

DISCOVERY GUIDE



Photography: Joan Marcus

A Play by **REGINALD ROSE**
Directed by **SCOTT ELLIS**
TWELVE ANGRY MEN

A ROUNDABOUTTHEATRECOMPANY PRODUCTION

MARCH 28–MAY 6, 2007 • AHMANSON THEATRE



L.A.'s Theatre Company

P.L.A.Y.

PERFORMING FOR LOS ANGELES YOUTH

DISCOVERY GUIDE

Twelve Angry Men

How to Use this Discovery Guide

IS JURY SERVICE a privilege or a burden? How much of your time and energy does an accused felon deserve? How do small prejudices influence our decision-making? How much doubt is *reasonable*? The classic drama *Twelve Angry Men* is provocative and relevant even 50 years after its debut. The national tour with its powerhouse cast **deliberates** at the Ahmanson Theatre this spring.

This Discovery Guide has been created to enhance your experience of the play. It contains historical material and a summary of the play. At the end of each section you will find opportunities to respond to the play's themes, events and characters.

Vocabulary words are in **bold type**. You will find definitions of these words at the end of each section.



DISCOVERY GUIDE CREDITS

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OBJECTIVES OF THIS DISCOVERY GUIDE

Provide an overview of the play's characters and plot

Explore the methods used for set and costume design

Examine historical events concurrent with the play

Introduce the history of the United States jury system

Direct you to resources that will help you continue to explore the themes of *Twelve Angry Men*

SYNOPSIS

Twelve Angry Men

The playwright said the reason he kept the characters as numbers and not names is because when he served on a jury, the jurors really were labeled by numbers. These people don't know each other when the play begins. The information you're given once that door is shut is the only information you have to start making your decision. You go into a room; you're not there to get to know people. You're there to decide.

—Scott Ellis, director of *Twelve Angry Men*



Illustration: Christine Cornell

Cast of Characters



JUROR ONE/
FOREMAN
George Wendt



JUROR TWO
Todd Cerveris



JUROR THREE
Randle Mell



JUROR FOUR
Jeffrey Hayenga



JUROR FIVE
Jim Saltouros



JUROR SIX
Charles Borland



JUROR SEVEN
Mark Morettini



JUROR EIGHT
Richard Thomas



JUROR NINE
Alan Mandell



JUROR TEN
Julian Gamble



JUROR ELEVEN
David Lively



JUROR TWELVE
T. Scott
Cunningham



GUARD
Patrick New

JUDGE, CLERK
offstage voices



Twelve Angry Men. Photography: Joan Marcus



ON A HOT SUMMER DAY in 1953, twelve men file into a cramped jury room of a New York City courthouse to decide the fate of a 19-year-old boy. The room is uncomfortable; the men are **cantankerous**; the charge is murder. The jurors all seem certain – the verdict is obvious. The boy killed his father. They settle down and take a vote by show of hands. Everyone is in agreement, except Juror Eight. Eight has doubts.

The other jurors' reactions range from curiosity to outright hostility. They have spent six long days listening to testimony and have given quite enough valuable time to this murderer. Eight contends that a decision so grave deserves a bit of discussion, and, with quiet persistence, he convinces the rest of the jury to talk. Juror Twelve suggests they each explain to Eight why they believe the boy is guilty, to sway him over to their side. In doing so, each man reveals a bit about himself.

Juror Two is insecure, votes with his gut and has no concrete reason for it. Three is driven by guilt and anger; he is estranged from his own son. Four is rational and distant; he is wealthy and from a different world. Five is from a poor neighborhood; he initially declines to speak. Six is a peacemaker; he avoids making waves and tries to smooth over the rough spots. Seven sees the defendant as a bad kid; that is reason enough for him. Juror Nine is unimpeachably polite and carefully observant; he speaks only when he has something important to say. Ten is overtly bigoted and belligerent. Eleven is an immigrant; he is committed to a fair process. Twelve wastes no time in announcing he is in advertising; he resents the commitment and just wants to get back to his office.

