

12 Angry Men: Writing a Persuasive Position Paper

Your task: Write about a problem raised by the events or circumstances in the 12 Angry Men juror room. Think of your position paper as having the following title:

“The Problem with...”

You may choose any topic relevant to the play that allows you to argue a position.

Potential Topics (choose one or create your own):

- The problem with eyewitness testimony
- the problem with the death penalty
- The problem with the jury system
- The problem with bias in the jury room
- The problem with _____ (fill in the blank)

Writing Guidelines:

- Make sure your persuasive piece has an informative, catchy title.
- The piece should be written in a structured manner, with a clear introduction, multiple body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Please share your piece on my “Turn in Papers” webpage.
- The introduction paragraph should be lively and creative. Remember that your first line is the hook that grabs your reader’s attention. Make it interesting and worthwhile to read. Transition to your position / thesis statement, which should appear at the end and offer a crystal-clear statement of your position.
- The body paragraphs should contain 2-3 reasons your chosen topic is problematic. Body paragraphs should argue and reflect, using reasons and evidence.
- One body paragraph should explore one reason your problem may be controversial and viewed differently by others, with a rebuttal / explanation afterwards.
- Your concluding paragraph should revisit your main argument with passion. Finish with a final, memorable line to help your reader think deeply and be convinced.

This persuasive piece should:

1. Be written in the **third person**
2. Include at least **three direct quotations** from the play or film.
3. Embed **each of Aristotle’s three argumentative appeals at least once**
4. Offer **statistics and facts** from an outside source, and include citation.

Topic Choice due _____ (12 pts)

Rough Draft due _____ (15 pts)

Final Draft due _____ (40 pts)

12 Angry Men: Writing a Persuasive Opinion Piece

Name _____

Date _____

Class Hour _____

Topic Choice:

I will write about “The Problem with _____”.

Two reasons that I think _____ is a problem:

1.

2.

One reason other people may think _____ is not a problem:

1.

Three examples and quotations that I can use from 12 Angry Men are:

Example	Quotation
a.	
b.	
c.	

One outside, reliable source that I can cite in my paper is: _____

A statistic or fact from this source is: _____

(____ / 12 points)

How to Write a Position Paper (from the Xavier University Library)

The purpose of a position paper is to generate support on an issue. It describes a position on an issue and the rationale for that position. The position paper is based on facts that provide a solid foundation for your argument.¹ In the position paper you should:

- Use evidence to support your position, such as statistical evidence or dates and events.
- Validate your position with authoritative references or primary source quotations.
- Examine the strengths and weaknesses of your position.
- Evaluate possible solutions and suggest courses of action.

Choose an issue where there is a clear division of opinion and which is arguable with facts and inductive reasoning. You may choose an issue on which you have already formed an opinion. However, in writing about this issue you must examine your opinion of the issue critically.² Prior to writing your position paper, define and limit your issue carefully. Social issues are complex with multiple solutions. Narrow the topic of your position paper to something that is manageable. Research your issue thoroughly, consulting experts and obtaining primary documents. Consider feasibility, cost-effectiveness and political/social climate when evaluating possible solutions and courses of action.³ The following structure is typical of a position paper:

- An introduction
 - Identification of the issue
 - Statement of the position
- The body
 - Background information
 - Supporting evidence or facts
 - A discussion of both sides of the issue
- A conclusion
 - Suggested courses of action
 - Possible solutions

The **introduction** should clearly identify the issue and state the author's position. It should be written in a way that catches the reader's attention.

The **body** of the position paper may contain several paragraphs. Each paragraph should present an idea or main concept that clarifies a portion of the position statement and is supported by evidence or facts. Evidence can be primary source quotations, statistical data, interviews with experts, and indisputable dates or events. Evidence should lead, through inductive reasoning, to the main concept or idea presented in the paragraph. The body may begin with some background information and should incorporate a discussion of both sides of the issue.

