12 Angry Men

1. Identity card

Title: *12 Angry Men*

Director: Sidney Lumet

Date of release: 1957

Genre: Courtroom drama

Historical and Cultural Context: Released during the post-war period in the United States, the film reflects democratic values and the importance of justice, individual responsibility and critical thinking. Set almost entirely in a jury room, it explores prejudice, civic duty and the functioning of the American legal system.

2. Plot summary

In a nutshell: twelve jurors must decide whether a young man accused of murder is guilty. At first, eleven jurors vote to convict, but Juror 8 expresses reasonable doubt and encourages the group to re-examine the evidence. As the discussion progresses, hidden prejudices and personal biases emerge, leading the jurors to question both the facts and their own assumptions. Eventually, they reach a unanimous verdict of not guilty.

Key Moments:

- ➜ The first vote results in eleven guilty verdicts.
- ➜ Juror 8 questions the evidence.
- ➜ The jurors re-examine witness testimonies.
- ➜ Personal prejudices are exposed.
- ➜ The jury unanimously votes “not guilty.”

3. Main characters

Name	Role	Symbol
Juror 8	protagonist	justice, critical thinking
Juror 3	main opponent	anger, prejudice
Juror 10	biased juror	discrimination, intolerance
Juror 4	logical juror	reason
Juror 9	elderly juror	empathy, wisdom
The accused boy	defendant	justice, vulnerability

4. Major themes and links to the LLCER program

Première – Rencontres

How does the film illustrate this theme?

- ➜ The jurors confront different opinions and perspectives.
- ➜ Dialogue encourages reflection and mutual understanding.
- ➜ Encounters reveal both conflict and cooperation.

Key examples

- ➜ The jury's deliberations.
- ➜ Juror 8 persuading the others.
- ➜ The changing votes throughout the discussion.

Terminale – Arts and debates of ideas

How does the film illustrate this theme?

- ➜ The film defends justice, democracy and critical thinking.
- ➜ It challenges prejudice and the dangers of hasty judgment.
- ➜ Debate and dialogue become essential tools for reaching the truth.

Key examples

- ➜ Juror 8's insistence on reasonable doubt.
- ➜ Juror 10's racist speech.
- ➜ The final unanimous verdict.

5. Key quotes and key words

"It's not easy to stand alone against the ridicule of others."

"It's always difficult to keep personal prejudice out of a thing like this."

justice – prejudice – democracy – reasonable doubt – debate – critical thinking – responsibility

6. Author's message

- ➜ Justice depends on careful reasoning rather than prejudice.
- ➜ Every individual has a responsibility to think independently.
- ➜ Dialogue and debate are essential in a democratic society.
- ➜ A single person can make a difference by defending the truth.