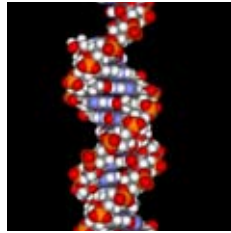
As they deliberate on the facts of the case, Juror Eight explains, and even demonstrates, why he has doubts of the young man's guilt. The second vote is ten to two. Eight has sparked reasonable doubt in one more man. By vote three they are **deadlocked**, six to six. Juror Twelve suggests they are a **hung jury**. Some jurors jump on the quick escape, but others refuse to give in. Juror Eleven laments that they are unable to agree even about whether or not the window should be open, as the deliberations continue.

1953 America



Inventions

Corvette sports car
Color TV – a set costs \$1,500 and color is only broadcast 1-2 hours per day
Instant iced tea



Science

DNA discovered



Books & Publications

Playboy magazine debuts
TV Guide debuts
James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain* is published
Ray Bradbury's science fiction novels gain popularity
James Bond first appears in book form in *Casino Royale*



Music

Big Band music swing and ballroom
Age of the Crooner
Young jazz musician Miles Davis becomes popular
"Doggie in the Window"
"That's Amore"



Movies

From Here to Eternity
Shane



Theatre

The Crucible (Arthur Miller)
Picnic (William Inge)
Tea and Sympathy (Robert Anderson)



TV

Romper Room
I Love Lucy
What's My Line?



Sports

Golf: Ben Hogan wins U.S. Open, Masters and first British Open
Baseball: Yankees defeat Dodgers



U.S. Politics

Dwight D. Eisenhower is president
Eisenhower establishes "Atoms for Peace" commission
Korean War ends (54,000 Americans died in three years)
Julius and Ethel Rosenberg executed for "conspiracy to commit espionage"



World Events

Fidel Castro leads disastrous revolt in Cuba
Josef Stalin dies after 29 years at helm of Soviet Union
Edmund Hillary and **Sherpa** Tenzing Norgay climb Mt. Everest
Cambodia declares independence from France



Twelve Angry Men. Photography: Joan Marcus



Richard Thomas in *Twelve Angry Men*.
Photography: Joan Marcus



Questions & Exercises

The defendant in *Twelve Angry Men* is never seen onstage. He is talked about at great length, but this is all the audience knows of him – like the jurors, he does not even have a name. Think back on the play and write down everything you can remember about him. Some things will be contradictory.

1. Choose from your list those characteristics you believe to be true about the defendant. Write an essay describing the boy and explaining why you think these particular facts are true.
2. Write a monologue from the boy's point of view. Set it during the time the jury is out deliberating. How does he feel? What is he thinking about? Did he commit the crime?

Vocabulary

- Cantankerous:** Ill-tempered, disagreeable, quarrelsome
- Crooner:** A singer of popular ballads, usually accompanied by a full orchestra or big band
- Deadlocked:** At a complete standstill due to the opposition of two unmoving factions
- Deliberate:** To consider carefully; to consult or confer formally
- Hung jury:** A jury that is unable to reach agreement
- Sherpa:** A member of a Tibetan peoples living in the Himalayas of Nepal, often serving as a guide or porter in the mountains

Courtroom Drama: Talking with Allen Moyer, Set Designer



Jury room research photos



Twelve Angry Men. Photography: Joan Marcus

What did you discover about jury rooms in researching this play?

Allen Moyer: I was struck by how faceless and ill-kept the rooms are. They were so small they created a feeling of claustrophobia. Being in that room with 11 other people for any length of time would be particularly unpleasant, I think. And then imagining it without air conditioning, or even a working fan, made it even worse. The biggest impression that I had coming out of the site tour was how it seemed that no one placed much importance on where people need to sit, decide and discuss a person's fate. I thought to myself, what does this tell us about our culture, that we would put people in here?

How do you translate those ideas onto the stage?

Moyer: It's important to me to create a room that's basically factual, in other words, a real room that doesn't look like it's been **theatricalized**. Now, that's a little hard to do, because when you're putting a room on stage in a theatre with wide **sightlines**, there are all sorts of compromises you have to make to do that.

