

# Parole Board Simulation

## **TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS (DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS)**

### Purpose of the Activity:

This simulation immerses students in the difficult moral, legal, and civic decisions faced by parole boards. Students must weigh rehabilitation, accountability, public safety, and victim impact while recognizing that parole decisions often involve incomplete information and deep emotional consequences.

### Teacher Guidance:

Encourage students to reference specific evidence from the case files. Remind them that emotional responses are natural, but decisions must ultimately be justified using reasoned argument and civic principles.

# STUDENT PAGES

## Instructions for Students

You will serve as members of a parole board. Your responsibility is to evaluate whether each inmate should be released back into society or remain incarcerated.

There are no easy or obvious answers. You must consider rehabilitation, justice, public safety, and the lasting impact of crime on victims and communities.

## Cases for Parole Review

### Case 1: John Jones

Conviction: Second-degree murder during a drug deal.

Sentence Served: 15 years (15–30 years).

Behavior in Prison: Excellent behavior, no disciplinary infractions, passed all drug screenings, earned GED.

Rehabilitation and Support: Strong family support and verified job prospects upon release.

First parole application.

**Statement for Release:** John Jones entered prison as a young man deeply involved in substance abuse and criminal activity. Over the past 15 years, he has demonstrated consistent remorse, personal growth, and accountability for his actions. He has taken full advantage of educational opportunities, remained drug-free, and maintained a flawless disciplinary record. His family has remained supportive throughout his incarceration, and a stable job awaits him upon release. Granting parole would recognize genuine rehabilitation and provide John the opportunity to become a productive, law-abiding member of society.

**Statement Against Parole:** Despite John's positive behavior in prison, the reality remains that his actions resulted in the loss of a human life. Second-degree murder during a drug deal reflects a serious disregard for life and public safety. Releasing John at the minimum end of his sentence may undermine the gravity of the crime and diminish accountability. Denying parole affirms justice for the victim and reinforces society's expectation that severe crimes warrant lengthy incarceration.

## Case 2: Mary Dean

Conviction: Armed robbery and assault with a deadly weapon.

Sentence Served: 5 years (3–10 years).

Behavior in Prison: Multiple disciplinary violations, contraband smuggling, and resistance to authority.

Personal Circumstances: Mother of a young child; cooperated with police during arrest.

Second parole application.

**Statement for Release:** Mary Dean's incarceration has had profound consequences for her young child, who has grown up without a mother present. Supporters argue that supervised parole would allow Mary to reconnect with her family while participating in structured reintegration programs. Her cooperation with law enforcement during her arrest demonstrates some willingness to accept responsibility. With strict monitoring and mandatory counseling, parole could provide a path toward stability and family reunification.

**Statement Against Parole:** Mary's continued misconduct while incarcerated raises serious concerns about her readiness for release. Smuggling contraband and repeated rule violations suggest a lack of respect for the law and authority. Granting parole under these circumstances risks public safety and sends a message that rehabilitation is optional rather than essential. Until Mary demonstrates sustained behavioral change, continued incarceration may be necessary.

### **Case 3: Alan Forrester**

Conviction: First-degree murder of his estranged wife and her partner.

Sentence Served: 35 years (life with mercy).

Behavior in Prison: Model prisoner, deeply religious, no disciplinary history.

Health: Terminal cancer with an estimated 6–12 months to live.

Fourth parole application.

**Statement for Release:** After decades of incarceration, Alan Forrester now faces the end of his life. Supporters argue that his terminal diagnosis, advanced age, and exemplary prison record eliminate any threat to public safety. Compassionate release would allow Alan to spend his final months in a medical setting outside prison walls, acknowledging both his rehabilitation and his humanity at the end of life.

**Statement Against Parole:** Alan's crimes permanently devastated multiple families, and the victims' loved ones continue to oppose his release. A life sentence was imposed to reflect the seriousness of taking multiple lives. Granting parole, even under compassionate grounds, may reopen emotional wounds and undermine the justice promised to the victims. Denying parole affirms that some crimes warrant lifelong accountability, regardless of age or illness.

## Case 4: Marcum Tate

Conviction: Multiple counts of sexual abuse, incest, and child pornography.

Sentence Served: 7 years (5–25 years).

Behavior in Prison: Extensive psychological counseling; earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

Victim Impact: Crimes involved minors and caused lasting trauma.

**Statement for Release:** Marcum Tate has participated in years of intensive psychological treatment and pursued higher education while incarcerated. Supporters argue that his willingness to confront his behavior and engage in counseling demonstrates a commitment to change. With strict supervision, registration requirements, and continued treatment, parole could allow for controlled reintegration while maintaining safeguards.

**Statement Against Parole:** Crimes involving the sexual abuse of children cause profound and lifelong harm. Despite educational achievements, the nature of Marcum's offenses raises ongoing concerns about risk to vulnerable populations. Public safety, victim trauma, and the seriousness of these crimes may outweigh evidence of rehabilitation. Continued incarceration may be necessary to protect the community and affirm justice for the victims.

## Worksheet

Parole Decision:

Parole Granted \_\_\_\_\_ Denied \_\_\_\_\_

Reasoning (3–5 sentences):

What evidence supports your decision?

Did the inmate demonstrate rehabilitation?

Did public safety concerns or victim impact influence your decision?

## Reflection Questions

1. What factors were most influential in your group's decisions?
2. How did emotions, ethics, or personal biases affect your reasoning?
3. Did your group disagree on any case? How was the disagreement resolved?
4. How does this simulation reflect the real-world challenges faced by parole boards?