

Legal drama movies

[Literature](#), [Drama](#)



Erin Brokovich is a true story of an unemployed single mother of the title name who is desperate to find a job in order to support her three young children. Without any real skills and work experience, borderline inappropriate wardrobe, but armed with charm, wit and beauty, she manages to accomplish what she needs. She finds an unlikely job as a file clerk in a law firm without any qualifications.

She talks herself into a job as a compensation for the loss of her personal injury case handled by the owner of the small California firm, Ed Masry. Doing her work, she comes across a file regarding a suspicious real estate case against Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). Fueled by curiosity and passion, she does her own investigation and learned the particulars of the case. She persuades her boss to allow her to research the case further.

She fervently pursues the case and discovers the systemic cover-up and that the company is trying to quietly buy the land that was contaminated by hexavalent chromium, a deadly toxic waste that the company is irresponsibly, improperly and illegally dumping in the area thereby poisoning the residents in the town of Hinkley giving them serious health problems. The pursuit of the case against PG&E seemed beyond the capabilities of the small law firm Erin works for, but her infectious passion and established bond with the victims propelled her and her boss to follow through.

The case proved very challenging to both Erin and her boss as she finds little time to take care of her children and her boss has to carry the burden of the legal costs. In the end, Erin's emotional connection with the victims and their families, her dedication and perseverance helped in winning one of the biggest class action lawsuits against a multi-billion dollar company in <https://assignbuster.com/legal-drama-movies-movie-analysis-samples/>

American history. *12 Angry Men* (1957) *12 Angry Men* is a story about twelve white, mostly middle-aged and generally of middle-class status men who were chosen jurors to determine the fate of a Latino teenager who was accused of stabbing his father to death.

The movie shows what happens in the deliberation of the jurors behind the closed doors of the jury room. The hot, summer day in New York adds to the tense setting and the irritability of the jury. It shows that jurors are influenced by their personal experiences, situations and biases. They are to decide about the life and death of another human being but the gravity of the situation only becomes apparent when one of the jurors cause a holdout, voting not guilty while everyone is eager for a verdict. The film points to the flaws of the justice system.

One of which is having a disinterested appointed court defendant whose meager efforts could very well personally strap the defendant to the electric chair. The importance of reasonable doubt is also highlighted as some tend to take it lightly ignoring the fact that they are making a life and death decision. It also portrays how the unreliability of witnesses and circumstantial evidence can give rise to reasonable doubt. Through the deliberation, the back stories of the jurors were revealed explaining their prejudices and predispositions that lead to disagreements and squabbles among the jurors because of their personal differences.

The discussion continued with the built up tension among the jurors but because they carried on, other jurors changed their vote in light of the arguments. The votes kept changing as they made the effort to dissect the case until the tally is reversed to an eleven to one in favor of not guilty from

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the swift and unscrutinized decision of eleven to one for a guilty verdict during the first vote. The lone juror for the guilty verdict sees that he is the only one with that vote and changed his vote, leading to a unanimous verdict for an acquittal. Civil Action (1998)

Based on the real-life water contamination case in Woburn, Massachusetts, Civil Action is about Jan Schlichtmann, a money-driven personal injury lawyer played by John Travolta and the case that changed his life. He pursues an environmental case thinking it would earn him millions of dollars and enhance his and his firm's reputation. The case was against the two major conglomerates Beatrice Foods and W. R. Grace & Co. as they were suspected of pollution crimes. The drinking wells supplying water to the town were found to be contaminated by industrial solvents caused by the companies' local factories.

There was a high rate of leukemia that led to the deaths of some of the children in the town as a direct result of the pollution and the families, represented by Schlichtmann, filed a class action lawsuit. It was a great challenge in Schlichtmann's career as the case was against someone with resources enough to impede the case. Later, he finds out that more than the case, a lot more is at stake. He pursues the case against the industrial giants at a great personal and professional expense. A judge rules against him thus not achieving his goal of earning millions and worse, setting his firm back because of the magnitude of the case.

