



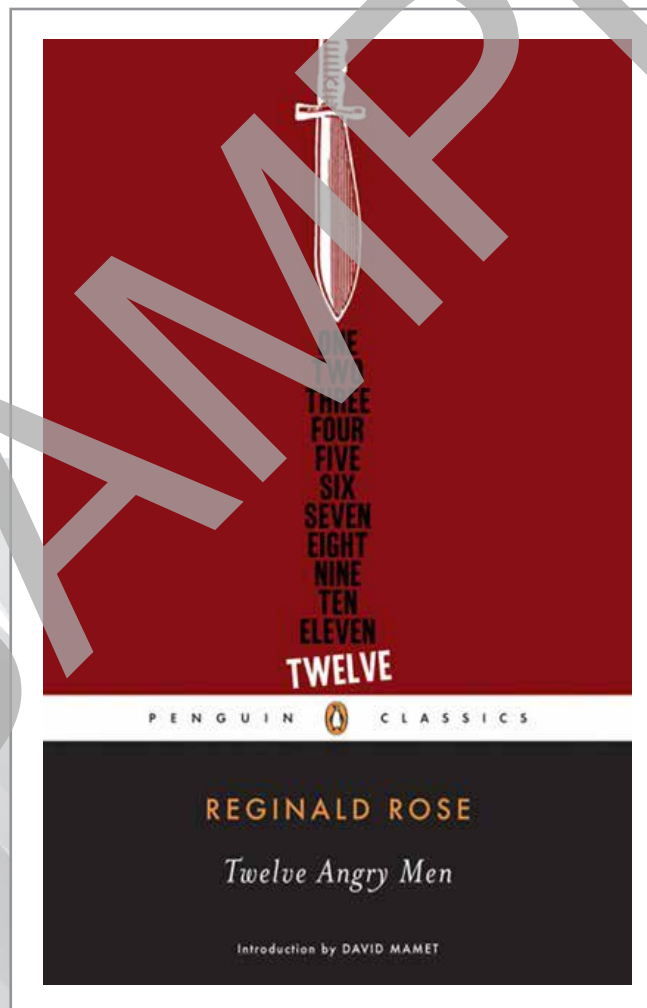
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 9-12**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# Twelve Angry Men

Reginald Rose



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# Twelve Angry Men

Reginald Rose

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Brainstorming, analysis,  
compare/contrast, research,  
critical thinking, evaluation,  
conflict

### Comprehension

Prediction, cause/effect,  
inference, plot development,  
thematic development,  
conflict/resolution

### Literary Elements

Metaphor, simile, symbolism,  
irony, characterization, tone,  
setting, theme, hyperbole,  
genre, sarcasm, rhetorical  
question

### Vocabulary

Target words, definitions,  
application

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, report,  
script performance,  
reenactment, interview

### Writing

Poetry, script, monologue,  
letter, editorial, newspaper  
article, review

### Across the Curriculum

Music—appropriate  
background selections;  
Art—blueprint, collage,  
diorama, sketch

### Viewing

Movie version of *Twelve  
Angry Men*

**Genre:** drama

**Setting:** jury room of a New York court of law; very hot summer day in 1957

**Themes:** justice, prejudice, integrity, common sense, anger, democratic process

**Conflict:** person vs. person, person vs. society, person vs. self

**Tone:** realistic; changes from pessimistic to optimistic

**Date of First Publication:** 1955—as a one-hour drama for CBS’s *Studio One*; 1957—first film version

## Summary

Twelve jurors must decide the fate of a 16-year-old boy who is on trial for allegedly killing his father. If convicted by a unanimous vote of the jurors, he will receive an automatic death sentence. Only one man, Juror #8, votes “not guilty” when the first vote is taken. Throughout the jury’s proceedings, he attempts to cast “reasonable doubt” on the defendant’s guilt. To do so, he must circumvent the apathy, prejudice, and bias of the other jurors. Although initially appearing to be an unlikely ally, Juror #9 supports Juror #8 as several jurors reveal ambiguities in the prosecution’s case. One by one, the other jurors begin to have reasonable doubt about the defendant’s guilt and change their votes to “not guilty.” The jury reaches a unanimous verdict when the lone dissenter, Juror #3, finally agrees with the others.

