediately rebukes No. 10 for his racist statement.

The jurors decide that they must go around the table and, one by one, convince No. 8 that the defendant is guilty. No. 2 thinks the defendant is guilty because no one proved he was innocent. No. 8 reminds No. 2 that the burden of proof is on the prosecution, not the defense. The defendant is innocent until proven guilty.

No. 3 suggests examining the facts. An old man lived on the second floor of the apartment building, immediately under the room where the father was murdered. About



ten minutes after midnight on the night of the killing, he hears an argument between the father and the son. It sounds like a fight. He hears the son say to the father, "I'm gonna kill you." A second later he hears a body falling. The old man runs to the door of his apartment, looks out and sees the kid running downstairs and out of the house. He calls the police and they find the father upstairs, dead with a knife in his chest.

No. 8 does not think the story fits the crime. No. 4 suggests that the defendant's story is flimsy, that he claims he was at the movies, but could not remember what movie he saw. The kid does not have a ticket stub and neither the ticket taker nor the cashier remember seeing him at the theater.

No. 10 points out that a woman across the street sees the defendant stab his father. The evening of the murder is hot. She has trouble sleeping. She wakes up and looks out her window, which is directly across the street from the victim's apartment. An elevated train is passing at that exact moment, but, through the windows of the passing train, she witnesses the son stab his father. No. 8 suggests that maybe she could not have seen that through the moving train. No. 8 reminds 10 that only moments ago he stated that people of that minority group cannot be trusted. He asks 10 why he believes the woman across the street if they are all liars. No. 10 is offended and must be restrained from going after No. 8. No. 4 points out that the jury was taken to the woman's room and given the opportunity to look across the street as an el train went by. No. 8 admits that he was able to see through to the apartment window across the street, though not as well as he had been led to believe.

No. 4 thinks the young man may be guilty because of testimony from neighbors that the father and son are in a fight around 8:00 that night and that the father strikes the son twice during the fight. The defendant angrily leaves the house.

No. 7 looks to the defendant's criminal record. He has stolen a car, been convicted of mugging and stabbed someone in the arm. He was in reform school at age 15. No. 8 counters that his behavior might be explained by the fact that he has an abusive father who beats him with his fists from the time he is five years old.

No. 8 reveals that his misgivings about the case stem from the fact that he does not feel the defense counsel did a thorough job of cross-examining the witnesses. Too many questions are left unasked. No. 4 agrees, but still feels the defendant is guilty.

No. 3 points out another very incriminating fact: that the defendant purchased a switch blade knife identical to the one used in the murder only hours before the murder. No. 8 suggests that the murder weapon is brought in so they can look at it. The defendant admits going to a neighborhood store to purchase a switchblade knife immediately after being punched by his father. The storekeeper is arrested the following day for selling the knife. He admits that it was the only one of its type that he had in stock. The defendant claims he bought it as a present for his friend, but that it must have fallen through a hole in his coat pocket that evening. The jurors find it impossible to believe that someone finds the same knife the defendant lost and uses it to kill the defendant's father. No. 8 suggests that it is possible someone stabs the father with a similar knife. No. 4 points



out that it is a very odd knife and the storekeeper has never seen another like it. No. 4 jams the knife into the wall. No. 8 reaches into his pocket, pulls out another switchblade knife and jams it into the wall next to the murder weapon. No. 8's switchblade is an exact duplicate of the murder weapon. He purchased it at another store around the corner from the defendant's house for \$2.

No. 7 reminds 8 that he is alone in thinking the defendant is not guilty. If No. 8 persists, they will deliberate all night and come back hung. The boy will then be re-tried and convicted. No. 9 cautions that the boy deserves one night of deliberation with his life on the line. No. 8 calls for a vote by secret ballot and agrees that he will abstain. If the vote is 11-0 in favor of conviction, he will go along with their decision and they can return a guilty verdict. The outcome is 10-1.

Act I Analysis

The jurors are tired, bored and angry at having wasted six days in a trial that they think is open and shut and could have been completed much sooner. Some fear they will be in trouble with their employers for missing so much work. The evidence supporting the defendant's guilt is staggering. Deliberations seem like they will conclude within five minutes until No. 8 speaks up. He thinks the prosecutor's case does not add up. He believes that since the defendant's life is at stake, they owe him a reasoned review of all of the facts. Other jurors look to the seemingly overwhelming facts, the defendant's record and even the defendant's race to support a guilty verdict.

No. 8 is a man of conviction. He understands the monumental responsibility the jurors have in determining whether or not the defendant will be convicted and put to death. He is not willing to send a man to the executioner upon anything less than a thorough assessment of the case. No. 8 has gone above and beyond the call of being a juror by visiting the neighborhood and investigating how difficult it might be to purchase a knife like the murder weapon. His doggedness rubs off on at least one other juror who breaks from the rest of the group and votes not guilty in the second vote.



Act II

Act II Summary

No. 3 is outraged that someone voted not guilty. He accuses No. 5 of changing his vote. No. 11, an immigrant to the United States, points out that in America, people are allowed to hold unpopular opinions. No. 9 admits that he was the one who changed his vote. He tells the others that he admired the fact that No. 8 chose to stand alone against the group. No. 4 observes that if there were one fact weighing in favor of the defendant, he would vote not guilty. No. 4 just cannot find any such fact. No. 7 wants to know who killed the father if the son did not. No. 8 reminds him that is not their job. They are only to determine whether the defendant committed the crime, not solve the mystery.

The jurors ponder the meaning of "beyond a reasonable doubt." What is beyond a reasonable doubt when the defendant faces execution? A feeling gnaws at 9 that the defendant might not be guilty. He wants more deliberation. No. 3 is frustrated and wants to play tic-tac-toe with No. 12. No. 8 angrily snatches their piece of paper and throws it away, declaring that this is no game, a man's life is at stake.

The jurors began to analyze the facts of the case. They first analyze whether the woman across the street had an opportunity to witness the murder through the windows of the elevated train. No. 8 tells the rest that he has lived near the el tracks and the trains make an almost unbearable amount of noise when they pass if your window is open. They estimate that an el train takes about 10 seconds to pass by a particular point. No. 8 theorizes that the old man downstairs could not have heard the boy say, "I'm gonna kill you" to his father just prior to the stabbing and hearing the body fall one second later if a train was going by at the same time. Nos. 2, 3 and 4 are unmoved and believe the testimony of the old man.

No. 3 asks why the old man downstairs would lie. No. 9 suggests that he did it for attention. No. 9 noticed that the old man wore shabby clothes and walked with two canes. He theorizes the old man lied because, at 75 years old, he has led a meaningless life. He is an insignificant nobody. As a star witness in a murder trial, he will get the attention that he so lacked in life. No. 9 believes the old man did not necessarily lie, but, instead, made himself believe those facts in error. No. 9 tells the jurors that he speaks from experience because he has led the same sort of life.

No. 8 asks the other jurors how many times they have uttered the words, "I'm going to kill you." He tries to make the point that they have all said it, yet did not mean it. No. 3 counters that the way the boy said it, screaming it, could not infer anything else. He intended to kill his father. No. 8 suggests that the boy was too smart to yell something like that out for the entire neighborhood to hear and then actually kill his father.



No. 5 changes his vote to not guilty. He thinks there is enough reasonable doubt that a conviction is not justified. He sees doubt in the availability of the knife and the possibility that the old man downstairs was not telling the truth.

The old man witness testifies that after hearing the body fall to the floor upstairs, he gets up from bed and goes to the door. He testifies positively that it took him 15 seconds to reach the door. From his front door he sees the defendant running down the stairs. Using a diagram of the apartment building to get the correct measurements and dimensions, No. 8 sets up some chairs in the jury room in order to conduct a test of how long it might take the old man to walk from his bed to his door, a distance of 55 feet. They conduct the experiment with 8 playing the role of the old man and walking at the old man's pace. It takes him 39 seconds to walk the distance.