He becomes deeply invested in the case and his original goal of monetary gain takes a back seat to pride and stubbornness. He declines some settlement offers deciding that he must win at all cost. After all these, the <https://assignbuster.com/legal-drama-movies-movie-analysis-samples/>

case is dismissed in favor of one of the defendants and he is forced to accept a settlement from the other defendant that was barely enough for him to break even with his expenses. Because of what transpired, his partners decided to break up the firm and no longer practice with him. On his own, he comes up with an idea to win a settlement for the families while his life remains a mess.

He later ends up alone and files for bankruptcy. The Insider (1999) The Insider is a true story of tobacco executive Jeffrey Wigand, played by Russell Crowe, and 60 Minutes producer Lowell Bergman, played by Al Pacino. Their lives converge when Bergman wanted to produce an expose against the tobacco industry and Wigand has the inside information that made him perfect for the interview. Wigand is a terminated employee from a tobacco firm, Brown and Williamson, who knew that the CEOs of the seven major tobacco companies perjured themselves to the US Congress about their knowledge of nicotine's addictiveness.

He says that Brown and Williamson manipulated nicotine so that it could be more rapidly absorbed in the lungs, thus affecting the brain and central nervous system through impact boosting and that they consciously ignored public health in favor of profit. The interview became a source of grief and personal problems for both Wigand and Bergman. Bergman suggested court deposition to Wigand to protect himself from his former employer's counterattack on the interview especially with his signed confidentiality agreement.

Soon his problems begin with restraining orders and death threats to prevent him from testifying, as well as character assassination to discredit him and <https://assignbuster.com/legal-drama-movies-movie-analysis-samples/>

his statements. Bergman on the other hand battles with censorship and with constant fights with the management, he was ordered to go on vacation. After all the turmoil, the Wall Street Journal clears Wigand's name, reveals his deposition and condemns his employer's smear campaign against him. The New York Times releases an article about the scandal in 60 Minutes, wherein Wigand's full interview was finally broadcasted.

The movie ends with the title cards showing the \$246 billion settlement the tobacco companies made with Mississippi and other states to reimburse Medicaid funds used to treat people with smoking-related illnesses: a result of Wigand's interview. Runaway Jury (2003) Runaway Jury, based on John Grisham's novel The Runaway Jury, is a movie about circumventing justice through manipulation of the jury. The story revolves on the case filed by Celeste Wood who sues a gun company who manufactured the gun that killed her husband. Representing her is an idealistic lawyer named Wendell Rohr played by Dustin Hoffman.

On the defense's side is jury selection expert Rankin Fitch, played by Gene Hackman, who unlike Rohr, is ruthless and willing to bend the rules to get the results he wants. The conflict intensifies when Nick Easter, played by John Cusack becomes part of the jury who has the same ability to sway and manipulate the other jurors like Fitch. He is helped by his girlfriend Marlee, played by Rachel Weisz in the efforts to outsmart Fitch. With Nick and Marlee's access to the jurors and their influence on them, they have the power to manipulate the verdict to whichever they wish.

They offered to sell this influence for a hefty price to both Rohr and Fitch. As the trial progresses and both the plaintiff and defense become desperate,

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the two opposing parties agreed to Nick and Marlee's terms but bothered by his conscience, Rohr backs out. Fitch deposits the millions to Nick and Marlee's account only to regret it when the twist of the movie is revealed. Fitch had worked on the case about the death of Marlee's sister in a school shooting years ago. The town sued the company that manufactured the gun that killed Marlee's sister but lost and went bankrupt.

Nick and Marlee particularly picked the Celeste Wood case to exact their revenge on Fitch. They used the money Fitch deposited as a leverage to force him to retire as the IRS would be interested with the amount of the transfer. As for the money, Nick and Marlee plan to give it to the town that went bankrupt after losing the case with the gun company. Wall Street (1987) Wall Street is a film about the seedy underbelly of the world of stock market as some stockbrokers resort to bending the rules and breaking the law with insider information to get ahead.