So would you say you were doing a realistic set?

Moyer: I would say it's more **naturalistic** than realistic, and there's a fine line between those two. What I always learned was that realism is selective and naturalism is not. Now, of course you ask, how can something be non selective ... and the truth is it can't be, especially when you're putting it on stage. So I would say that this is trying to be naturalistic, as much as one can on the stage.

This is a remarkable thing about democracy. ... That we are notified by mail to come down to this place – and decide on the guilt or innocence of a man; of a man we have not known before. We have nothing to gain or lose by our verdict. This is one of the reasons why we are strong. We should not make it a personal thing.
–Juror Eleven in *Twelve Angry Men*

Fashion Police: Speaking with Michael Krass, Costume Designer

What kind of research do you do for *Twelve Angry Men*?

Michael Krass: First, we researched the period [1953], because we wanted to make it as accurate as possible. The more specific we can get with every detail, the better story we can tell. Then we research the characters. Where is each character coming from? Where are they going? For what purpose did they get dressed this morning? And for this play, that's all very clear. They got dressed to come to court. They've been coming to court for several days. They're tired and they're hot. We also go further into each character. How much money do they have? What do they do for a living? Do they care about what they look like? The text contains the answers. So you go through the script and see what these people do for a living - they don't even have names, but most characters state their occupation somewhere in the dialogue. Juror #8, for example, seems to be a fairly careful person, an architect, upper middle class, and more likely than not, he wears a suit.



George Wendt and Richard Thomas in *Twelve Angry Men*.
Photography: Joan Marcus

How do the actors contribute to the costume design process?

Krass: That's my favorite part. I can only do so much. The actor needs to make the costume his own. However, there are certain things within the big picture that I'm responsible for. One responsibility is to make everybody look different, so the audience can differentiate one character from another. For example, if twelve actors ask for glasses, white shirts and bow ties, we are all in terrible trouble. And they need to understand that.

I'm going to assume that everyone in this play is going to want glasses, because they are going to want a **prop** to play with. There is one person who must have glasses, because it's in the script, and beyond that, I'm thinking maybe four others might have glasses. And what do I do with that? I'll give the glasses to everyone who wants them in rehearsal. Then, bit by bit, I'll take them from the people who don't use them. But, one could have a pocket watch, if he is the kind of guy who has a pocket watch. Is he old-world? Is it his father's? Is it from Germany? I love that stuff. It makes the actor an individual, and I am really happy to do that.



What does it take to be a professional costume designer?

Krass: When I went into my first meeting to design a play, someone said, "What do you think of the play?" I was stunned that anybody wanted me to think about the play. I thought they wanted me to go get costumes. Any kind of training that's about reading plays, how to read a play or how to think about it and have your own reactions to it will prepare you for this field. The research is not hard, but what do you do with all of the research, all of the pictures? How do you choose which one? It depends what the play is about, how you feel about it and who the audience is. So, broad training in literature, historical culture and art is the most important thing. Clothing is a tool - in the same way that lumber or music is a tool - to tell the story. And that's what we're doing; we're telling a story.



Costume design research photos.



Questions & Exercises

Costume designer Michael Krass says that all the actors “are going to want a prop to play with.” Actors often use props to create stage business – something to *do* while the attention of the audience is directed at someone else, or just to keep active on stage, without drawing focus. Stage business creates a sense of realism, as actors create small habits, routines or tasks for their characters.

1. Before seeing the play, observe people in ordinary situations: meetings, waiting in line, chatting in the kitchen, sitting in traffic. With what sort of “business” do people occupy themselves while their primary attention is on something else? Make a list.
2. As you watch the play, take note of the business the actors have created. After the show, write down all the business you recall each character doing. Were these actions believable? Compare the list of real people’s business to the stage business. Discuss with your class or group what makes activity onstage appear “real” or “believable.”