The **conclusion** should summarize the main concepts and ideas and reinforce, without repeating, the introduction or body of the paper. It could include suggested courses of action and possible solutions.⁴

https://www.xavier.edu/library/students/documents/position_paper.pdf

(from Popular Science)

The Problem with Cancer-Sniffing Dogs By Sara Chodosh

Your canine pal won't have a job at your local hospital

Your dog just wants to be a good boy. That's what makes him great at fetch and sitting for treats. But it's also part of why he's unlikely to have a job screening patients for cancer. It's all a game to your dog. He finds the right sample, he gets the treat. That makes dogs great at finding the sample--their noses can hone in on a characteristic pattern of smells associated with certain types of cancers better than any current technology. It also makes them expensive and time-consuming. And if a cancer screen needs to be anything, it's affordable and efficient.

"Mostly with our dogs, we think it's a numbers game," says Cynthia Otto, Director of the [Penn Vet Working Dog Center](#) at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Veterinary Medicine. Dogs can learn to identify the odor of cancer, she says, but it requires intensive training and the testing process isn't quick. People in third world countries contact Otto about these studies because their accuracy rates are so impressive, not realizing how much time and money go into training just one dog. The whole point of screening, though, is to be able to test lots of people. And if you're going to test lots of people, you'd better make sure that your screen can distinguish between people who definitely have cancer, and people who definitely don't. Screens that give too many false negatives or positives aren't useful.

False negatives give you a bunch of people who actually have cancer, but are told they don't because the screening test was negative. False positives give you people who don't have cancer, but are told they might, and undergo many more tests only to determine that they were fine all along. "For a screening test, it is crucial to rule something out," says Klaus Hackner, a researcher and physician who studies dogs detecting cancer in breath samples at Krems University in Austria. "If you can't rule something out, you need to do more tests." He says it's not clear that dogs would be able to provide a high enough accuracy to be a reliable screen, one that wouldn't require more tests. It might sound obvious, but it needs to be said that dogs are not machines. Some days the dogs work better than others, says Otto. Unlike human judges, dogs work better before lunch than after it, but having a test that doesn't work well after eating seems impractical and unsafe. "They have all of these influences that can throw them off, and we may not recognize it," she says. "We don't want to risk somebody's life on that."

That's not to say that we can't learn a lot from dogs. Canine noses can detect much smaller amounts of scent than any man-made technology and there is a lot of scientific evidence for dogs' ability to identify cancerous samples. They're clearly detecting something, we're just not sure what it is. Urine, breath, and direct biopsy samples all seem to have some characteristic odor that humans are so far unable to pick up on. By looking at the pattern of smells in samples that dogs can correctly identify as cancerous, researchers can learn what the chemical signature is and design an electronic way to test for it. They're almost too good at identifying things. Otto says her team has to constantly train with new samples because the dogs start to learn individual scents. You can't explain to a dog that you want them to identify the cancer smell, not the person's particular scent. But that's not how a lot of studies have tested the dogs. Two of the major papers published on canine detection just looked at whether the dogs could find the one cancerous sample out of five. Dogs are great at that task--they score in the 99 percent accuracy range. But it's not a screen.

When tested in a scenario much more similar to a screen, like in [Hackner's recent study in the Journal of Breath Research](#) and a [prior one from 2013](#), the reliability drops. Hackner's group found a sensitivity rate of 78.6 percent, meaning nearly one in four samples were false negatives--and a specificity rate of just 34.4 percent, making almost two-thirds of the samples false positives. Even when dogs are working well, their accuracy isn't 100 percent. [Bomb](#) and drug sniffing dogs have an 85-95 percent accuracy rate (not to mention their [tendency to unconsciously reflect their handlers' racial prejudices](#)). Search and rescue dogs are generally more effective, but also suffer from emotional problems.

These dogs need the reward of finding people or they can get depressed. During the 9/11 search and rescue effort, emergency responders had to stage fake body finds so that the [dogs](#) could be rewarded. Cancer screening dogs need the same thing to avoid stress. Changes to the methodology--like hiding positive samples in the lineup to give a reward--might help the dogs perform better, explains Hackner. It seems unlikely that they will ever get good enough or require so little training as to be a helpful cancer screen. But researchers remain optimistic about how valuable dogs can be to studying the scent of cancer. We just always have to be conscious of the fundamental truth about our canine friend, says Hackner: "He just wants to be a good dog."