Bud Fox, played by Charlie Sheen, is a discontented mediocre stockbroker eager to get to the top like Gordon Gekko, played by Michael Douglas. Gekko, whose philosophy in life is "Greed is Good," is ruthless, devoid of ethics, and would do anything to earn his millions — a polar opposite to Bud's father Carl, played by Martin Sheen. Fox, desperate to be mentored by Gekko, tries to impress him and inadvertently reveals insider information about his father's company Bluestar Airlines. Gekko becomes interested and takes Fox under his wing.

Gekko shows Fox the fast and the good life of a successful and rich stockbroker but in exchange for more information about Bluestar. Fox suggests to buy Bluestar and to expand the company's assets. Even with <https://assignbuster.com/legal-drama-movies-movie-analysis-samples/>

Carl's dislike of Gekko, he was convinced by his son to use his influence in the company's union to push the deal forward. Gekko, however, had a different plan and sells Bluestar's assets leaving Carl and the other employees of the airline unemployed. Wracked by guilt, Fox finds a way to ruin Gekko's plans.

He manages to alter Bluestar's stock value and as Gekko realizes that his stock is plummeting, decides to relinquish his remaining interest in the company. Fox feels triumphant but not for long because Gekko learned his involvement in the scheme and had him arrested by the Securities and Exchange Commission. Towards the end of the film, a heated confrontation ensues between Fox and Gekko, which was Fox's ploy to record Gekko's confession of his crimes. Fox hands over the recordings to federal authorities helping them build a case against Gekko, which would help lighten Fox's sentence.

Their fates are left unambiguous but the film delivers a message that crime does not pay and greed is indeed not good. *The Firm* (1993) *The Firm*, based on a John Grisham novel, is about a young lawyer's budding career and the troubles that he encounters when he associates with the wrong people in pursuit of early success. Mitch McDeer, played by Tom Cruise, is one of the top graduates of his class in Harvard Law School despite his poor economic status. He receives many offers from different firms but coming from an unprivileged upbringing, he was enticed by the most lucrative offer from Bendini, Lambert, & Locke law firm in Memphis.

Everything is great until the reason for the too-good-to-be-true offer gets revealed. Mitch learns that no one in BL&L ever quits and those who do end

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up dead shortly after. The firm also takes a very keen interest in its employees' personal lives. Things become suspicious and he later learns about the firm's strong ties to the Mafia and that the firm was being used to launder money for organized crime. With the FBI's interest on the case, they contact Mitch and coerce him into cooperating with their investigation of the firm.

The firm suspects of Mitch's knowledge on their illegal activities and soon, Mitch is blackmailed from both sides and is torn between doing the right thing and his personal and professional wellbeing. Doubting the FBI, Mitch gets the help of those he trusts to collect the necessary evidence against the firm at great personal risk, even coming face to face with the mob boss. With their resourcefulness despite the great difficulties of acquiring the important client files and documents, they gathered what they needed and Mitch provides the FBI enough evidence to indict the firm.

In the end, everyone gets what they deserve and everything is resolved. Mitch gets a modest job in a small but promising law firm in Boston. Fracture (2007) Fracture is a film about a talented structural engineer Ted Crawford, played by Anthony Hopkins, who manages to escape justice with his skill in finding the fracture or flaw in arguments. He however is hindered by an equally intelligent prosecutor Willy Beachum, played by Ryan Gosling. Ted carefully plans the murder of his unfaithful wife. He executes it but his wife manages to survive but is dependent on life support.

Ted confesses to the crime but retracts it and demands to represent himself in the trial, relying on his skills of spotting the weakness in structures, in this case, the prosecutor's arguments. Willy, who has a young and successful

career and in transition to a more lucrative corporate position, takes Ted's case thinking it would be an easy victory only to be humiliated by someone untrained for litigation. It was discovered that Ted's gun acquired at the crime scene was not the gun used to shoot his wife. Baffled and lacking further evidence, the prosecution lost and Ted was acquitted.