The foreman and No. 4 are moved by the display and discrepancy in times. No. 3 is adamant that the boy is guilty. No. 3 accuses No. 8 of being a bleeding heart type who is throwing out common sense to spare a ghetto kid. No. 3 will not see the defendant set free. When No. 8 asks if No. 3 is his executioner, No. 3 responds, yes, that he is one of them and that he would pull the switch if he could. No. 8 accuses him of being a sadist who wants to see the defendant die because he personally wants it, not because of the facts of the case. No. 8 calls No. 3 a beast who disgusts him. No. 3 lunges at No. 8, but is held by two other jurors. He says, "Let me go! I'll kill him! I'll kill him!" No. 8 seizes the opportunity to correct No. 3's previous argument by asking whether he really means that.

Act II Analysis

No. 8's conscience is contagious. By standing apart from the group and allowing them to make the second vote on their own, he wins the support of No. 9. A couple of the other jurors are willing to vote not guilty if there is just one fact in the defendant's favor. They begin to analyze the facts one by one. A theme develops wherein the group becomes more insightful than the individual members. In other words, each member of the group, when reasoning patiently, can offer particular viewpoints and information from their own personal history that helps the group unravel the case. No. 8 begins the process by telling the jury about his experience living near an el track: that the noise makes it almost impossible to hear. No. 9 offers his own personal experience as a frustrated old man to give insight on why the old man witness might not have testified truthfully. No. 5, a young man himself, offers his unique perspective that maybe the old man lied because he did not like the young defendant. Finally, No. 3, does his part to unravel the case, though not intentionally, by demonstrating that sometimes a person can say "I'm going to kill you!" and not mean it.



Act III

Act III Summary

The jurors take another vote. It is now 6-6. No. 3 thinks they should adjourn and declare a hung jury. No. 4 directly asks the most recent three converts why they changed their votes. He tells them they could be turning a murderer loose. No. 3 declares that he will never change his vote. No. 8 points out that when they began he stood alone, now he has five other jurors supporting him. They vote on whether they are a hung jury and the outcome is no. They continue to deliberate.

No. 4 suggests a hypothetical that would suggest the defendant is guilty. Perhaps the old man downstairs was wrong about the time it took him to get to the door, but was right about what he saw. No. 4 points out that there were no fingerprints on the knife or the doorknob, so the killer must have taken time to wipe them clean. No. 3 points out that since the father died as the result of a stabbing, it is likely that he did not die instantly, but writhed around on the ground for a moment or two. They recreate and time the murder in the same way they recreated the old man walking to his front door. It takes 29 seconds to commit the murder, wipe down the knife and doorknob, and then exit the apartment. Adding some time to run down one flight of stairs, the jurors observe that the time almost exactly matches the time it would have taken the old man downstairs to rise from bed and walk to his front door. No. 8 observes that while this tends to confirm the old man's story, it also makes him a liar since he swore that it only took him 15 seconds to reach the door. The jurors that previously switched to not guilty now begin to sway back towards guilty.

No. 8 suggests that the old man may have been confused about who he saw running by his door due to the poor lighting in the hallway. Maybe he is as confused about it being the defendant as he is about the time it took to reach the door.

No. 2 has doubts about testimony concerning the downward angle of the fatal wound because the victim is 6'2" and the defendant is only 5'8". The jurors conduct another experiment. No. 3 grabs the knife, and, with No. 8 as a volunteer victim, crouches low to simulate a 6" height difference. He opens the blade and makes a hard, downward stabbing motion that scares other jurors into thinking he will actually stab No. 8. No. 8 is not convinced by the experiment. No. 3 has never participated in or seen a knife fight. No. 8 believes a knife would be handled underhand. No. 5 offers his insight. He has witnessed several knife fights in a vacant lot across the street from his house. He believes anyone with experience handling a switchblade would do so underhand, not overhand.

No. 8 has another theory about the case. He asks the others whether they think the defendant is smart or dumb. The defendant could be considered dumb for shouting "I'm gonna kill you," then going to the corner store and buying a very distinctive type of switchblade knife to use in the murder. On the other hand, the kid would have to be very



smart to use an overhand stabbing motion that an amateur might make when everyone knows he is an experienced knife fighter. He is smart to wipe the knife and the door clean of prints. He might be smart to wait for the el train to go by to commit the crime, but, in contrast, might be dumb because, with the train so close to the window, there could easily have been a witness. No. 8 thinks it makes no sense for the kid to be so dumb as to do everything he can to associate himself with the murder before hand, but to try to hide it afterwards. This exercise in analysis convinces the jurors to take another vote. The vote is now 9-3 with Nos. 3, 4 and 10 holding out.

The vote causes No. 10 to launch into a bigoted diatribe about "those people"—members of the defendant's ethnic group. He tries to convince the rest that those people lie and kill each other. They are violent and cannot be trusted. One by one, the other jurors stand up from the table, walk towards the window and turn their backs on No. 10. He is left alone to spew his racist ramblings. Finally, No. 4 warns him that if No. 10 says one more word, he will split his skull.

Nos. 3 and 4 consider the most crucial witness to be the woman across the street who saw the murder. She goes to bed around eleven. Her bed sits next to an open window directly across the street to the window of the victim. While lying down, she can look directly across to that window. She has trouble falling asleep that night. Around ten after midnight, she happens to look out the window and see the defendant stab his father through the passing el train. No. 8 remembers a crucial detail—that the woman wears glasses when she testified. No. 11 remembers that they were very thick bifocals. No. 8 asks the jurors in the room who wear glasses whether or not they wear them to bed. They both say no, never. No. 8 asks if it is not unlikely then that the woman would have put on her glasses while in bed trying to fall asleep in order to casually glance out the window. No. 8 thinks that while she may have honestly thought she saw the boy kill his father, she really saw just a blur. This argument convinces Nos. 4 and 10 that there is reasonable doubt.

No. 3 now stands alone and insists that he will hang the jury on his own. No. 4 tells No. 3 that if the jury is hung, each of them will talk to the various attorneys about their deliberations and give them some tips on how to try the case next time. This forces No. 3 to reconsider. He pounds the table in frustration, but gives in. The other jurors file out, leaving No. 3 and No. 8 alone. No. 3 walks towards No. 8, reaches in his pocket, pulls out the switchblade and opens it. He holds it in underhand, knife-fighting position as though he will stab No. 8. No. 8 firmly says, "not guilty" and No. 3 hands him the knife. No. 3 repeats "not guilty" as he walks out of the jury room.

Act III Analysis

The jury actively deliberates the facts of the case. They are willing to discuss theories and facts that point both towards guilt and innocence. No. 4 suggests calculating the time the stabbing and cleaning of fingerprints might have taken. He thinks it is plausible that the old man was simply wrong about his estimate of 15 seconds. This argument seems to sway several jurors who had recently joined the not guilty group.



At this point, No. 8 asks the jury to step back and look at the big picture. Instead of analyzing the case in minute detail, one facet at a time, No. 8 encourages them to look at the murder as a whole. He convinces most of them that it makes no sense for the defendant to have been so reckless before the crime and so cautious afterwards. He cannot be dumb and smart at the same time. He is either one or the other. This sways several jurors so that the tally is now 9-3 in favor of acquittal.

No. 10's racist rant provides the opportunity for the final three jurors to find reasonable doubt. The reaction to this outburst, that the rest of the jurors turned their back on him, has an impact even on No. 10 himself. He finally learns that he cannot dismiss the defendant and convict him simply because he belongs to an ethnic group.

Once the final three jurors have excised their personal animosity against the defendant, they can objectively analyze the fact that the eyewitness to the murder was likely not wearing glasses. This is the strongest fact of the case. Once a reasonable doubt is introduced as to the likelihood of this fact, there is reasonable doubt about the entire case. The defendant is not guilty.



Characters

Foreman

The foreman is described in the author's notes to the play as "a small, petty man who is impressed with the authority he has." The foreman tries to run the meeting in an orderly fashion, but in the film he is too sensitive and sulks when his attempt to stick to the way they had agreed to proceed is questioned. His contribution to the deliberations comes when they are discussing how long the killer would have taken to get downstairs. The foreman points out that since the killer wiped his fingerprints off the knife, he would also have done so off the doorknob, which would have taken some time. He votes guilty several times, but in act 3 he switches his vote, along with two others, to make the total nine to three for acquittal.