## About the Playwright

**Personal:** Reginald Rose was born in New York City in 1920. He attended Townsend Harris High School and City College before enlisting in the U.S. Army after Pearl Harbor. He served in the Philippines and Japan, attaining the rank of First Lieutenant. He was married twice and had six children. He died in 2002 from complications of a heart condition.

**Career:** Rose, an American film and television writer, began writing when he was a teenager. He sold his first television play, *The Bus to Nowhere*, in 1950 and was most well-known for his work in the early years of television drama. He served on a jury for the first time in 1954—a manslaughter case. Jurors argued angrily for eight hours before reaching a unanimous verdict. Capturing the powerful situation in the jury room, Rose wrote *Twelve Angry Men* as a one-hour drama for CBS’s *Studio One*, and the film version was made in 1957. Stage productions of *Twelve Angry Men* include the original in 1964 and revised versions in 1996 and 2004. Rose’s work in television included writing a broad spectrum of dramas and the creation, supervision, and writing of many episodes of the TV series *The Defenders* from 1961–1965. He wrote the screenplay for several films, including *Crime in the Streets*, *The Wild Geese*, *The Sea Wolves*, *Man of the West*, *Somebody Killed Her Husband*, and *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* He also wrote *Six Television Plays* (1957) and *The Thomas Book* (1972). In addition to his stage production of *Twelve Angry Men*, Rose’s writing for theater included *Black Monday* (1962), *The Porcelain Year* (1965), *Dear Friends* (1968), and *This Agony, This Triumph* (1972). He also wrote for children and published a memoir, *Undelivered Mail*.

**Honors:** Rose received Oscar nominations for Best Screenplay and Best Picture (as co-producer) for *Twelve Angry Men*. He was nominated for six Emmy awards and won three (1954, 1962, 1963). A sampling of his many honors includes the Berlin Film Festival Golden Bear, three Mystery Writers of America Awards (including the Edgar Allan Poe Award), Writers Guild of America Awards (including the Lifetime Achievement Award), and the Writers Guild of America Laurel Award in 1958 and 1987.

## Introduction

American playwright David Mamet points out the importance of the diverse people who comprise an American jury and the need to set aside individual prejudices in order to reach a unanimous verdict. He contrasts “good” and “bad” drama and concludes that the unpredictable ending of *Twelve Angry Men* marks it as a good drama.

### Vocabulary

ad-hoc  
decry  
Shul  
jurisprudence  
subsumed  
maligning  
hucksters  
adjurations  
idiosyncratic  
mitigate  
catalyst  
egress

### Discussion Questions

1. Mamet cites Eric Hoffer as the “greatest American Philosopher” (p. vii). How does Eric Hoffer believe America was built? *(He compares the building of America to the ability of volunteers under the WPA [Works Progress Administration] to build a road with little supervision but with diverse talents and desire to work. He points out that a group of intelligent workers built America by devising a plan and using their common sense and group spirit to execute that plan.)*
2. Analyze Mamet’s explanation of the “two Americas,” of “them” and “us,” and how this relates to our system of jurisprudence. *(He believes there are two Americas, as reflected by the pronouns “them” and “us.” The America of “them” refers to those of a different political persuasion than ours. We refer to the America in which we participate as “us.” Although members of this group have different talents and interests, “we” join them in various activities and can usually find a way to unite with other members of our group on most issues. Mamet claims that this ultimate unison is the essence of America’s system of jurisprudence.)*
3. Examine Mamet’s discourse on the jury system. Note the metaphor, “we (the jurors) are the State” (p. viii). *(He emphasizes that the process of being able to unite is the essence of our system of laws, and the jury trial epitomizes this ability to unite for a specific purpose. Within the jury room, everyone is expected to put aside individual agendas and prejudices in order to reach a fair verdict. As convincing lawyers for both sides present their arguments, jurors must try to differentiate between truth and lies. They must decide if the defendant is a criminal or a victim and render a verdict that will determine that person’s future. Jurors are instructed to apply the standard of “reasonable doubt,” which may have different connotations for members of the jury, but they must assimilate all the information and reach a unanimous verdict. Because jurors are given this power, they are, for the period of time they serve on the jury, “the State.”)*
4. Analyze the Biblical allusions to perjury. *(Mamet uses allusions from the book of Proverbs to reinforce his condemnation of perjury. According to these allusions, perjury can result from partiality. Jurors must weigh testimony carefully in order to detect outright lies, slanting of the truth, or mistakes in judgment.)*
5. Discuss Mamet’s definition of “gang drama,” and compare/contrast his view of bad vs. good drama. Examine his rationale for calling *Twelve Angry Men* a good drama. *(A “gang drama” places the protagonist in a situation from which he must find a way out. In a bad version of this type of drama, the audience can foresee a predictable ending, but a good version makes the ending unpredictable. Twelve Angry Men has no predictable ending and, for most of the play, the possibility for the jurors to reach an equitable, peaceful verdict seems impossible.)*

