

Open your Class
Minds on Trial: Great cases in Law and Psychology

You are on the Jury

Directions: With a small group, discuss each question that you may be presented with as a juror to determine the outcome of the case. What other information would you need to make your decision? (All case study examples are taken from *Minds on Trial*)

1. John Hinckley is well known for shooting President Ronald Reagan, but the details of his life are less well known. As a teenager, he was a loner who did not have friends and isolated himself playing guitar who hoped to be a songwriter. He became obsessed with guns and the violent film *Taxi Driver* as well as the film's star Jodi Foster. He wrote Foster letters and poems and spoke to her by phone on a number of occasions. John's psychiatrist encouraged his parents to stop paying John's bills and allowing him to be jobless; they followed this request. Shortly thereafter, he shot President Reagan and wounded three others in an attempt to impress Foster. Experts disagreed on the disorder from which Hinckley suffered and diagnoses ranging from schizophrenia to narcissism were posed. In order to be found innocent by reason of insanity, Hinckley had to lack the capacity to understand that what he did was wrong. Indicate what information you would need as a juror to determine if Hinckley was innocent by reason of insanity?

2. John Demjanjuk worked as a mechanic near Cleveland, Ohio. He immigrated to the United States in 1951. In 1975, his name appeared on a list of suspected Nazi war criminals. Damajanjuk was identified by a survivor of the Treblinka death camp as "Ivan the Terrible", a sadistic guard who ran the gas chambers and tortured prisoners in camp. Demjanjuk claimed he did not know about the events at Treblinka until after the war ended. He claimed to have been a member of the Russian army who was held as a POW during most of the war. There were two small photographs and five eyewitnesses who claimed that Demjanjuk was in fact "Ivan the Terrible". As a jury member, what other information would you need or what would you consider in determining a verdict in the case?

3. Mike Tyson was one of the most decorated boxers in history. In a match for the heavy weight championship in 1997 Tyson committed a major foul when he bit off a piece of the ear of his opponent Evander Holyfield. Tyson had a rough upbringing in New York, which eventually placed him in a residential facility for children with behavior problems. He was taken in by foster parents, who introduced him to boxing and he was devastated when his foster father died. In 1992, Tyson was convicted on charges of rape and sentenced to six years in prison. After the Holyfield fight Tyson's boxing license was removed and in order to reinstate his license he needed to convince the committee that a violent attack would not occur again. If you were a member of the committee, what other information would you need to determine if the license should be reinstated? What questions would you have?

4. Daryl Atkins had a history of criminal activity including over dozen felonies including larceny, burglary, and robbery. On August 16th, 1996 Atkins and a friend had been drinking and using drugs when they borrowed a gun from a friend and walked to a 7-11 store to rob someone in order to buy more alcohol. They accosted Eric Nesbitt and drove him to an ATM where they forced him to take out cash and then killed him. Atkins's friend pointed to Adkins as the shooter, and as such Adkins was sentenced with capital murder and the death penalty was considered as a possible sentence. Atkins was tested on the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WISC) and scored a 59. In addition to the IQ score, one's level of mental capacity should factor in limitations in present functioning. According to interpretations of the 8th Amendment, which addresses cruel and unusual punishments, those who are deemed and intellectually disabled cannot be given the death penalty. As a member of the jury, what other information do you need to be able to determine if Daryl Atkins meets to criteria for intellectual disability?
