

- note briefly that aspects of the relationship comment upon other important themes and ideas in the play.
- **Paragraph 2** – contextualise this relationship beside other important elements of the play (particularly those mentioned in the introduction):
 - discuss the notion of reasonable doubt – explain what it means, reference discussions from the text (e.g. 8th Juror's speech, p.53)
 - discuss attitudes of prejudice, using examples (e.g. 10th Juror's speech pp.52–3)
 - discuss the jury-room conflicts using direct evidence from text, including disagreements over the case and personal conflicts.

Paragraph 3 – explain how this relationship illustrates all other important elements of the play:

- 8th Juror is the character who most clearly understands 'reasonable doubt' and 3rd is the least willing to accept it – the clashes in their relationship represent the struggle to come to terms with the concept of reasonable doubt
- show how 3rd and 8th jurors represent extremes: 3rd tends towards stereotyping and prejudice, while 8th is more balanced, and their relationship embodies the effects of prejudice on decisions and interactions
- reference specific instances of conflict between 3rd and 8th jurors (such as the disagreement about what's 'possible', p.16), explain how these are primary examples of conflicts that arise in jury-room situations.

Sample conclusion

While there are multiple elements that can be seen as central in this play, the relationship between 3rd and 8th jurors is clearly the most important of these. Their relationship not only exemplifies Rose's central themes of decision-making in a judicial context, but symbolically represents the progression of the play. From the opening moments when they oppose each other in their opinions on the case, through the incidents of physical conflict between

them, to the play's conclusion when 3rd has accepted 8th's perspective and accepts his help to put on his coat, the shifts in this relationship reflect the larger narrative shifts in the play. The dynamics of the relationship symbolise the conflicts within the room, and through these characters Rose challenges audience members to confront their own beliefs and prejudices, imagining how we ourselves might have behaved in the room if we had been members of this jury.

SAMPLE ANSWER

'Twelve Angry Men presents the pessimistic view that all humans are flawed.' Discuss.

In *Twelve Angry Men*, Reginald Rose consistently demonstrates that humans are flawed creatures – from the twelve jurors to the prosecution's witnesses to the defendant himself, people are constantly revealing their weaknesses and imperfections. No characters in the play are faultless, and their various flaws underpin the actions and conflicts in the jury-room as well as the details of the murder case which form the narrative's basis. However, the play does not argue that human flaws are always cause for despair; rather, it advocates accepting the realities of our flaws so that we may carry on with our lives in the best way that we can.

The scope of human imperfection presented in the play is, indeed, extensive. The trial itself paints a bleak portrait of humanity: the crime in question is first degree murder – one of the ugliest imaginable acts one human can commit against another. Here, even the victim is not portrayed as innocent, but as a 'tough, cruel, primitive kind of man' – guilty of gambling and fighting, among other wrongs. The lawyers on the case, too, are described variously as 'just plain stupid', not doing their jobs thoroughly enough or lacking motivation to win the case.

Many other human flaws are identified in discussions of both defendant and witness testimonies. One example is inaccuracy of memory: the

defendant weakens his own alibi because he cannot recall details of a film he claims to have seen. Another example of flawed behaviour is the second witness's vanity, which results in potentially deceptive testimony: in court she tries to appear younger than she is, and her 'eyesight' (and therefore testimony) 'is in question' by the end of the play.

It is not just offstage characters who are shown to be imperfect. Each juror has deficiencies and less-than-ideal qualities, whether these emerge through their interactions with each other or their attitudes towards the trial. For example, 10th Juror is prejudiced, regularly using stereotypes to condemn the defendant without stopping to consider whether the boy really is a 'very big drinker' or a 'born liar'. Similarly, 3rd Juror is guilty of stereotyping the defendant based on age, and he defends his opinions and stereotypes violently in the jury-room, such as his near-attack on 8th Juror at the end of the first act. The play does not let a single character escape unflawed. Even 8th Juror, constructed as a gentle, admirable character and one with whom we should empathise, is not perfect. He himself admits that he 'broke the law' buying the switch-knife in order to make his point about reasonable doubt.

'Flaws' are not just clear-cut behaviours like prejudice, violence or crime. In many cases, characters' fallibilities are the result of qualities that are, of themselves, not necessarily considered negative. For example, in the jury-room discussions, when 8th Juror discredits the testimony of the first witness, he doesn't accuse the witness of lying. Instead, other jurors argue that he is a 'frightened, insignificant old man who has been nothing all his life', and perhaps these factors led him to unconsciously convince himself of his own testimony. His inaccurate testimony is not the result of intentional or malicious behaviour, but simply of basic human fallibility. The jurors, therefore, do not hold a grudge against him, nor does the play suggest that such flaws are evidence of a hopeless world. Instead we are reminded that behaviour is always complex and influenced by many variables, and that we should simply be aware of this.

The play examines flaws (whether of character, behaviour or ability) as innate human qualities. But this fact is not presented in a pessimistic way – human imperfection is never portrayed as evidence that there are

no positives. Rather, flaws are portrayed as basic facts of life. They may actually have their benefits, as we see from 8th Juror's speech reminding us that while prejudices interfere with truth, no 'real damage has been done here'. He argues that even the apparently flawed state of doubt can be a positive: a 'safeguard' against unfair convictions. He is optimistic that the jurors have made the best decision they can, under the circumstances. This is supported by his gentle gestures of compassion towards 3rd Juror at the end of the play, as he helps him with his jacket. Rose is careful to leave us with this optimistic image as the final commentary from the play, ensuring that we do not see human flaws in a pessimistic way.

Even 3rd Juror, who holds such a pessimistic view of young people, is forced to change his vote by the end of the play, and to conclude that despite his flaws, the defendant may not be guilty. While the play paints a striking picture of a deeply flawed society, Rose does not encourage us to feel pessimistic about this. His central character, 8th Juror, is never worn down by others' (or his own) faults, but instead works hard to consider all reasonable possibilities and give his fellow humans the benefit of the doubt. *Twelve Angry Men* ultimately leaves its audience feeling hopeful about a flawed world.