

Glen Ridge Middle School

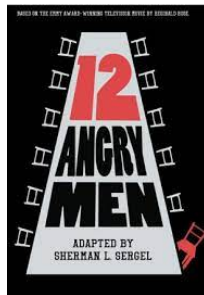
G & T NEWSLETTER

June 2021



12 Angry Men

MS G&T students read and discussed the play 12 Angry Men by Reginald Rose. To supplement our reading and discussions we viewed some pivotal scenes from the 1957 film version starring Henry Fonda. These served as springboards to discussions on many of the legal concepts that were integral as we moved forward in preparing for our Mock Trial. Key concepts include:



- **Jury of Peers**
- **Impartiality**
- **Reasonable Doubt**
- **Burden of Proof**
- **Reliability of Eyewitnesses**
- **Civil vs. Criminal**

Consider viewing the full film with your children this summer to get them talking more about their Mock Trial experience and all that they learned. This movie, although dated and filmed in black & white, is still relevant today in many ways.

As Common Sense Media states “Despite its age, this drama still has a lot to say about the principles on which the American justice system is based, as well as issues of prejudice.” As was done in class, be sure to acknowledge the fact that the jury is made up exclusively of white males due the time period it was filmed, and discuss the progress that has been made since, and the role that prejudice has and can still unfortunately play in our justice system.



Our Mock Trial

For most of the second semester, G&T students prepared for their Mock Trial. We worked on the case, **Symbol of Peace or Symbol of Death**, a past award winner from the NJ State Bar Foundation's Law Adventure competition for middle school students.

In this case, fictional MS student Shanti Pyrar and her family bring her school to court claiming they have violated her **first amendment rights** to free speech and religious expression. For Unity Day in her new school, Shanti wears a swastika, which is a Hindu peace symbol. Classmates are offended and upset. The principal asks her to refrain from wearing the symbol in school and when Shanti does so again, she is suspended.



What makes this an interesting case is that there are no easy and obvious answers. Do students have the same first amendment rights within school as citizens do in general? Do school administrators have the right to restrict what students say and wear in order to maintain a safe and peaceful learning environment? These are just some of the questions our students struggled with in developing their cases. Of course, they also had to research relevant legal precedents which inevitably led them to the historic Supreme Court ruling of the **Tinker v.s Des Moines** case.

Students worked in teams for either the **plaintiff** or the **defense** to first develop an overall strategy and then the various components for the trial. We viewed portions of a sample Mock Trial presented at the NJSBF in the past for inspiration. Then students wrote opening statements, a line of direct questioning for their own witnesses, cross examination questions for the opposing counsel's witnesses and eventually closing arguments. This required lots of brainstorming, team work, research and revision.



In the final weeks of school, each student was assigned a role as an attorney or witness and we rehearsed before presenting the trial to a select group of classmates who volunteered to be our jurors.



Summer - Time to Relax & Read!

Summer is a wonderful opportunity to read for pleasure. During the school year students are often too busy with required reading, school work and activities to devote much free time to reading books of their own choice.

Summer is the perfect time for them to choose books that genuinely interest them. Without the pressure of reading checks or related projects they may remember and rediscover the true joys of reading!



Consider signing up for the [GRPL Summer Reading Program](#) where students can now log and track their summer reading hours online through [Beanstack](#).

Try [Novelist](#) - This reading advisory site can make suggestions based on age appropriateness, preferred genres, previous favorites (If you like...) and more. If you have not previously logged into the school's EbscoHost databases you may be asked to enter the **User Name: glen** and **PW: ridge-21**.

Download the [Teen Book Finder App](#) from the American Library Association.

If your child is motivated by checklists and earning rewards, check out the [Mensa Reading Program](#).

Get out, Socialize & Explore

This summer more than ever, we should all be grateful to get out and go places we couldn't last year or just spend time with family and friends.

Apply for a [NJ State park Vax Pass](#) to take advantage of free access to 51 State parks with proof of vaccination.