Juror Two

Juror Two is a quiet, meek figure who finds it difficult to maintain an independent opinion. In the 1957 film, he is a bank clerk. Juror Two does, however, make one useful contribution to the jury deliberations. He mentions that it seems awkward that the defendant, who was six inches shorter than his father, would stab him with a downward motion, as the fatal wound indicates. Although this is not a conclusive point, it does jog Juror Five's memory of how a switchblade is used and so helps to induce doubt in the minds of a number of jurors. Juror Two changes his vote to not guilty at the beginning of act 3, along with Jurors Eleven and Six.

Juror Three

Juror Three is a forceful, intolerant man who is also a bully. In the 1957 film, he runs a messenger service called Beck and Call. He believes that there is no point in discussing the case, since the defendant's guilt is plain, and he is quick to insult and browbeat anyone who suggests otherwise. At one point, Juror Three describes how he fell out with his son. He raised his son to be tough, but when the boy was fifteen, he hit his father in the face, and Juror Three has not seen his son for three years. He condemns his son as ungrateful.

As the play develops, it becomes clear that Juror Three is the principal antagonist of Juror Eight. This is brought out visually when Juror Three demonstrates on Juror Eight how he would use a knife to stab a taller man. His animosity to Juror Eight comes out in the aggressive way he makes the demonstration, which shocks some of the jurors. Also, when Juror Eight calls him a sadist, Juror Three is incensed and threatens to kill him.

Juror Three is the last to hold out for a guilty verdict. For a few moments after it becomes apparent that he stands alone, he sticks to his guns, saying there will be a hung jury, but he finally gives in to the pressure and votes not guilty. In the film, he pulls



out his wallet to produce some facts of the case—perhaps notes he has made—and a photograph of himself with his son falls out. He stares at it for a few moments and then tears it up and begins to sob. He recognizes that his desire to convict and punish the defendant is bound up with his feelings of anger and betrayal in regard to his own son.

Juror Four

Juror Four is described in the author's notes as seeming to be “a man of wealth and position, and a practiced speaker who presents himself well at all times.” In the 1957 film, he is a stockbroker, a well-dressed man in an expensive suit who, unlike the others, does not remove his jacket and shows no signs of distress in the heat. He is an arch rationalist who insists that the jury should avoid emotional arguments in deciding the case. He has a good grasp of the facts and an excellent memory, and he presents the case for guilt as well as it can be done. He is extremely skeptical of the defendant's story that he was at the movies on the night of the murder. However, his pride in his memory is shaken when, under questioning from Juror Eight, he discovers that he cannot accurately recall the title of one of the movies he saw only a few days ago, nor can he remember the names of the actors. (This incident is not in the play, but it appears in the film.) However, he still believes strongly in the defendant's guilt and is the last juror but one to change his vote. This occurs when it is demonstrated that the piece of evidence on which he places greatest value—the woman's eyewitness testimony that she saw the murder take place—is undermined. He then admits that he has a reasonable doubt.

Juror Five

Juror Five is described in the author's notes as “a naive, very frightened young man who takes his obligations in this case very seriously but who finds it difficult to speak up when his elders have the floor.” When, at the beginning, jurors are asked to speak in turn, Juror Five declines the opportunity. Later, he protests when Jurors Four and Ten speak disparagingly of kids from slum backgrounds, saying that he has lived in a slum all his life. Juror Five's main contribution is in pointing out that an experienced knife fighter would use a switchblade underhand, stabbing upward rather than down. He knows this because he has witnessed such fights. Juror Five is the second juror to switch his vote to not guilty. He acquires a reasonable doubt when it is shown that, because of the noise from the train, the old man could not have heard the boy yell that he would kill his father.

Juror Six

Juror Six is a housepainter, a man who is used to working with his hands rather than analyzing with his brain. He is more of a listener than a talker. In the film version, he suggests early in the debate that the defendant had a motive to kill his father, because there was testimony in the trial about an argument between father and son earlier in the



evening. But Juror Eight dismisses this as a possible motive. Juror Six stands up for Juror Nine when Juror Three speaks rudely to him, threatening to strike Juror Three if he says anything like that again. Juror Six also speaks up for himself when he changes his vote, succinctly explaining why he did so. In the film version, he talks to Juror Eight in the washroom, asking him how he would feel if he succeeded in getting the defendant acquitted but later found out that he was guilty.

Juror Seven

Juror Seven is a salesman. He assumes that the defendant is guilty and has no interest in discussing it. His only concern is that the deliberations should be over quickly, so that he does not miss the Broadway show he has tickets for. (In the film version, he has tickets for a baseball game.) At no time does he make any serious contribution to the debate, other than to point out that the defendant has a record of arrests. In the film, he is a baseball fan and uses baseball allusions in almost everything he says. At one point, he gets into an argument with Juror Eleven about why Juror Eleven changed his vote, and he makes some prejudiced remarks about immigrants. He favors declaring a hung jury, because that will mean he will get out of the jury room quickly. Eventually, he changes his vote to not guilty, for the same reason. In the film version, Juror Eleven harshly rebukes him for caring only about ending the proceedings as quickly as possible, rather than whether the man is guilty or not.

Juror Eight

Juror Eight is a quiet, thoughtful man whose main concern is that justice should be done. In the film, he is an architect. Although he is usually gentle in his manner, he is also prepared to be assertive in the search for truth. He is the only juror who, in the initial ballot, votes not guilty. He does not argue that the man is innocent but says that he cannot condemn a man to death without discussing the case first. As he probes the evidence, he manages to cast reasonable doubt on many aspects of the testimony given at the trial. He is resolute in suggesting that although, on its face, the evidence may suggest guilt, it is possible that there are other explanations for what happened that night. Juror Eight is a natural leader, and one by one he persuades the other jurors to accept his arguments. A telling moment comes when he produces a knife from his pocket that is exactly the same as the murder weapon; when he says that he bought it cheaply in the neighborhood, he disproves the jury's belief up to that point that the knife is a very unusual one.

Juror Eight remains calm throughout the deliberations. The only times (in the film version) that he becomes heated is when he stops the game of tic-tac-toe that Jurors Ten and Twelve have started and when he calls Juror Three a sadist. The latter incident serves his purpose, however, because it goads Juror Three into saying that he will kill Juror Eight, thus proving Juror Eight's earlier point that when such expressions are used, they are not always meant literally.



Juror Nine

Juror Nine is an old man. In the author's notes, he is described as "long since defeated by life, and now merely waiting to die." In the film version, however, he is given more strength and dignity, and other jurors insist that he be heard. It is Juror Nine (in both play and film) who is the first to switch his vote to not guilty, saying that he wants a fuller discussion of the case, as Juror Eight has requested. It is Juror Nine who offers an explanation of why the old man might have lied about hearing the boy yell that he was going to kill his father. Juror Nine's explanation is that, because the old man has led an insignificant life and no one has ever taken any notice of him, this is his one chance for recognition. Juror Nine is also extremely observant, and the film version amplifies his role in the final discussion, when he is the one to point out that the female witness at the trial, in an effort to look younger, omitted to wear the glasses that she habitually wore, as shown by the marks on either side of her nose. This is the key point that results in the discrediting of the woman's testimony.

Juror Ten

Juror Ten is described in the author's notes as "an angry, bitter man—a man who antagonizes almost at sight. He is also a bigot." He is automatically prejudiced against anyone who comes from a slum. He believes strongly that the defendant is guilty, argues the case forcefully, and is one of the last three to hold out for a guilty verdict. But he loses credibility with the other jurors when he makes a long speech near the end of the play that reveals his bigotry in full. He insists that people from slums are drunks and liars who fight all the time. The other jurors repudiate him, and Juror Four tells him not to say another word; he does not, other than to finally admit that there is a reasonable doubt in the case.

Juror Eleven

Juror Eleven is an immigrant from Europe, a refugee from persecution. He is possibly Jewish, although this is not stated explicitly. In the film, he is a watchmaker. Juror Eleven feels fortunate to be living in a country known for its democracy, and he has great respect for the American judicial system. He takes his responsibility as a juror very seriously. He is one of three jurors who change their minds, to make the vote split six to six. He further expresses reasonable doubt about the old man's ability to recognize the son in a dimly lit tenement building. In the author's notes, he is described as "ashamed, humble, almost subservient to the people around him," but in the film his character is strengthened. He rebukes Juror Seven for not taking the trial more seriously, and he is prepared to stand up for what he believes. Also in the film version, he questions whether the son would have returned to his father's house at three o'clock in the morning if he had been the murderer.