Vocabulary

Naturalistic: Describes art that portrays all of reality, down to the minutest detail; often appears *less real* for its excruciating exactitude

Prop: Any item onstage that is not nailed down and with which a performer may interact

Realistic: Describes art that portrays the world as people perceive it

Sightline: The view of the stage from the seating in a theatre

Theatricalized: Transformed for the stage

Origins of the American Jury System



THERE IS AN ONGOING DEBATE in the American legal profession regarding the origin of trial by jury. Theorists do agree that the jury trial finds its roots in medieval England.

At that time, groups of **laymen**, not legal professionals, would not only decide a case, but also determine what type of proof was required to settle the dispute. Acceptable forms of evidence included direct testimony; written documentation; the endorsement of friends and neighbors; battle, in which the parties engaged in combat so that God would grant victory to the injured or innocent party; and ordeal, which required the accused to perform a difficult and painful task, believing that God would protect the innocent.

The earliest mention of the right of citizens to a jury trial appeared in the Magna Carta in 1215 CE. This precursor to an English constitution required the king to abide by certain laws in the treatment of the nobility and church officials, effectively granting them some civil liberties. Article 39 of the Magna Carta reads, “No free man shall be arrested, or imprisoned, or deprived of his property, or outlawed, or exiled, or in any way destroyed, nor shall we go against him or send against him, unless by legal judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land.”

Like many other former colonies, the United States, upon independence, adopted the British judicial system. Reforms were enacted by the Sixth (1791), Seventh (1791) and Fourteenth (1868) Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Although the U.S. Supreme Court still has not ruled on the viability of **dueling** to settle civil disputes, happily, the more violent forms of evidence long ago fell out of favor.

But Where Are the Women?

In 1953, while women were allowed to serve on juries in New York State, most were excused for reasons such as economic hardship, poor health, advanced age, a need to care for small children or the distance they lived from the courthouse. Some were disqualified from serving because they were not of voting age, not residents of the jurisdiction for some minimum time, unable to read and write English or had a felony conviction. Others – admittedly fewer among women – were exempt because of their occupations (doctor, lawyer, clergy). This is why the jury is all male in *Twelve Angry Men*.

By these means, women became virtually absent from the entire courtroom proceeding, and women’s voices were silenced in the making of common law. Since then, steps have been taken to correct the problem, and juries today are **impaneled** from a more representative cross-section of society – all races, genders, religions, etc.

In *Taylor v. Louisiana* (1979), the Supreme Court struck down the Louisiana Code of Criminal Procedure, which held that a woman should not be selected for jury service unless she had previously filed a written declaration of her desire to serve. The law was deemed unconstitutional because it applied only to women and was thus discriminatory, and additionally because a defendant has the right to a jury selected from a panel representing a fair cross-section of the community. Note that the jury itself does not have to represent a fair cross-section, just the panel from which the jury is selected.





Twelve Angry Men. Photography: Joan Marcus

Questions & Exercises

All twelve men have a history of how they deal with the world, how they deal with individuals: their prejudices. I think the interesting part is when those preconceived ideas have to be changed or looked at differently. How do you change a prejudice that is deep-rooted, that has been with you, even if you don't know it's there? And there's nobody on a jury that doesn't come with that. So, how do you take it to the next level and get out of that and yourself and really be able to look at it clearly?

– Scott Ellis, director of
Twelve Angry Men

They don't need any real big reason to kill someone, either. You know, they get drunk, and bang, someone's lying in the gutter. Nobody's blaming them. That's how they are. You know what I mean? Violent! Human life don't mean as much to them as it does to us.

– Juror Ten
in *Twelve Angry Men*

Justice and fairness are not the same. Often the outcome that the law deems just is not at all what a layperson would call fair. Following the verdict in the Rodney King trial, the public displayed its displeasure violently and destructively. Only the twelve jurors on the case know how the evidence swayed them. For a large portion of society, while justice *may* have been served, fairness certainly was not.

1. Look through newspapers, magazines or on the Internet to find an article about a court case and its verdict. Share the article with your group or class. Discuss whether the outcome is fair. Do different people define fairness differently? How would your group have settled the case? Can you come to a unanimous decision?
2. Have you ever been accused of something you did not do? How did you defend yourself? Were you able to prove your innocence? Write a two-person dialogue of the scene.