The Problem With Chocolate

BY TARA PARKER-POPE

Most people have heard that chocolate is good for you. But now, the medical journal *Lancet* is bursting the chocolate bubble. Just in time for the holidays, a [Lancet editorial](#) published today notes that there won't be a "truffle treatment" for heart disease any time soon. In fact, the editors point out that the very thing that makes chocolate good for you — the antioxidants called flavanols — also make chocolate taste bitter. As a result, confectionery makers often take out the flavanols, stripping the chocolate of its main health-promoting properties. Worse, labels usually don't tell you whether your chocolate comes with or without flavanols, making it tough to know if a particular piece of chocolate has any health benefits at all.

This depressing news comes just a month after *Circulation*, the medical journal for the American Heart Association, created a stir when it reported a [study](#) of 22 heart transplant patients who were given a dose of dark chocolate or fake chocolate. Just two hours after eating the real thing, patients had measurable improvements in blood flow and vascular function and less clotting, compared to placebo chocolate eaters, who experienced no changes.

The *Circulation* report is the latest in a string of studies touting the benefits of chocolate. The flavonoids in chocolate, which include the antioxidants called flavanols, are similar to those found in tea, red wine and some fruits and vegetables, foods also known for their heart-healthy effects. To boost your chances of getting a flavanol-rich bar, the best bet is to look for very dark chocolate with few added ingredients, notes Dr. Jacob Shani, chairman of the Cardiac Institute at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, NY. The darker the chocolate, the higher it's likely to be in flavonoids, according to the February [issue](#) of *Mayo Clinic Health Letter*. A typical bar of dark chocolate contains an average of 53.5 milligrams of flavonoids. A milk chocolate bar contains less than 14 milligrams, while white chocolate doesn't have any, according to the Mayo report.

But even if your chocolate is loaded with flavanols, it won't be a wonder drug. Most studies show only modest benefits from chocolate, and even though it's good for you, you still have to pay attention to calories and fat.

"If you ask me what's more important, a little physical activity like walking or eating the chocolate, go take your walk," said Dr. Shani. "I don't think in the very near future we're going to tell every patient go ahead and eat lots of chocolate. That would be too good to be true."

The Problem With Parole By The Editorial Board

States that set out a decade ago to trim [prison costs](#) have learned that success lies in a few areas — rolling back draconian sentencing that drove up prison populations in the first place, and remaking parole and probation systems, which have, in numerous cases, sent as many or even more people to jail for rule violations [as the courts do for new crimes](#). Significant progress has been made on both fronts. Yet New York, a national leader in reducing its prison population, could do much more to reform its parole and probation systems.

These systems were established across in the United States in the 19th century. The premise was that steering people who commit minor offenses to probation, rather than prison, and shortening prison sentences with parole in exchange for good conduct further the goal of rehabilitation. But that notion fell out of favor after the country embraced mass incarceration in the late 20th century, driving up the prison population from about 200,000 at the start of the 1970s to a peak of 1.6 million at the end of the 2000s. The woefully underfunded parole system fell in line with the jail-first agenda. Parole officers, who were buried under massive caseloads, sent parolees back inside for technical violations, like failing drug tests, missing curfew or socializing with friends they had been forbidden to see. [With nearly five million people in the nation under supervision](#) — more than twice the number housed in prisons and jails — the parole and probation systems have become what corrections researchers now describe as a significant driver of recidivism.

Even law-and-order states have grasped the need to refashion so-called hair-trigger community supervision systems that reflexively and unnecessarily send people to prison for minor infractions that have no bearing on public safety. Some have hired additional [case workers to make their systems more effective](#), have given newly released inmates better access to drug treatment or mental health care, or have developed community sanctions that send only the most troubled or repeat-prone offenders back to prison. A recent analysis [by the reform-focused Council of State Governments Justice Center](#) found that states like Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas have seen dramatic reductions over the last decade in recidivism connected to probation or parole. Then there is New York. The state, which has closed more than a dozen prisons over the last decade alone, is a national standout when it comes to sentencing reform. But [a new study from Columbia University's Justice Lab](#) calls on state lawmakers to do significantly more to address the problems with the community supervision system, which come at a considerable cost to the local jails where most of the people locked up for state parole violations are held.

