

**TSSM**<sup>TM</sup>  
Creating VCE Success

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES  
**“Twelve Angry Men”**

Text guide by: Scott Langan

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TSSM

ACN 099 422 670

ABN 54 099 422 670

**A:** Level 14, 474 Flinders Street Melbourne VIC 3000

**T:** 1300 134 518

**F:** 03 97084354

**W:** [tssm.com.au](http://tssm.com.au)

**E:** [info@tssm.com.au](mailto:info@tssm.com.au)

SAMPLE

# Contents

PLAYWRIGHT NOTES .....	4
Aspect of Teaching and Learning: Social Values .....	4
HISTORICAL CONTEXT .....	6
Aspect of Teaching and Learning: Historical and/or cultural values .....	6
GENRE .....	8
Aspect of Teaching and Learning: Structure, features and conventions .....	8
Audience .....	9
STRUCTURE .....	11
STYLE .....	13
Symbols .....	13
SETTING .....	16
PLOT SUMMARY .....	18
CHARACTER PROFILES .....	23
Protagonists and Antagonists .....	23
Construction of Character .....	24
Relationships between Characters .....	25
THEMES AND ISSUES .....	26
Racial Prejudice .....	26
Justice and the Jury .....	27
Rationality and Subjectivity .....	29
Argument: dialectics, debate, or diatribe .....	30
Peer Pressure: the power of personality .....	31
Evidence Analysis Chart: .....	32
IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS .....	33
EXPLANATION OF EXAMINATION CRITERIA .....	35
SAMPLE ESSAY TOPICS .....	36
FINAL EXAMINATION TIPS .....	37
REFERENCES .....	38
References Used .....	38
References for Students .....	38

Note: All page numbers provided throughout this piece are taken from: *Twelve Angry Men*, by Reginald Rose, Samuel French Edition, London, 1977. ISBN 978 0 573 040122. (VCAA specified edition)

## PLAYWRIGHT NOTES

### ***Aspect of Teaching and Learning: Social Values***

*On completion of this Area of Study, the student should be able to analyse in writing, how Reginald Rose, in the play *Twelve Angry Men* constructs meaning, conveys ideas and values, and how the play is open to a range of interpretations.*

*Understanding the wider context of the playwright is important and necessary when writing analytical essays. Examination questions or School Assessed Coursework set for Area of Study 1: Reading and Responding will usually not solely focus on this aspect of the text study, but the best responses (essays) will incorporate details from their understanding of the wider context and social values of the text as supporting evidence for analysis and/or interpretation written in response to a specific text question.*

- Therefore, students should be familiar with the historical time period in which the text is set.*
- They should also be able to discuss the influence of wider cultural, social or political forces which were affecting the author at the time of writing/constructing the text.*
- They should be generally aware of the social and political influences which the author of the text had (or has) as a personal interest or are concerned with.*

Reginald Rose (December 10, 1920 – April 19, 2002)<sup>1</sup> was an American film and television writer most widely known for his work in the early years of television drama. His play *Twelve Angry Men* was adapted from his 1954 teleplay, which had the same title. He wrote this teleplay for the CBS *Studio One* anthology television series.

He was born in Manhattan, New York City, New York, in the United States of America. He attended Townsend High School and briefly attended City College (now part of the City University of New York) from 1937 - 1938. He served in the U.S. Army from 1942-46. Here, he attained the rank of First Lieutenant.

He sold his first teleplay, *Bus to Nowhere*, in 1950 to the live CBS dramatic anthology program *Studio One*. He wrote *Twelve Angry Men* four years later. Rose received an Emmy for this teleplay. He also received an Oscar nomination for the feature-length 1957 film adaptation.

Rose wrote for all three of the major broadcast networks from the 1950s through to the 1980s. He created and wrote for *The Defenders* in 1961, a weekly courtroom drama spin off from Rose's *Twelve Angry Men*. *The Defenders* was a weekly courtroom drama which won two Emmy awards for dramatic writing.

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia: Reginald Rose. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reginald\\_Rose](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reginald_Rose) (as accessed 1-10-2010)

His list of works for television is impressive, with the Internet Movie Database listing that he wrote for 65 different series or programs.<sup>2</sup> He also wrote five plays:

- *The Porcelain Year* (1950)
- *Twelve Angry Men* (1954)
- *Black Monday* (1962)
- *Dear Friends* (1968)
- *This Agony, This Triumph* (1972)

Rose was a prolific writer. A more comprehensive biography is found on The Museum of Broadcast Communications website.<sup>3</sup> Here, his work is described as being, “directed at the scrutiny of social institutions and mechanisms. Rose... tackled controversial social issues head-on.”<sup>4</sup> His play *Twelve Angry Men* is directly concerned with the social issue of prejudice.

Different forms of prejudice are explored through the interactions between the play’s characters, along with other social ills such as peer pressure, racial and social-economic stereotyping and the divisions which can come from differing levels of education. These prejudices are brought out and explored within the context of the American Judicial system - more specifically, the machinations or role of a twelve man jury in a murder trial.

Rose was married twice. His first wife was Barbara Langbart. They were married in 1943, whilst he was enlisted and in the midst of World War Two. They had four children, Jonathan, Richard, Andrew and Steven (twins). This marriage ended in divorce. He then married Ellen McLaughlin in 1963, with whom he had two children, Thomas and Christopher. He died in 2002 from complications of heart failure.

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<sup>2</sup> The Internet Movie Database: Reginald Rose. <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0741627/> (as accessed 1-10-2010).

<sup>3</sup> The Museum of Broadcast Communications website: Reginald Rose, U.S. Writer. <http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=rosereginal> (as accessed 1-10-2010). (should it be rosereginald)

<sup>4</sup> ‘Reginald Rose, U.S. Writer.’ Biography by Kevin Dowler. <http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=rosereginal> (as accessed 1-10-2010).(should it be rosereginald)