

The Emerald

by D. Van Dalsem

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The old woman's hand trembled as she dropped the small box into Jenny's outstretched hand. Her voice quavered as she explained that the contents had come all the way over from Ireland with her own mother in 1912. Jenny leaned in close as her grandmother whispered, "Your great-grandmother always kept it in that sad little cardboard box. I don't know why. I didn't even know it existed until she died thirty-two years ago. It was right here in this hospital that she gave it to me just before she passed on. I opened the box to look at it that very day and took it right home and put it in your father's safe. I never looked at it again. It's a shame that such a beautiful thing has spent so much time hidden away in such a dark place. People should see it and enjoy it. I give it to you now. Don't make the mistake I made. Don't lock it away in a safe. Wear it everyday so people can see it and enjoy it."

"I will Grandma — I promise I will," replied Jenny softly just as her grandmother closed her eyes and lapsed into a deep and restful sleep.

"The doctor gave her a sedative just before you came. I guess it must be working," interjected the nurse as she lowered the lights. "She'll sleep for hours. You should probably go now."

Jenny stepped into the clean, bright light of the hallway and looked down at the tiny, shabby box in her hand. Curious, she wiggled the tight-fitting lid until it came free. Jenny gasped in surprise as she stared down at the most perfect emerald ring. "That is gorgeous! Did you ever see such a magnificent stone?" questioned the nurse who had followed Jenny out into the hall. "Oh honey, you'd better put that in the hospital safe — it must be worth a fortune."

"No — my grandmother made me promise never to put it away like that. I'll be careful with it," stated Jenny flatly as she slipped it on her finger. It was a perfect fit.

All the way home Jenny wondered how her great-grandmother could have come to own such an expensive piece of jewelry. Everyone in the family had always lived frugally. They weren't exactly poor, but they certainly couldn't afford precious stones like the resplendent one gleaming on her finger.

Jenny walked up the three creaky steps to the porch of her house just as her mother was bustling out the door. Jenny started to show her the ring, but her mother interrupted in an impatient and fretful tone, "I have to get to the hospital, honey. Grandma's taken a turn for the worse. Dinner's in the oven. Stay here with your brother. He's in charge, so you mind him, and please, you two don't get in another fight!"

This put Jenny in a sour mood. "He's in charge, so you mind him!" mocked Jenny sarcastically. It bothered Jenny that whenever they were home alone her parents always put her twin brother in charge. "It's totally unfair," Jenny whined to herself, "I'm older by fifteen minutes — why should he be the one in charge all the time?"

Just then her twin Jason entered the room. "Hi, freak-face. How's Grandma? I'm going over to Bobby's. I'll be back before Mom gets home. You stay here. If Mom calls don't tell her I'm gone. If you tell I'll break your face!" threatened Jason as he threw his varsity jacket over his shoulder and sauntered out the door.

Jenny sat down to wait and stared at the beautiful ring on her finger. She was fascinated by the deep, green color of the flawless emerald and the gleaming gold band. "Grandma's right," said Jenny out loud, "people should see such a beautiful stone." She jumped up and trotted out the door and down the street toward the home of her friend,

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Cindy Patterson. Because her family was rich Cindy had lots of nice jewelry, but she had nothing as fine as the superb emerald ring on Jenny's finger. Cindy would be so jealous.

Jenny was right — the envy in Cindy's eyes was obvious. She had never seen such a magnificent gem. She wanted to take it up to the mall where her sister worked and show it to her. Jenny agreed and the two of them set off for the shopping center.

The mall was only two blocks away. As they crossed the parking lot, they noticed an old man standing a few feet away from the taxicabs just outside the entrance to the mall. He was digging through a large metal trashcan. His clothes were tattered, filthy and much too large. He wore a red tennis shoe on one foot and an old, scuffed cowboy boot on the other. The old man was talking to himself as he rummaged through the trash. The girls giggled as they raced past him and into the mall. The old man really gave Jenny the creeps.

