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## Literature Teaching Unit

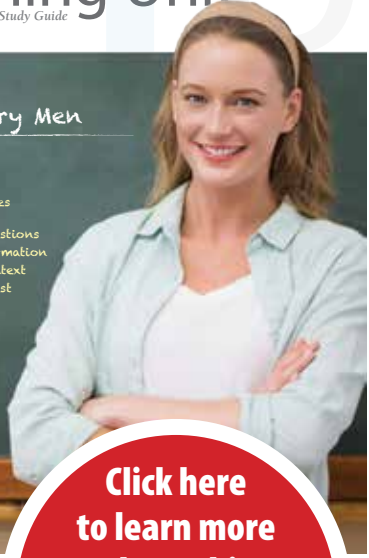
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



### Twelve Angry Men

by Reginald Rose

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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*Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide*



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## About the Author

Reginald Rose (1920-2002) was born in Manhattan and attended both high school and college in the city. During WWII, he joined the Army.

Rose's writing career began in the age of live television drama, but he later developed scripts for movies and the theater. His first teleplay was performed on CBS television in 1950 and from his experience as a juror in a manslaughter trial, Rose gained the knowledge and ideas for *Twelve Angry Men*.

Reginald Rose won many national and international awards and continued writing for many years. His works are noted for their realistic commentaries on matters of social and political importance. One of his works, *Thunder on Sycamore Street*, for example, directed attention to the possible dangers of conformity.

*Twelve Angry Men* originally aired on CBS's Studio One in 1954, but this production was a shortened version of Rose's original work. This is the version that appeared in print in *Six Television Plays* and later in school anthologies.

The film version of this play starring Henry Fonda was produced in 1957. Its running time is 93 minutes. There is also a 1997 film version of *Twelve Angry Men* available on video with a racially mixed jury and with Jack Lemmon in Henry Fonda's role. Additionally, an alternative version of the play with a female cast exists called *Twelve Angry Women*. The dialogue is basically the same as the 1954 play. Although the original is a bit dated, it remains the superior version.

This play deals with the sensitive issues of prejudice and racism, relying heavily on the portrayal of stereotypes. The ultimate purpose of these portrayals is to delineate the value of justice and morality, looking past stereotypes and prejudice. Students must be alert to the fact that the views, improper as they are, did indeed influence jury decisions for many years. This controversy emphasizes the play's important theme of justice prevailing, even when only one person stands up for what is right.

All references come from The Dramatic Publishing Company edition of *Twelve Angry Men*, copyright 1983.

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. identify and define these elements of drama: plot, character, dialogue, and staging.
2. state how the staging reveals the setting, and how staging contributes to the mood.
3. identify the protagonist and the main antagonist in the play and state the nature of their conflict.
4. distinguish between drama and melodrama and identify *Twelve Angry Men* as one or the other, supporting the choice with evidence from the play.
5. explain how playwright Reginald Rose differentiates between his characters.
6. define the term “stereotype” and explain how stereotypes are used in this play.
7. cite examples from the play to prove the point that all the details in a drama are important in:
  - A. providing character motivation/differentiation
  - B. advancing the action of the plot
  - C. revealing theme.
8. discuss the following themes in the play and indicate how they are revealed to the reader:
  - A. Justice and fairness will prevail if there is one just man who believes in them.
  - B. Intolerance and prejudice may be mundane in appearance, but are, nonetheless, persuasive.
  - C. For one person to stand alone against the group takes courage.
9. comment on the motivation of the three major characters and discuss whether this motivation is a convincing and believable explanation for their behavior.
10. identify the dramatic climax at the end of each act and state what produced it.
11. explain how he or she would have voted, citing evidence from the play.
12. define various terms relating to the legal system.

### Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. How does melodrama differ from drama? Is this play more of a drama or melodrama? Explain.
2. At the end of the play, the audience cannot be completely sure that the boy was *not guilty*. Why do you think the boy's guilt or innocence was left uncertain? How would you have voted?
3. What is the mood of this play, and what elements of staging contribute to the mood? Explain.
4. Define the term "stereotype" and identify at least six stereotypes found in this play.
5. Write an essay in which you prove, by referring to incidents and comments in the play, that each of the following are themes in this play:
  - A. Justice and fairness may prevail, even if there is only one just person who believes in them.
  - B. Intolerance and prejudice may be mundane in appearance, but are nonetheless persuasive.
  - C. It takes courage for one man to stand alone against the group.
6. A good drama is supposed to make the reader think and respond. Did this play succeed in this? Why or why not?
7. What is reasonable doubt? How does it differ from being reasonably sure?
8. People are often judged mentally unstable or incompetent if they cannot reason. How does reason affect the thought process of the first juror to change his vote?
9. Our jury system requires the selection of twelve people to come to a conclusion about the guilt or innocence of a person on trial. What questions would you put to a potential juror to determine if he or she should serve on this particular jury?

4. Of what is the defendant accused and what evidence is there against him?

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5. Who is the protagonist in this play and what is he doing when we first see him?

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6. Who does it appear will be his major antagonist? How is this antagonist differentiated from the other jurors?

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7. What will be the cause of the conflict between the protagonist and antagonist?

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8. To quickly identify and differentiate among his characters, Rose uses a number of stereotypes. Identify at least three of them.

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9. What is the cause of Three's anger toward all young men?

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10. What does Ten's following comment reveal about himself? "How can you believe him, knowing what he is? I lived among 'em all my life. You can't believe a word they say."  
(Act I)

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5. Juror Eleven makes a suggestion that one of the others does not understand “reasonable doubt.” To whom is he directing his remark, and why is the other juror angry?

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6. Why is Five convinced that the boy did not stab his father? What makes Five an authority?

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7. After Five’s comments about the knife, another vote is taken. How does the count stand after this vote?

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8. In the scene where Ten starts talking about “those people,” why do the other jurors get up from the table?

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9. What comments does Juror Eight make that seem to settle the argument about “doubt”?

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10. To Four, what is the most convincing evidence that the boy is guilty?

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11. What is brought up to refute the woman’s claim that she saw the boy kill his father?

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