Vocabulary

Duel: A formal fight between two persons to settle a disagreement

Impanel: To select for jury duty

Layman: A person who is not a member of a particular specialist group

RESOURCES

Twelve Angry Men

Interested in knowing more
about *Twelve Angry Men* and the U.S. jury system?
Here are some websites, books and films to check out.



WEBSITES:

www.crfc.org/americanjury

Website of the Constitutional Rights Foundation of Chicago has information about the jury system in the United States, as well as the amendments passed on behalf of civil rights in the justice system.

www.law.umaryland.edu/conferences/conf42/12angrymen2.asp

University of Maryland's School of Law Library Resources for the Roundabout Theatre Company's production of *Twelve Angry Men*

www.infoplease.com/year/1953.html

More about the world in 1953



BOOKS:

In the Hands of the People: The Trial Jury's Origins, Triumphs, Troubles, and Future in American Democracy by William L. Dwyer (Thomas Dunne Books, 2002)

A federal district judge explores the current state of the American jury system, in terms understandable to laypeople.

Readings on Twelve Angry Men

edited by Russ Munyan (Greenhaven Press, 2000)

This companion volume to the play includes a biography of the playwright, interviews, criticism and commentary.

Reel Justice: The Courtroom Goes to the Movies by Paul Bergman and Michael Asimow (Andrews McMeel, 2006)

Two UCLA law professors dissect courtroom films, providing a legal analysis of the case that discusses evidence, legal procedures, testimonies, juries, validity of actions by the attorneys and more.



FILM & VIDEO:

Twelve Angry Men directed by Sidney Lumet (MGM, 1957)

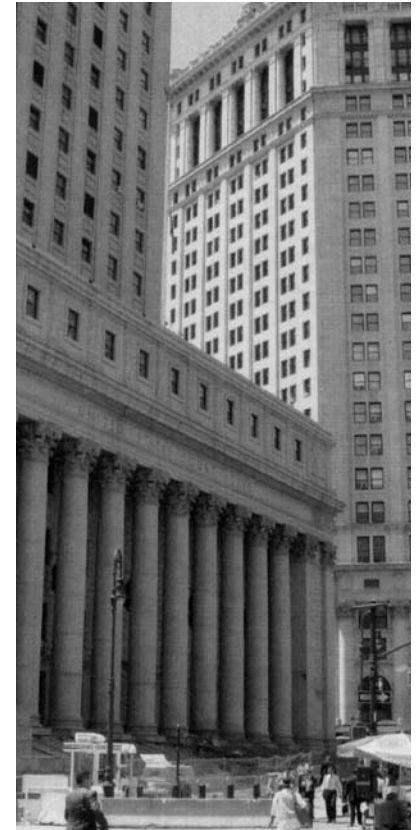
Filmed version of the play

To Kill a Mockingbird directed by Robert Mulligan (Universal, 1962)

Classic story of prejudice and racial tension in 1930s Alabama, centered on the trial of a black man accused of raping a white woman

Inherit the Wind directed by Stanley Kramer (MGM, 1960)

Courtroom drama about a teacher on trial for teaching evolution; much of the dialogue is taken directly from transcripts of the "Scopes monkey trial"



United States Courthouse, New York City.

About P.L.A.Y.

P.L.A.Y. Twelve Angry Men

NOW IN ITS 36th YEAR, Performing for Los Angeles Youth (P.L.A.Y.) is Center Theatre Group's award-winning youth theatre and theatre education program. P.L.A.Y. serves more than 35,000 young people, teachers and families annually through a variety of performances, residencies, discount ticket programs and innovative educational experiences. P.L.A.Y. offers programs that allow young people, teachers and families to attend productions at the Mark Taper Forum, Ahmanson and Kirk Douglas Theatres for low or no cost. P.L.A.Y. is dedicated to artistic excellence and innovation in its theatrical productions and to the development of young people's skills and creativity through the exploration of theatre, its literature, art and imagination.



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