Juror Twelve

Juror Twelve works for an advertising agency. He is clever, but as the author's notes point out, he □thinks of human beings in terms of percentages, graphs and polls, and has no real understanding of people.□ When Juror Three presses him, near the end of the play, to explain his not-guilty vote, he finds it very hard to do so, since he does not, in fact, have strong opinions one way or the other. He is reduced to mumbling about the complexity of the evidence.



Objects/Places

The Window in the Jury Room

The jurors all complain about the heat in the courthouse because of its lack of air conditioning. When they enter the jury room, one of them opens the only window. Not long thereafter, No. 11 gets up and closes the window because the air is blowing on his back. The other jurors object because of the heat. No. 11 claims that he has some rights, too and that the open window made him uncomfortable. No. 4 suggests that the window stay open and that No. 11 simply trade seats with another juror so the wind does not blow on his back. No. 2 volunteers to swap seats. This exchange demonstrates that through give and take, through compromise, the group can come together and find a solution to a problem that makes everyone happy.

Reasonable Doubt

The defendant is innocent until proven guilty. The burden of proof is on the prosecution to prove his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The jurors struggle with the concept of reasonable doubt. At first, they see the case as open and shut, with an eyewitness, a second witness who sees the defendant leaving the scene and a defendant with a record who admits buying a knife identical to the murder weapon just hours before the murder. All but one juror is ready to convict immediately. That one juror though, has a feeling that something is not right in the trial process. Questions are left unanswered. No. 8's feeling slowly develops into reasonable doubt as the facts of the case are analyzed one by one.

Tic-Tac-Toe Game

No. 3 is frustrated that the other jurors do not feel the case is open and shut. He will pass the time with a tic-tac-toe game with No. 12. No. 8 angrily snatches away the piece of paper and tells them that deliberations are not a game. There is a man's life at stake. No. 3 threatens to walk around the table and punch No. 8. This is the first real confrontation between No. 3 and No. 8 with a hint of violence. Previously, they just argued about whether the defendant was guilty. Now, things are getting personal.

The Knife

The murder weapon was a switchblade knife. The storekeeper who sold the knife said it was one-of-a-kind. No. 8 took it upon himself to visit the defendant's neighborhood looking for other sources for such a knife. He finds one in a store around the corner from the defendant's house. By refusing to accept the shopkeeper's testimony at face value, and performing some research on his own, No. 8 begins to expose the weaknesses of the case.



The Inner City

The victim lives in a tenement. Poor lighting in the tenement hallways likely prevent the old man from getting a look at the killer as he ran past the old man's door. One of the jurors offers helpful information about knife fighting methods because he, too, grew up in the ghetto.

Glasses

The woman eyewitness testifies that she has trouble falling asleep on the night of the murder. She tosses and turns in her bed, which provides a view out her window, straight across the street to the victim's apartment. She happens to look outside just as the murder occurs. She claims that, through the windows of a passing train, she sees the defendant stab his father. Some of the jurors notice that during trial she wears thick bifocals. A couple of jurors who wear glasses offer that no one wears glasses to bed. The jury concludes that it is unreasonable to assume that she would have put on her glasses to casually glance outside at the exact time of the murder. Her testimony is discounted.

The El Train

The elevated or "el" train passes by the window of the victim. No. 8 previously lived next to an el. He describes the noise they make when they pass as almost unbearable. The jurors think that noise from the passing el train may have prevented the old man downstairs from hearing the defendant say, "I'm gonna kill you" and from hearing the body hit the floor. They also question whether the woman across the street could witness the murder through the windows of the train without her glasses. Finally, they wonder why the defendant, if he was a smart criminal, would choose the exact moment the train passes to stab his father when anyone on the train could look into the open window and witness him.

Evidence

Jurors listen to the testimony of the witnesses. That testimony is evidence. Evidence however, can change depending on how it is interpreted. In this case, the 11 of the 12 jurors think the evidence, at first blush, weighs heavily against the defendant. They are willing to give him the death penalty without bothering to assess the evidence. Once forced to consider the facts in minute detail, they slowly change their minds. What initially seems a slam-dunk conviction becomes a "not guilty" verdict because the jurors take time to thoughtfully analyze the evidence.

Themes

The Triumph and the Fragility of Justice

The play is, in one sense, a celebration of justice, showing the workings of the American judicial system in a favorable light. Although initially the jury is inclined to wrongly convict a man without any discussion of the case, the persistence of Juror Eight ensures that the right verdict is reached in the end.

Three key elements of the judicial system are demonstrated in the play. The first is one that almost everyone knows, although Juror Eight has to remind Juror Two of it: According to the law, the defendant does not have to demonstrate his innocence. He is innocent until proved guilty. The second element is that the verdict must be unanimous, since unanimity guards against a miscarriage of justice. Third, the defendant can be convicted only in the absence of reasonable doubt on the part of the jury. If there is reasonable doubt, he must be acquitted. The underlying principle is that it is better that a guilty man be set free than an innocent man be convicted. In the film versions and at least one revival of the play, Juror Six, speaking to Juror Eight in the washroom, shows that he does not understand this principle, since he asks Juror Eight how he would feel if he managed to get the defendant acquitted and later found out that he was guilty (which he may be, since nothing that happens in the jury room proves his innocence). The system is as much about protecting the innocent as it is about convicting the guilty.

The play is also a warning about the fragility of justice and the forces of complacency, prejudice, and lack of civic responsibility that would undermine it. Several jurors show that they are virtually incapable of considering the matter fairly and listening to opposing points of view. Juror Seven, whose only desire is to get out of the room quickly, is clearly unfit for jury service. Juror Three insists that there is nothing personal in his negative comments about the defendant and that he is merely sticking to the facts. He denounces the arguments put forward by Juror Eight as emotional appeals. But there is an irony here, since the truth of Juror Three's position is the opposite of what he claims. He is dominated by his own emotions arising from his bad relationship with his son. Because of this, he cannot look at the case dispassionately. He harbors an unconscious desire to vicariously punish his son by convicting the defendant, who is of similar age. Juror Eight, on the other hand, refuses to let emotions interfere in the case. Unlike Juror Three and Juror Ten, the bigot, he brings no personal agenda to the deliberations and is solely interested in ensuring there is no miscarriage of justice. Whether the play is regarded as a celebration of justice or a warning about how easily justice can be subverted depends on one's views about the likelihood of a juror similar to Juror Eight being present in every jury room.



Overcoming Class and Race Prejudice

In the play, Juror Ten is violently prejudiced against anyone who comes from a slum. "You can't believe a word they say," he says early in act 1. Note that he does not say "he," meaning the defendant, but "they," the group as a whole, which shows that he cannot make a fair judgment about individual guilt. Juror Nine, the old man with much experience of life, sees this immediately and rebukes Juror Ten ("Since when is dishonesty a group characteristic?"). But Juror Ten's bigotry continues to smolder before finally erupting in a long speech near the end that leads the other jurors to reject him. The message is clear that such irrational prejudice is incompatible with justice. Juror Four also shows signs of such prejudice, though he couches it in more acceptable words: "The children who come out of slum backgrounds are potential menaces to society."

In the play, the defendant comes from a slum, but there is nothing to suggest that he is not white, as all the jurors are. In the 1957 film version, however, the defendant is shown in a fairly lengthy shot at the beginning. He is clearly Hispanic, perhaps Puerto Rican, and looks sad and vulnerable, rather different from the thug the jury initially believes him to be. The defendant as a member of an ethnic minority gives an entirely new, racial dimension to the notion of prejudice. The positive message is that in the end, prejudice is overcome in the light of reason, and perhaps those who express such prejudice are left to ponder how foolish and bigoted they have made themselves look. However, there is another, less positive way of seeing this issue. The ideal of the judicial system is that a person is judged by a jury of his peers, but the cross-section of white males on the jury can hardly be considered peers of the boy whose fate they are called upon to decide. It might also be argued that in showing the jurors almost to a man rejecting the blatant racial prejudice of Juror Ten (in a scene that is visually powerful onstage and onscreen), the playwright presents a rosy view of American society in the 1950s, which could hardly be said to be free of such prejudice against minorities or even to be willing to face up to the existence of it. Another view would argue that the playwright is aware of such social problems and is trying to educate his audience, encouraging them to see and reject attitudes that he has reason to believe many of them may hold.