Cindy's sister was busy and it was getting close to sundown so the two friends decided to skip it and walk home together. As they left the mall, Jenny noticed that the strange old man was still rummaging through the trash and talking to himself.

"That old man gives me the creeps," said Jenny. "I don't want to walk home. He might follow us. Let's take a taxi. You can pay for it — you're so rich."

"No, I'm not paying for a cab. You're being silly. He's just a harmless old man," argued Cindy. "Besides, we're only two blocks from home!"

"Don't be so cheap! I want to take a cab!" replied Jenny angrily as she turned on her heel and stomped off to the nearby cab stand. Cindy just shrugged her shoulders and walked away toward home.

Jenny walked up to the cab driver who was standing next to the taxi parked at the curb. Because the old man was so near, she whispered that she had no money with her and asked him to drive her the two blocks to her house because she was afraid of the weird old man digging in the trash. She said she could pay him when she got home.

"Sure I'll take you there, but it will cost you five dollars and you have to pay in advance," replied the cabby.

"I just told you, I don't have any money with me!" exclaimed Jenny.

"Too bad. No money, no ride," scoffed the cab driver.

Jenny angrily snatched the emerald from her finger and shoved it in the cab driver's face. "You can hold onto this expensive emerald ring until I get home and get you your money you greedy jerk. This ring is worth a fortune!" she screamed.

The cab driver took the ring, glanced at it briefly and scoffed, "It's probably junk jewelry and you can walk home you rude little brat!" He tossed the ring back to Jenny, but he threw it a little too hard and it sailed over her head and into the trash can. Jenny stood there in absolute horror as the old man reached in, picked it up, put it on his pinkie finger and walked away muttering to himself.

Jenny raced inside the mall and reported the episode to a security guard. The guard doubted her story about the glorious emerald, but called the police anyway. A policeman responded to the call and searched the mall and the parking lot, but the old man was gone. Jenny had lost her magnificent emerald ring.

Initial Response Sheet

Which person was the **most** responsible for the loss of the emerald ring? Who was the **least** responsible? Jenny has filed a lawsuit to recover the value of her lost ring. Your jury must decide the degree of guilt for each person listed below.

Put a 1 on the line to the left of the person you feel is **most** responsible. Put a 2 by the person you feel is the next most responsible. Continue until everyone listed below has a number, 1 through 7. In each box write brief notes explaining why you feel this way. You will need to share your reasons with the rest of the jury.

_____ Grandmother

_____ Jenny

_____ Jenny's mother

_____ Jason

_____ Cindy

_____ Old man

_____ Cab driver

Jury Award Recommendation

The judge has determined that the ring was worth \$10,000. Your jury must now reach a consensus as to the exact dollar amount each person should pay. The most responsible person will have to pay the largest amount of money. Write the amount each person must pay on the line to the left of the names. All amounts must add up to \$10,000.

In each box write a sentence defending your jury's final consensus. You will need to explain your reasoning to the judge.

\$ _____ Grandmother Any amount she is responsible for can be collected from her estate after her death.

\$ _____ Jenny Any amount she is responsible for will reduce the total award from \$10,000.

\$ _____ Jenny's mother

\$ _____ Jason

\$ _____ Cindy

\$ _____ Old man The old man has not been found. You can award a dollar amount against him, but Jenny will have to find him to collect it.

\$ _____ Cab driver

\$10,000 = total award

Lesson Guide — “The Emerald” — Teacher Resource

Anticipatory Set: Teacher reviews the jury experience as portrayed in the video *Twelve Angry Men* and solicits student observations on the jury experience. On Board — “What’s it like to serve on a jury?” and “What are the traits of a good juror?”

Objective: TLW actively participate in a group discussion to analyze a complex situation and persuasively express opinions to reach a unanimous group consensus. The learner will evaluate the social interactions and processes inherent in juries.

Input & Task Analysis:

1. List everything the learner needs to know.
2. *Italicize items to be reviewed or taught.*
3. Number the items in teaching sequence.