## Supplementary Activities

1. Research the development of the jury system in the United States, noting when women were first allowed on juries. Create a time line that details how the jury system has changed throughout history.
2. Name a play or movie you have seen that fits Mamet's definition of good drama, and explain why.

## Act I, pp. 5–17

After the judge issues his instructions to the jurors, the twelve men retire to the jury room to deliberate on whether or not a sixteen-year-old boy is guilty of killing his father. In the initial vote, only the 8th juror, who is unsure of the boy's guilt, casts a "not guilty" vote. Several of the other jurors present their rationales for voting guilty, including details about the boy's criminal background. Three jurors immediately establish their positions: #3—antagonism toward the defendant, #7—impatience with the proceedings, and #10—bigotry toward "slum" kids in general.

### Vocabulary

lavatory  
fluorescent  
premeditated  
mandatory  
Exchange  
monopoly  
el

### Discussion Questions

1. What is the setting of this drama, and what is its significance?  
*(The drama is set on a very hot summer afternoon in the jury room of a New York court of law in 1957. The bareness and drabness of the room echo the emptiness and dullness of the defendant's life and the struggle about to take place in this room as the twelve jurors decide his fate. The oppressive heat symbolizes the intensity of the jurors' task and the explosive, heated arguments that will transpire between them. The jurors' only "escape" from the tension-filled room will be brief visits to the connecting bathroom. They also cannot get the fan to work, which adds to their frustration.)*
2. What are the judge's instructions to the jury? What is the charge against the defendant?  
*(He instructs the jurors to try to separate facts from fancy as presented in the courtroom testimony and to deliberate honestly and thoughtfully. If they find cause for reasonable doubt, they must return a verdict of "not guilty." If they return a unanimous verdict of "guilty," the death sentence will be mandatory. The defendant, a sixteen-year-old boy, is charged with stabbing his father in a premeditated homicide.)*
3. Examine the significance of the jurors' initial actions and their conversation about the trial after entering the jury room. *(They seem ill-at-ease with each other, and it takes them several minutes to get started with their deliberation. Their activities include going to the bathroom, getting a drink, reading the newspaper, and opening the windows. Juror #8 stares out the window instead of interacting with the other jurors. Their conversations reveal that some of them were bored during the trial, and most have already formed an opinion about the defendant's guilt. Their reactions to the trial, to their roles as jurors, and to the defendant include nervousness, hesitance, impatience, sarcasm, prejudice, rationality, and arrogance.)*
4. Discuss the emerging roles of the individual jurors, and evaluate the effectiveness of the Foreman. *(Juror #7 establishes himself as the "jokester" and is primarily interested in a quick verdict so he can go to a baseball game. Juror #12 is impressed with the prosecuting attorney. Juror #10 immediately pronounces the defendant guilty of killing his father and reveals his bias against "those people" [p. 10]. Juror #3 thinks the case is open-and-shut and becomes*

## Character Chart

**Directions:** In the boxes across from each of the feelings, describe an incident or time in the play when each of the listed jurors experienced that feeling. You may use “not applicable” if you cannot find an example.

	Juror #3	Juror #4	Juror #8	Juror #10
<b>Frustration</b>				
<b>Anger</b>				
<b>Anxiety</b>				
<b>Intimidation</b>				
<b>Humiliation</b>				
<b>Relief</b>				

## Conflict

The **conflict** of a story is the struggle between two people or two forces. The following are three types of conflict: person vs. person, person vs. society, and person vs. self.

**Directions:** The characters experience some conflicts in the play. In the chart below, list one example of a conflict and resolution for each of the three types of conflict.

person vs. person	
Conflict	Resolution

person vs. society	
Conflict	Resolution

person vs. self	
Conflict	Resolution