Democracy and Social Responsibility

The play suggests that not only must class and race prejudice be overcome, so must political differences. Juror Eight adopts a classic liberal position. He tries to understand the social background from which the defendant came, explaining the boy's anger as a reaction to his social conditions: "You know why slum kids get that way? Because we knock 'em over the head once a day, every day." Jurors Three, Four, and Ten adopt a more conservative position. They have no sympathy with examining the social causes of crime and simply want to get tough on the criminal. But the play shows that both liberal and conservative positions are essentially irrelevant in deciding whether the boy is guilty. The jurors must transcend their political differences and work together to find



out the truth. In this sense, the play is a microcosm of democracy at work. Everyone has their say, and everyone works together to further the common good, which, in this case, is the administration of justice. It is Juror Eleven who makes this connection between the American judicial system and the democracy that, as an immigrant, he loves and respects because it is so different from what he knew in his home country. He emphasizes that everyone must play their part in it: □We have a responsibility. This is a remarkable thing about democracy. . . . We have nothing to gain or lose by our verdict. This is one of the reasons why we are strong.□

Prejudice

Prejudice and hatred are themes that dominate this play. Nos. 3 and 10 harbor hatred against minorities. While No. 10 is overt in his prejudice, referring to the defendant as one of a type ("those people"), No. 3's prejudice is beneath the surface. Certainly, No. 3 hates the defendant and wants to see him convicted and put to death. He is not as open about his prejudice as No. 10. Though not as open, his prejudice and hatred is just as insidious.

Breaking these characters of their prejudice and hatred is a monumental task. No. 10, to the end, in the face of mounting reasonable doubt, believes the defendant is guilty because he is a minority and somehow a lesser person. He is guilty because he is one of "those people" and "those people" lie and kill each other. Not until all of the other jurors turn their back on him does No. 10 realize he stands alone and that society does not accept or condone his prejudice. The other jurors effectively tell No. 10 that his prejudice is not accepted in society. Apparently he learns the lesson and later is willing to reconsider the case and change his vote to not guilty.

The prejudice of No. 3 is more difficult to rectify. His hatred and insistence on guilt persists to the very end. He insists that he will hang the jury on his own. He does not change his mind until one of the other jurors points out that they will advise the attorneys for the defendant of how better to defend the case next time. Once he realizes that his hatred is futile, he agrees to go along with the rest.

Collaborative Decision Making

The jury would never have reached their verdict without working together as a group. There is a reason that a jury includes twelve members instead of one or two or three. A jury of twelve will almost necessarily include members of different age groups and backgrounds. This jury has both young and old members. There are members of different economic backgrounds. Each of these members has something to offer the deliberation. The old juror sees himself in the old man witness and provides a reason for why he may have lied or misinterpreted what happened that night. A younger juror offers that the old man may have hated the young defendant. A juror that grew up in a poor neighborhood offers insight into methods of knife fighting. One who lived next to an elevated train knows that the sound of the train passing drowns out all other noise.

Jurors who wear glasses know that no one ever wears glasses to bed. This jury could never have fully and completely analyzed the case without the insight and individual experience of each of its members.

Conviction

Conviction is an interesting word in the context of this criminal trial. A conviction is something that some of the jurors want at all costs. They have de-humanized the defendant into a type and want to see him die. Conviction can also represent resolve and the strong beliefs that one holds in something. Overcoming one's convictions is a theme the jurors must struggle with throughout this play.

All of the jurors except No. 8 initially think the case is open and shut. They vote "guilty" without any deliberation whatsoever. Some have spent too much time in court already and want to leave. Some are prejudiced and feel there is no need to deliberate—they will convict the defendant for the color of his skin. It is likely that some would like to deliberate, but are swept along by the group dynamic. No. 9, for instance, votes guilty at first, but changes his mind after watching No. 8 stand alone and face down the rest of the jury.

Some of the jurors are more easily swayed than others. No. 10 stands by his racist convictions until the end. It is only when the other jurors literally turn their backs on him does he realize that the defendant will not be convicted for belonging to a particular minority group. No. 3 will not relinquish his hatred until he realizes that his resistance is completely futile.

Style

Limited Setting, Claustrophobic Atmosphere

The play has only one setting, the jury room, though both films and later stage productions added a washroom. Props are minimal, consisting mainly of a long conference table and twelve chairs. The room is hot and humid, since there is no air-conditioning and the fan does not work. The atmosphere is claustrophobic, and the men are understandably short-tempered. This confined setting helps produce the basic rhythm of the play: a juror or several jurors will provide exposition, reviewing some of the details of the case, and this will be followed by a flare-up, in which jurors express sharp disagreements and engage in bad-tempered exchanges. These, in turn, are followed by a quieter phase as tempers calm, before more exposition sets the rhythm in motion again. In this way, the static setting, in which no one comes or goes, is overcome by the dramatic rhythm inherent in the dialogue. The static setting is also mitigated by the way the director has the actors move around the stage as the arguments ebb and flow.

In the 1957 film version, the heat of the room is conveyed by the jurors shown with their shirts visibly stained with sweat. This also contributes to characterization, since Juror Four, who remains calm and rational throughout, does not sweat. After the thunderstorm cools the room a little, the sweat dries up, except in the case of Juror Three, which conveys something about his tense, emotional state of mind.

Film provides opportunities a stage director does not have; in the film, the director Sidney Lumet achieves movement and variety by frequently varying the camera angles. The changes in camera angles multiply as the dramatic tension increases. Also, Lumet progressively lowers the level from which the movie is shot. The first third is shot from above eye level, the second third at eye level, and the last third from below eye level. In the last third, the ceiling of the room begins to appear, giving a sense that the room is getting smaller.

Lumet's use of progressively longer lenses also contributes to the seeming diminishment of the room. Lumet began with normal-range lenses of 28 to 40 millimeters and then progressed to 50-, 75-, and 100-millimeter lenses. (The length of the lens refers to the focal length, or the distance from the focal point to the lens.) The longer lens alters the relationships of subject and background, giving the impression in the film that the walls are closing in and also making the table look more crowded, thus adding to the atmosphere of claustrophobia.

Point of View

Twelve Angry Men is a three act play with no particular point of view. There is an average amount of stage direction, but no narrative voice. The reader observes a jury



deliberating the guilt or innocence of the defendant.

On a different level, point of view could describe each jury member's attitude towards the case and how it changes. Initially, the jurors, with the exception of No. 8, believe the defendant is guilty and want to convict him straight-away. One by one, the jurors join into the deliberations and most offer some unique point of view on the case that helps them better make a collective decision. The various members of the jury have different backgrounds. They are young and old, successful and meager, conservative and liberal. For example, jurors who wear eyeglasses inform the group that no one wears their glasses to bed. This casts doubt on the alleged view of the woman across the street. One juror who grew up in a bad neighborhood informs the jury about how he has seen people handle knives in knife fights. The young juror suggests that the old man downstairs may have been biased against the defendant simply because of his age. As more and more facts are broken down and analyzed, the ultimate opinion as to guilt or innocence of the jurors begins to shift. By looking at the case from a different point of view, the jurors change their votes.

Setting

The play is set entirely in a jury deliberation room. The deliberation room is hot and uncomfortable because the building is not air conditioned. The only contact with the outside the jurors have is with a bailiff stationed at the door who can retrieve evidence for them. While the play is set in the deliberation room, it really concerns what happened elsewhere. The jurors spend their time, however, minutely discussing a homicide that occurred in a tenement. The tenement can be considered a second setting. Drawing the focus back a bit more, the setting can be considered a large, urban city.