TL must (1) listen and read for significant detail, (2) verbally express opinions clearly, (3) *listen and consider all differing opinions*, (4) *compromise appropriately*, (5) *seek out the opinions of everyone*. (On Board — “Everybody speaks & Everybody listens.”)

Learning Activities: The whole group listens to an oral reading of “The Emerald”, a teacher written short story. Students independently make judgments and record their opinions about the relative responsibility of characters in the story.

Guided Practice: Students break into jury groups to share and compare their opinions and character rankings. Groups then discuss and interact in an orderly **manner to reach a unanimous group consensus**. Group recorder completes a summary of the consensus to share with the entire class.

Closure: Each jury group shares its consensus with the entire class in turn followed by a general class discussion to evaluate the success of the experience in simulating probable jury experiences.

Independent Practice: TLW analyze and evaluate their experiences within the jury group by completing reflective responses composed by the teacher. Responses will include the following:

How much trouble did your jury have reaching consensus? Did everyone participate equally in the discussions? Did anyone attempt to dominate the group? Was everyone’s opinion given fair consideration? Did you feel pressured by the group to change your opinion? Did you change your mind on anything because of peer pressure or because of well-reasoned arguments? What are some advantages of trial by jury? What are some disadvantages of trial by jury? If you were on trial and you were innocent, would you prefer to be tried by a judge or a jury? Why? If you were on trial for a crime and you were guilty, would you prefer to be tried by a judge or a jury? Why? The right of trial by jury is recognized twice in the Bill of Rights. Obviously the Founders felt it was very important — why?

Lesson Plan — “The Emerald”

Content Standard: TLW analyze fundamental liberties ensured by the Bill of Rights (CA SS 8.2.6).

Skill: Speaking / listening — TLW participate respectfully in the exchange of ideas; TLW restate opponents point of view (CNUSD Academic Standard for grade 8 Language Arts).

Objective: TLW actively participate in a group discussion to analyze a complex situation and persuasively express opinions to reach a unanimous group consensus. The learner should gain experience and appreciation of the social interactions and processes inherent in juries.

Input & Task Analysis:

1. List everything the learner needs to know.
2. *Italicize items to be reviewed or taught.*
3. Number the items in teaching sequence.

TL must (1) listen and read for significant detail, (2) verbally express opinions clearly, (3) *listen and consider all differing opinions*, (4) *compromise appropriately*, (5) *seek out the opinions of everyone*.

Learning Activities: The whole group listens as the teacher reads “The Emerald.” Teacher distributes one copy each of the *Initial Response Sheet*, and directs students to record their initial evaluations of each person's responsibility in the loss of the ring. Students break into jury groups of about 12 to share and compare their opinions and character rankings. Juries are told they must reach a unanimous consensus before marking their *Final Response Sheets*. Groups then discuss and interact in an orderly **manner to reach a unanimous group consensus**. Only after group consensus is reached may students mark their *Final Response Sheets*.

Closure: Each jury group shares its consensus with the whole group in turn followed by a general class discussion to evaluate the success of the experience in simulating probable jury experiences.

Extension: TLW analyze and evaluate their experiences within the jury group by composing reflective responses to the following questions.

- 1) How much trouble did your jury have reaching consensus?
- 2) Did everyone participate equally in the discussions?
- 3) Did anyone attempt to dominate the group?
- 4) Was everyone's opinion given fair consideration?
- 5) Did you feel pressured by the group to change your opinion?
- 6) Did you change your mind on anything because of peer pressure or because of well- reasoned arguments?
- 7) What are some advantages of trial by jury?
- 8) What are some disadvantages of trial by jury?
- 9) If you were on trial and you were innocent, would you prefer to be tried by a judge or a jury? Why?
- 10) If you were on trial for a crime and you were guilty, would you prefer to be tried by a judge or a jury? Why?
- 11) The right of trial by jury is recognized twice in the Bill of Rights. Obviously the Founders felt it was very important — why?