At a time when the number of people being detained in New York City jails is shrinking, state parole violators represent the only subgroup of offenders that is growing. Between 2014 and 2018, for example, the percentage of people held on technical violations of parole increased by 15 percent, even as the overall jail population declined by 21 percent. A November 2017 snapshot count of city inmates found 1,460 people in New York City's jails for state parole violations. If this were a stand-alone group, the report's authors note, it would be larger than the population of any jail in the state, with the exception of New York City's sprawling Rikers Island complex. Among other things, this population is an obstacle to the city's goal [of closing that historically troubled complex altogether](#). Gov. Andrew Cuomo has called on the State Legislature to make changes that would help those in custody for parole violations, such as abolishing money bail for people accused of misdemeanors, eliminating state supervision fees for people on parole and reviewing how child support is calculated for people incarcerated for more than six months.

But the Columbia study calls on the Legislature to do a lot more. It recommends that the state adopt several common-sense reforms, most of which have already shown promise in other states. These include: adopting a system of graduated sanctions and rewards, instead of automatically dumping people into jail for minor infractions; capping jail terms for minor parole violations; requiring a judicial hearing before parole officers can jail people accused of technical violations; shortening parole terms for people who stay out of trouble for specified periods of time; and using the savings reaped from cutting the prison population to expand education, substance abuse and housing opportunities for parolees, who need considerably more help than they're getting to forge stable lives in their communities. These proposals would be a heavy lift in the conservative New York State Senate. But they make good policy and economic sense, and would bring the state to the forefront of the parole reform movement.

The Trouble with Second-Hand Clothes BY TANSY E HOSKINS

American rapper Macklemore's hugely popular anthem "Thrift Shop," which has been viewed over 450 million times on YouTube, is a cheeky tribute to the joys of shopping on the cheap, featuring mountains of second-hand coats, sweaters, jackets, jeans, jumpsuits, dresses, shoes and shirts. On the surface, the recycling of used clothes, often charitably donated, means old garments don't go to waste, while new owners get a bargain. It seems like a "win-win" situation that couldn't be more ethically sound. And as the Christmas season approaches, millions of Westerners will soon flock to charity shops to donate their second-hand clothes. But on closer inspection, the reselling of clothes is more complex than one might think, posing difficult questions for those hoping to do good by donating their old clothes.

Contrary to its homespun image, the second-hand clothing industry is dominated by what Dr Andrew Brooks and Prof David Simon at the University of London have called "hidden professionalism." The majority of donated clothing is sold to second-hand clothing merchants, who sort garments, then bundle them for resale, usually outside the country in which the clothing was originally donated. In a paper entitled "Unravelling the Relationships between Used-Clothing Imports and the Decline of African Clothing Industries," Brooks and Simon quote a representative of UK-based anti-poverty organisation Oxfam Wastesaver, who states that 300 bales of second-hand clothing can be sold in Africa for around £25,000 (about \$40,000 at current exchange rates), while transport costs are just £2,000. Even taking into account the costs of things like collection and processing, these numbers suggest that the selling of second-hand clothing can be a lucrative affair, especially as the clothing being sold has often been charitably donated for free.

But it's not just the "hidden professionalism" of the used clothing business — and the resulting gap between costs and resale prices — that hurts markets like sub-Saharan Africa. The flood of castoffs collected via second-hand clothing schemes (along with the rise of cheap Chinese apparel imports) have also helped to undermine Africa's own fledgling textiles and clothing manufacturing industry, says Cambridge economist Ha-Joon Chang.

The second-hand clothing market has a negative impact in donor markets, as well. Consumers in the global North throw away vast quantities of clothing every year. But, ultimately, recycling tackles the symptom not the cause — and gives consumers a false sense of security that the rate at which they are consuming and disposing of clothing is at all sustainable. The truth is, "fast fashion" is a deeply unsustainable model. And by emphasising recycling rather than tackling the root cause of why people continue to buy and dispose of larger and larger quantities of lighter, thinner and less well-made clothing, consumers are reassured that they can continue shopping as normal.

"There is now this notion that fashion is just a commodity, and that we are just consumers," laments Dilys Williams, director of the Centre for Sustainable Fashion at the London College of Fashion. "It doesn't do justice to us or to fashion. Fashion should be about cherishing clothes and creating an identity, [but today it's] based on constant adrenalin and the excitement of purchasing. There is no anticipation or dreaming. Nothing lasts or is looked after. We each have a mini-landfill in our closets." But why stop and think when the charity shop or recycling bank is there to take care of the mess?