Engrossed by the case and his career in disarray, Willy visits the only eye witness, Ted's wife, who Ted later orders to be pulled from life support. With his efforts, Willy uncovers that Ted and the arresting officer's guns were identical. Ted learns that the police officer was his wife's lover, switches out the guns and shoots his wife. The officer arrived at his house, surprised to see his lover's predicament, became distracted and Ted was able to switch back the guns. Ted's gun was admitted into evidence and the officer unknowingly takes the murder weapon.

Willy confronts Ted with this new evidence and thinking he is protected by the double jeopardy clause, Ted confesses. Willy reveals that because he took his wife off life support, they can now try him for murder and double jeopardy does not apply as he was previously tried for attempted murder. Ted was arrested and a new trial begins, this time with Ted defended by actual lawyers. Michael Clayton (2007) Michael Clayton, played by George Clooney, is a story about a man who makes a living by cleaning up other people's messes.

He is a former District Attorney who uses his contacts to get the clients of his high-priced law firm out of trouble. Other than his ethically dubious job, he is also troubled by his personal problems of a failed marriage and gambling debt and later finds the addition of threat to his very life when he encounters

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the new problem his firm will send him to fix. One of the firm's partners Arthur Edens, played by Tom Wilkinson, had an outburst in the middle of a deposition involving an agricultural products conglomerate U-North and Michael is sent to remedy the situation.

U-North's general counsel Karen Crowder, played by Tilda Swinton, learns that Edens have evidence about the company's involvement in manufacturing a cancer-causing product. Learning that Edens is not likely to cooperate, she orders to permanently incapacitate him in a way that will look like suicide. Michael is saddened by Edens' death and later becomes suspicious about its connection with U-North. He was able to sneak in to Edens' apartment and learns about the U-North documents.

This puts his life in danger as two men are tailing him informing Crowder of the situation. They later detonate a remote bomb in Michael's car which luckily exploded when he was out of the vehicle. Later, Michael waits for Crowder to finish a U-North board meeting. He tells her that he is in possession of Edens' U-North evidence, he knows about her involvement in Edens' death and that he will keep his silence for a hefty price. When she agrees, he reveals that their conversation is being monitored.

He walks away and Crowder and the chairman of U-North get arrested by the police. The Star Chamber (1983) The Star Chamber is a film about the flaws in the judicial system and the boundaries that some people are willing to cross in order to take justice into their own hands to address these flaws. Judge Stephen Hardin, played by Michael Douglas, is a California judge frustrated about being forced to set free suspects that are obviously guilty based on technicalities in paperwork and processing of evidence.

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He reaches his breaking point when two men accused of raping and killing a ten-year-old boy had to walk free because of the small detail in dates of paperwork processing. This is when his friend Judge Ben Caufield, played by Hal Holbrook, introduces him to the secret organization of radical magistrates called the Star Chamber. These judges take the law into their own hands by identifying and assassinating guilty criminals who got away with their crimes. The two men in Hardin's case become the next target of the Star Chamber.

A predicament arises when a detective shows Hardin conclusive evidence that someone else raped and killed the boy. He then appeals the case to the group but it was too late. An assassin has already been ordered and cannot be called off. Also, the group justified that what they do is still for society's greater good and that those two men are guilty of other crimes, if not for the murder of the boy. Hardin goes on a quest to ironically save the two men he wanted killed. He warns them but they do not believe him, especially because he finds out about the other illegal things that they are involved in.

Hardin was attacked by the two men but the Star Chamber's assassin kills them before they kill him. However, the assassin was also there to kill Hardin since the group ordered his murder as well. In the nick of time, the detective comes to his rescue and he survives. The Star Chamber continues with their work without Hardin, who is merely outside in a car with the detective, recording their meeting. Reference All Media Guide LLC. (n. d). All Movie Guide. Retrieved April 21, 2009, from <http://www.starpulse.com/>