The tenement is in a largely minority neighborhood in a big, American city. Residents of this part of the city experience crime and violence on a daily basis. Some of the jurors initially feel that the defendant is part of a minority group and this minority group is predestined for crime. They want to convict him on the basis of who he is and where he grew up. These jurors feel that members of this minority group are less than full members of society. Minorities are a type not equal to them. This is especially troubling in the context of a death penalty trial. It is only through a difficult civics lesson that they learn all Americans are afforded the same rights of being innocent until proven guilty.

Language and Meaning

The language of the play is informal and conversational. It is appropriate to mid 1950s America, the publication date of the play. The language of the play is often heated and confrontational, reflecting the opinions and beliefs of the jurors. Some jurors, particularly, No. 3 and No. 10, feel very strongly about the guilt of the defendant. Their feelings are the result of some deep-seated prejudices. At times their heated opinions



spill over into threats and near-violence. Juror No. 10's outburst at the end of the play is a demonstration of the power of language and hatred. He believes he is speaking for the group and for society when he says that "these people" lie and cheat and kill each other. He dehumanizes the defendant. The defendant should be convicted, No. 10 feels, simply because he is a member of this minority group. The jury's reaction to this rant is powerful and moving. One-by-one, without saying a word, they stand and turn their back on him. They refuse to be part of the "we" that would see the defendant as a "they." This pivotal scene is so powerful that even No. 10 is forced to acknowledge how wrong and racist his viewpoint is. Soon thereafter, he changes his vote to not guilty.

Structure

Twelve Angry Men is a play divided into three acts. The play follows a jury from the closing instructions of a murder trial into the deliberation room. There we witness the jury's deliberations from start to finish. The deliberations begin with an 11-1 vote to convict. Jury No. 8 feels something is amiss, but cannot put his finger on it. One by one, the jury peels away layers of the case in order to make their final, grave decision. Likewise, one by one their layers of prejudice and hatred are peeled away. One by one, the jurors change their votes from guilty to not guilty. The structure of the play then, follows the jurors as they make this very significant change of opinion from guilt to innocence.

Historical Context

Live Television Drama in the 1950s

The decade of the 1950s is sometimes known as the golden era of television, largely because thousands of live dramas were broadcast during that time. These dramas supplemented the standard television fare of variety shows, westerns, and soap operas. It was during this period that television replaced radio and film as the chief medium of entertainment for the American family.

The live programs were in the form of drama anthologies, such as NBC's *Kraft Television Theater* and *Goodyear Television Playhouse* and CBS's *Studio One*. It was *Studio One*, which ran from 1948 to 1958, that aired *Twelve Angry Men* and other plays by Rose. Rose recalled in an interview the challenging but rewarding nature of television drama in the 1950s: "It was a terrifying experience, but very exhilarating. But there were always mistakes. . . . I don't recall a show I ever did when something didn't go wrong" (quoted in "Reginald Rose: A Biography," in *Readings on Twelve Angry Men*, edited by Russ Munyan). Rose recalls cameras breaking down and shows that ran either too long or too short to fill the exact time slot allocated.

There was great variety in the content of these dramas. Some were adaptations of stage plays by such playwrights as Eugene O'Neill and Arthur Miller as well as Shakespeare. Most, however, were original dramas. The constant demand for new plays provided a fruitful creative outlet for writers, directors, and actors in the new medium. Television drama offered actors who were not well known in movies their first national exposure. In 1949, Marlon Brando, then only twenty-four years old, starred in *I'm No Hero*, a television drama produced by the Actors Studio. Paul Newman and Steve McQueen made appearances on the *Goodyear Television Playhouse*. Directors such as John Frankenheimer, Robert Altman, Sidney Lumet, and Sidney Pollack, who would later become known for their work in film, began their careers directing television dramas in the late 1940s and 1950s. Live drama died out in the early 1960s, because new technology enabled productions to be filmed. This produced higher-quality technical work, since mistakes could be edited out and scenes could be reshot, but many of the pioneer actors, writers, and directors bemoaned the loss of the excitement and intimacy of live drama.

McCarthyism and Fear of Communism

In the 1950s, during the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union, Americans were apprehensive about the spread of Communism around the world and at home. The Communist takeover of China in 1949, as well as the U.S.S.R.'s first test explosion of an atomic bomb that same year, followed by the Communist invasion of Korea in 1950, had all intensified these fears. In the late 1940s, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) began to investigate people who were suspected of being



Communists. Their focus was on Hollywood and the entertainment industry. In October 1947, nineteen witnesses called before HUAC refused to cooperate with the committee; as a result, ten of them, who became known as the Hollywood Ten, were sentenced in 1950 to between six and twelve months in prison. During the 1950s, many people who worked in film, theater, radio, and television were blacklisted for alleged ties to Communism. They were prevented from working again in the entertainment industry.

The 1950s also saw the rise of Joseph McCarthy, a Republican senator from Wisconsin and a fierce anti-Communist. In 1950, McCarthy claimed that he had a list of 205 Communists who worked in the U.S. State Department. The following year, McCarthy became chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Investigations, which gave him even greater authority to pursue suspected Communists. Many people lost their jobs as a result of admitting that they were members of the Communist Party. Some, in order to show they had renounced their left-wing views, gave information about others who were Communist Party members.

Having created an atmosphere of hysteria regarding Communist infiltration and conspiracies, McCarthy overreached himself when he began to investigate Communist infiltration of the U.S. military, which angered military leaders as well as President Dwight Eisenhower, a retired general. From April to June 1954, the Army-McCarthy hearings were televised and watched by an estimated twenty million viewers. When *Twelve Angry Men* was shown only three months later, on September 20, 1954, viewers could hardly fail to see the contrast in the play's theme of fairness and justice with the witch hunt led by McCarthy. In December 1954, McCarthy was censured by the U.S. Senate, and the McCarthy era essentially came to an end.

Critical Overview

When *Twelve Angry Men* was first shown as a live television drama on CBS in 1954, Leonard Traube, in *Variety*, wrote one of the first of the many positive reviews the play was to receive. As he puts it, "Seldom in TV history has a story been able to achieve so many high points with such frequency and maintain the absorbing, tense pace."

When Rose revised the play and coproduced a movie version with Henry Fonda in 1957, critical response was also positive. The reviewer for *Newsweek* calls the film a "hard, emphatic, single-minded drama of extraordinary drive and fascination." In *America*, Moira Walsh describes it as "continuously absorbing. . . . It is well constructed and abounds in forceful and abrasive characterizations." However, the film was not an immediate popular success and was quickly withdrawn from large theaters. Subsequently, it was shown at the Berlin Film Festival, where it won first prize. It also won prizes in Japan, Italy, Australia, and other countries. Since then, it has established a reputation as one of the significant films of the 1950s and an all-time American classic film.

Revised by Rose, the play was revived in 1996 at the Comedy Theatre in London, directed by the noted British playwright and director Harold Pinter. The reviewer Matt Wolf, in *Variety*, finds the play a "startlingly innocent work in its belief in a fundamental integrity to the legal process." He contrasts this with the disillusionment felt by many in the United States in the mid-1990s, after the controversial acquittal of O. J. Simpson on double-murder charges in 1995.

The play was revived again at the American Airlines Theater in New York in 2004. John Simon, writing in *New York*, praises the strong writing and the characterization and the "underlying faith in democratic procedure not neutralizing the frightful precariousness of its realization." He concludes:

This superficially dated but fundamentally self-renewing play is more than a lesson in civics and shrewd analysis of a cross-section of psyches. It is a nudge toward our leaving the theater a bit better than we entered it.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1



Critical Essay #1

Aubrey holds a PhD in English and has published many articles on twentieth-century literature. In this essay, he discusses the play in the context of jury behavior, the unreliability of eyewitness testimony, and the inadequacy of defense counsel in many capital cases in the United States.

There must be many playgoers or moviegoers who come away from a performance or showing of *Twelve Angry Men* filled with images of themselves acting as the heroic Juror Eight. They, too, when their time came, would be calm and rational in the jury room and motivated only by a desire for justice, and they would gradually, through their integrity and persistence, persuade the other eleven jurors to adopt their viewpoint. It is, of course, natural for the audience to identify with the hero, but people may not realize that this aspect of *Twelve Angry Men*, in which one juror persuades eleven others to change their positions, is fiction, not reality. The truth is that in real life, no one would be able to act out the admirable role of Henry Fonda (or Jack Lemmon, who played Juror Eight in the 1997 remake of the movie).

