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Twelve Angry Men
Reginald Rose



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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

Twelve Angry Men

Pre-Reading

1. At some point in their adult lives, most Americans will be called to report for jury duty. Do you think you would enjoy sitting on a jury, or would it feel like a chore? On what case would you most like to serve as a juror? Explain your answers in a paragraph or two.
2. Does trial by jury seem like a fair system to you? Imagine a local newspaper has asked citizens to send in their opinions on the matter. Write a letter to the editor in which you explain your feelings on trials by jury. Whatever opinion you hold, write a letter that will persuade those who currently disagree with it to change their minds.
3. The first draft of *Twelve Angry Men* was written for television in 1954. At that time, it was very likely that a jury would consist entirely of white males. Today, a more inclusive approach is taken when selecting juries. What, in your opinion, would a jury truly representative of the American people as a whole look like? Number a list from 1 to 11. Then list the members of your imaginary jury. Include their sexes, races, and ages (remember: jurors must be at least 18 years old). Finally, explain why you think your jury accurately represents the full spectrum of Americans.

Notes on Characters and Costumes

4. Read over the descriptions of the jurors and the foreman. Which one of them do most relate to? Explain your answer in a paragraph, emphasizing why your personalities would be compatible.
5. Of the foreman and the jurors, which one do you think you would instantly dislike? Explain your answer in a paragraph.

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10. Juror Three suggests that you can tell by the look on a person's face what kind of character he or she has. Do you agree? Write a dialogue between yourself and Juror Three in which you address this idea.
11. Juror Eight says, "It's not so easy for me to raise my hand and send a boy off to die without talking about it first."

When *Twelve Angry Men* was written, we had not yet established a method of collecting DNA as evidence. Suppose that your state governor has proposed a law stating that no one will be given the death penalty in the absence of DNA-related evidence. Would you support such a law? Write a letter to the governor, sharing your views on the matter.

12. In speaking of the defendant, Juror Eight says, "He's a tough, angry kid. You know why slum kids get that way? Because we knock 'em over the head once a day, every day."

What do you think Juror Eight means by this statement? Make a list of ten ways in which you think the better-off "knock" the less fortunate "over the head" every day.

13. It quickly becomes clear that Juror Ten is a racist who is condemning the defendant for being "one of *them*." In America, one is entitled to a trial by a jury of one's "peers"—or equals. The catch is that some Americans do not feel that those of another race, class, gender, religion, or sexual orientation really *are* their equals.

Would trials be fairer if every member of the jury shared the same race, class, gender, religion, and sexual orientation as the defendant? Elaborate on your opinion in a paragraph or two.

Act Two

23. Do you think general elections (President of the United States, for example) would turn out differently if people were made to vote publicly instead of privately? Explain your answer.
24. After uncertainty concerning the validity of the 2000 Presidential Election in America, many are questioning the country's method of collecting votes. If you think the current method is the best possible one, explain why, providing at least two reasons for your certainty. Otherwise, describe your ideal method for collecting Americans' votes in large elections, and be as inventive as you like—just be sure to keep your method practical. Remember, critics of electronic voting machines assert that tampering can easily occur when they are used.
25. You are a juror on the case dealt with in *Twelve Angry Men*, but you are not Juror Eight, nor are you the juror who has just upped the “Not Guilty” tally to two. Do you want to know which juror changed his vote? Do you think you have the right to know? Explain your answers.
26. Juror Eleven says that a major reason he emigrated to America is that he “always thought that a man was entitled to have unpopular opinions in this country.” To what extent do you believe this is true of America? What might happen to people whose opinions are unpopular? Is it always safe to have such opinions? Discuss the issue in a paragraph or two.
27. Identify and assess five examples of famous Americans who suffered because they held unpopular opinions.
28. Among students in today's high schools, there is significant pressure to be popular. How risky is it to have unpopular opinions in this context? Elaborate on your answer in half a page or so, using at least one example from your own experience.

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W r a p - U p

49. Imagine that a new movie version of *Twelve Angry Men* is in the works and that you are in charge of the casting. For each of the below roles, choose the Hollywood actor that you think would be best for the part and include a line or two about why you think so. In this new version, women will be in the cast to demonstrate a true jury of peers. Make sure to include at least one female juror and come up with a new title for the film.

Juror Eight–

Juror Three–

Juror Eleven –

Juror Five –

50. You're still at work on the film, but now you're the sound coordinator and in charge of picking the songs for the *Twelve Angry Men* soundtrack. Name at least three songs you would include and explain the reasoning behind each of your choices.
51. Although the notes to the play point out that contemporary versions of *Twelve Angry Men* might be played with a cast of male and female jurors, they still recommend that Juror Eight be played by a man. Do you agree that the role will be more powerful and effective if played by a man? Write a letter to the author of the notes (we are not given his or her name) that either supports or attacks this recommendation. Be sure to support your argument with several reasons.