The dynamics of group behavior simply do not work that way. In the 1950s, a study of 255 trials by the Chicago Jury Project turned up no examples of such an occurrence. The study, in which microphones were placed in the jury room to record deliberations, found that 30 percent of cases were decided, either for conviction or acquittal, on the first ballot. In 95 percent of cases, the majority on the first ballot persuaded the minority to their point of view. In other words, the way a jury first casts its vote preferences is the best predictor of the final verdict. This conclusion has been confirmed by much research in jury behavior over the past half-century. So if *Twelve Angry Men* had been true to life, the defendant would almost certainly have been convicted. In group situations such as jury deliberations, there is simply too much pressure on a lone individual to conform to the view of the majority. The Chicago Jury Project showed that in the 5 percent of cases in which the original minority prevailed, there were always three or four jurors who held their minority views from the start of deliberations. (The results of the Chicago Jury Project are reported in □ *Twelve Angry Men Presents an Idealized View of the Jury System*, □ by David Burnell Smith.)

In cases where one juror persists in maintaining his or her view against the majority, the result will be a hung jury, although research on juries suggests that hung juries are more common when there is a sizable minority rather than a minority of one. There is also a body of opinion within the legal profession that indicates that in cases where a lone juror opposes the majority, the holdout is unlikely to resemble Juror Eight in *Twelve Angry Men*, who is devoted to justice and acts with integrity. In fact, such a juror is more likely to be the opposite, a stubborn and antisocial person who, for some reason, feels driven to oppose the majority, sticking to his or her opinion when there is no evidence to support it. In a review of the play in the *Michigan Law Review*, Phoebe C. Ellsworth summarizes this view:



The juror who opposes the majority is seen as essentially unreasonable. . . . The majority jurors, on the other hand, are seen as reasonable, willing to spend time sifting through the issues and listening carefully to the arguments of the minority even if the initial verdict is 11-1 and they have enough votes to declare a verdict.

If this aspect of *Twelve Angry Men* is more fiction than truth, the play does raise other issues that are as relevant for the criminal justice system today as they were in the 1950s. The most important of them is the nature of eyewitness testimony. At first, the jurors in *Twelve Angry Men*, with one exception, accept the eyewitness testimony at the trial at face value. This testimony is crucial to the case for the prosecution, and the jurors do not think to question the old man's claim that he saw the murdered man's son fleeing or the testimony of the woman across the street, who said that she actually saw the murder being committed. The jurors repeatedly refer to this testimony as the "facts" of the case, and near the end of the play, Juror Four even says that the woman's account of what she saw is "unshakable testimony." Juror Three adds, "That's the whole case."

The jurors in the play are conforming to what most people, when called to jury duty, believe—that eyewitness testimony is extremely reliable. The truth is rather different. Many studies have shown that eyewitness testimony is often unreliable, with an accuracy rate of only about 50 percent. Some experiments have shown even lower percentages for accurate identification, such as the 41.8 percent reported in Brian Cutler and Stephen Penrod's *Mistaken Identification: The Eyewitness, Psychology, and the Law*.

It seems that despite what people believe, humans do not have a good ability to identify people they may have seen for only a few seconds. Eyewitnesses have been shown to be especially poor at making interracial identification (in the film, a white man and a white woman identify a Hispanic individual). Research has also shown that people in stressful situations have less reliability of recall than those in nonstressful situations. Obviously, witnessing a murder is almost by definition a stressful situation. In addition, people find it harder to recall information about a violent event than about a nonviolent one.

Many experts believe that mistaken identity based on eyewitness testimony is a leading cause of wrongful convictions in the United States. In her book *Eyewitness Testimony*, Elizabeth F. Loftus discusses the issue in depth. She analyzes the famous and controversial Sacco and Vanzetti case in the 1920s, in which two men, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, were convicted and executed for murder. It appears that eyewitnesses initially failed to identify either man as the perpetrator of the crime but later testified that they were certain of their identifications. (Loftus raises the possibility that they were improperly influenced by repeated questioning.) The jurors believed the eyewitnesses, despite plausible alibis presented by both defendants establishing that they were elsewhere at the time of the murder.

Loftus describes another case in which eyewitness testimony against the accused was accepted by a jury, even when evidence pointing to the man's innocence far outweighed



it. (The conviction was later reversed.) Loftus also discusses an experiment in which subjects were asked to play the role of jurors trying a criminal case. When eyewitness testimony was included in the experiment, establishing that someone saw the murder, the percentage of the fifty jurors voting for conviction rose from 18 percent to 72 percent. Then a variation in the case was introduced that has some relevance for *Twelve Angry Men*. The defense established that the witness had not been wearing his glasses on the day of the crime and had very poor vision. Therefore he could not have seen the robber's face. Even with this variation, 68 percent of jurors still voted for conviction. In *Twelve Angry Men*, it is a juror's realization that an eyewitness who wears glasses could not have been wearing them at the time she witnessed the crime that is the decisive factor in swinging the final three jurors to a vote of not guilty.

The legal system does have safeguards against misidentification by eyewitnesses. Since *Twelve Angry Men* was written, there has been a trend toward accepting expert testimony on the reliability of eyewitness identification. In such cases, an expert would advise the jurors on how much weight they should attach to the eyewitness testimony presented at the trial. Another legal safeguard is the right of the defense attorney to cross-examine an eyewitness. The attorney may ask questions about how long the eyewitnesses saw the defendant, what the lighting was like, how much stress they were under, the degree of certainty in their identification, and other relevant questions.

Such cross-examination requires a competent attorney. In *Twelve Angry Men*, the defense attorney's cross-examination of the witnesses is weak, according to Juror Eight, who says, "Somehow I felt that the defense counsel never really conducted a thorough cross-examination. Too many questions were left unasked." Juror Four agrees with him that the defense attorney was bad. In the 1957 film, this point is expanded. Juror Eight points out to Juror Seven that since the defense attorney was court appointed, he may not have wanted to take the case. There would have been neither money nor glory in it for him. In addition, he probably did not believe in the innocence of his client and so did not mount a vigorous defense. Thus, in *Twelve Angry Men*, the jury ends up doing the defense attorney's job for him, which is hardly an ideal situation.

Unfortunately, the inadequacy of defense counsel in death penalty cases is a persistent problem in the criminal justice system in the United States. On its website, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) summarizes several death penalty cases in which inadequate representation has led to wrongful or dubious convictions. The reason for this is that capital cases are extremely complex and require expertise and experience on the part of the defense counsel, who must devote large amounts of time to the case. Because most defendants cannot afford a lawyer, the court provides them with one, but few states offer adequate compensation in such cases. The result, according to the ACLU, is that "capital defendants are frequently represented by inexperienced, often over-worked, and in many cases incompetent, lawyers." The ACLU cites one egregious example of a court-appointed lawyer in Alabama who was so drunk during a capital trial in 1989 that he was held in contempt and jailed.

The facts as presented by the ACLU suggest that the ability of the jurors in *Twelve Angry Men* to reach a just verdict despite the failures of the defense counsel is not



replicated in real life. Although some playgoers and moviegoers may feel that *Twelve Angry Men* vindicates the criminal justice system□because the right verdict is reached□it seems more accurate to view the play as an indictment of the system, since had it not been for the presence of the larger-than-life Juror Eight, justice would most certainly not have been served. The system was saved by one man, and that, sadly, is the stuff of fiction, not reality.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on *Twelve Angry Men*, in *Drama for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2006.



Quotes

"Hey, you're in left field!" Act I, p. 14.

"We don't owe this kid a thing. He got a fair trial, didn't he?" Act I, p. 16.

"Weren't you telling us just a minute or two ago that you can't trust *them*? That you can't believe *them*... How come you believed her? She's one of *them*, too, isn't she?" Act I, p. 19.

"Are you calling the old man a liar?" Act II, p. 33.

"He gambled for support and I gave it to him. I want to hear more." Act II, p. 29.

"It's my guess that the old man was trying to get to the door, heard someone racing down the stairs and *assumed* that it was a boy." Act II, p. 42.

"You're a sadist... You want to see this boy die because you personally want it—not because of the facts." Act II, p. 43.

"Why did you change your mind?" "He—[points to Eight]—he seems so sure. And he has made a number of good points. While he—[points to Three]— only gets mad and insults everybody." Act III, p. 48.

"You are now admitting that the old man lied in one case and told the truth in the other. I admit that this does tend to confirm the story of the old man, but in part he is now a proven liar—and this is by your own admission." Act III, p. 52.

"Maybe it wouldn't hurt us to take a few tips from people who come running here! Maybe they learned something we don't know. We're not so perfect." Act III, p. 54.

"I don't understand you people. How can you believe this kid is innocent? Look you know how those people lie... They don't know what the truth is." Act III, p. 59.

"I don't care whether I'm alone or not! I have a right..." Act III, p. 62.

"It's gonna be a hung jury! That's it!" Act III, p. 63.

"Not guilty!" Act III, p. 63.

Adaptations

In 1957, *Twelve Angry Men* was made into a film starring Henry Fonda and Lee J. Cobb and directed by Sydney Lumet, with a screenplay by Rose (produced by Orion-Nova Productions/United Artists). It is available on DVD through MGM/UA Video.

In 1997, the cable channel Showtime released the made-for-television movie of *Twelve Angry Men*, directed by William Friedkin and starring Jack Lemmon as Juror Eight, with George C. Scott, Hume Cronyn, James Gandolfini, and Tony Danza. Rose produced an updated screenplay for this production. The videotape, put out by MGM/UA Video, has limited availability.



Topics for Further Study

Most states in the United States insist on a unanimous jury in criminal cases, but two states accept majority verdicts. Write an essay discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

Is a jury of ordinary people the best way to reach a correct verdict in a trial? Would a panel of judges or other legal experts be a better way? Research a trial in which the jury reached a controversial verdict and write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper discussing these issues.

In what ways do Jurors Eight, Nine, and Eleven embody the ideal of active citizenship in a democracy? What kinds of threats to the success of democracy through active citizen participation are posed by Jurors Three, Seven, Ten, and Twelve? Team up with two other classmates and make a class presentation in which you discuss these issues.

In the play and the 1957 film, the jury is all-white and all-male. In the 1997 remake of the film, four jurors are African American. There are no women in any versions of the play. Should race and gender play a part in jury selection? Would female jurors or Hispanic jurors have been less willing to convict the defendant in *Twelve Angry Men*? Set up a classroom debate in which one person argues in favor of taking race and gender into account and the other person argues against it.

Watch the 1957 and the 1997 film versions of *Twelve Angry Men*. Give a class presentation, with clips from the movies if possible, outlining the major differences between the two versions. Do you prefer Henry Fonda's performance as Juror Eight, or Jack Lemmon's? Compare and contrast the ways at least two other jurors are presented.



Compare and Contrast

1950s: In 1953, 55 percent of American households possess a television set. In 1955, the figure jumps to 67 percent. In this year, 7,421,084 television sets are sold in the United States. NBC is the first network to have a regularly scheduled color program on the air (*Bonanza*, starting in 1959).

Today: More than 98 percent of households have television sets, and many have more than one. In 1999, 68 percent of households with television have cable television. On average, Americans watch four hours of television a day.

1950s: Support for the death penalty in the United States drops. In the 1940s, there were, on average, nearly 130 executions a year, but in the 1950s this figure falls to an average of 71.5 executions. The most famous cases are those of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who are put to death in New York in 1953 for passing atomic secrets to the Soviet Union. In New York in 1954, the year *Twelve Angry Men* is first televised, nine people are executed. Two of the condemned are teenagers; a total of three more teenagers die in New York's Sing Sing in 1955 and 1956.

Today: Although the United States is one of the few countries to retain the death penalty, the number of executions is falling, from 71 in 2002 to 65 in 2003 and 59 in 2004. In New York, Governor George Pataki reinstates the death penalty in 1995, but, as of 2005, New York had not executed anyone since 1963. In 2005, the Supreme Court abolished the death penalty for those who commit murder when younger than age eighteen. This decision affects not only future sentencing but also approximately seventy prisoners on death row who were under eighteen when they committed their crimes.

1950s: The cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union dominates global politics in the era, as does the Korean War, from 1950 to 1953. Fear of Communism leads to the McCarthy era in the United States. Television drama during this period often includes patriotic sentiments, such as those expressed by Juror Eleven in *Twelve Angry Men*. There is a perceived need to reinforce U.S. citizens' belief in the virtues of American democracy in contrast to the totalitarian Communist states of China and the Soviet Union.

Today: The cold war is over, leaving the United States as the sole superpower. U.S. and, to an extent, global politics are dominated by the "war on terror." The Islamic terrorist group al Qaeda has replaced the Soviet Union in the minds of Americans as the prime source of evil in the world. Politicians regularly exploit people's fear of terrorism to gain support for their policies.

What Do I Read Next?

Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* (1955) is about the Salem witch trials in the seventeenth century and the hysteria that resulted in the persecution of innocent people. The play was written during the McCarthy era, in which fears about Communism led to witch hunts and many people were condemned as Communists or Communist sympathizers without evidence.

In *The Run of His Life: The People Versus O. J. Simpson* (reprint edition, 1997), Jeffrey Toobin analyzes one of the most sensational trials of the twentieth century. Toobin argues that O. J. Simpson was guilty of the murder of his wife, Nicole, and her friend Ron Goldman, and much of the book is devoted to analysis of why Simpson was acquitted at the trial in 1995, despite the strong evidence against him. The reason, according to Toobin, was the racial divide in America that made the jury mistrust the evidence presented by the prosecution.

Great American Trials: 201 Compelling Courtroom Dramas from Salem Witchcraft to O. J. Simpson, edited by Edward W. Knappman (2004), contains descriptive accounts of America's most historically significant trials as well as those that fascinated the general public. Accounts range from the Boston Massacre in 1770 to the "Boston Strangler" trial in 1967 and include the notorious nineteenth-century trial of Lizzie Borden for the murder of her parents.

Live Television: The Golden Age of 1946-1958 in New York (1990), by Frank Sturcken, tells the story of television's golden age, a period in which more than five thousand dramas were broadcast live. Sturcken has done much original research, and the book is enhanced by interviews with many executives, producers, and actors from the period.

Further Study

Abramson, Jeffrey, *We the Jury: The Jury System and the Ideal of Democracy*, with a new preface, Harvard University Press, 2000.

Abramson, who is a former prosecutor, describes the history and function of juries in democratic society. He discusses such issues as mandatory cross-section representation for juries and scientific jury selection and advocates mandatory unanimous verdicts. He concludes that the jury system works well and serves the interests of democracy.

Burnett, D. Graham, *A Trial by Jury*, Vintage, 2002.

Burnett, a historian of science, was the foreman of the jury in a murder trial in New York City, and in this book he discusses the responsibilities and frustrations of jury duty. The result is an excellent account of what really goes on in a jury room. Reviewers made comparisons between this book and *Twelve Angry Men*.

Hans, Valerie P., and Neil Vidmar, *Judging the Jury*, Perseus, 2001.

The authors discuss the performance of juries and conclude that on the whole, they do a competent job. Other issues discussed in the book include jury selection, the effects of prejudice, and the significance of whether the verdict is unanimous or a majority decision. They also cover the history and development of the jury system.

Yarmey, A. Daniel, *The Psychology of Eyewitness Testimony*, Free Press, 1979.

Yarmey presents the psychological and legal aspects of eyewitness identification. He also discusses the implications for criminal justice of the scientific literature on memory, perception, and social perception.



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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's "For Students" Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on "classic" novels frequently



studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized



Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. • Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author’s time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes “The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,” a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children’s Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from DfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

“Night.” Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from DfS (usually the first piece under the “Criticism” subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on “Winesburg, Ohio.” Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335–39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. “Margaret Atwood’s “The Handmaid’s Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,” Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9–16; excerpted and reprinted in Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133–36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. “Richard Wright: “Wearing the Mask,” in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69–83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59–61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Drama for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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