Summary:

Bart, a Haverford alumnus, wrote a letter to the Chair of Honor Council explaining that he had looked up the answer to one section of one problem on a closed-book, take-home exam during his first year. A summer trial was held. The jury found that Bart had committed a violation of the Honor Code. The jury recommended that Bart fail the exam and that his course grade be changed accordingly; that Bart write a letter of apology to the professor in whose course he had cheated; and that Bart consider who else his actions had affected and seek to make amends to them in whatever way he saw fit.

Introduction:

Bart, a Haverford alumnus, wrote a letter to the Chair of Honor Council outlining his conduct on a closed-book, take-home exam he took his first year here. Honor Council decided to hold a summer trial. The professor could not be reached. However, given the nature of the trial, the Chair decided to proceed.

Fact-Finding:

Since Bart was not present at the trial (he now lives quite a distance away), Bart’s letter served as his statement. The letter stated that he had taken the exam in his room with the notes nearby. He recalled having gotten through half of a six-part question only to blank on the next step. He needed the solution to this part to complete the rest of the question. He looked up the fourth step in his notes and proceeded with the test. Except for that one incident Bart said he had followed all other instructions on both the test and in the course.

Deliberations 1:

The jury agreed that a violation had occurred:

“Bart violated the Honor Code by cheating on a closed-book exam.”

Circumstantial:

Bart explained in the letter that at the time of his violation he had lost his sense of self-worth through a series of upsetting events, including a lingering illness, he said, had left him isolated and depressed, and his grades had become his only source of self-worth. The prospect of not doing well had been too much for him. Aside from this though, Bart had acted in accordance with the Honor Code during his time here.

Bart felt that, in light of his subsequent academic work, repeating the course would serve no purpose, but that failing the course was the “lightest penalty” he should receive.
The jury agreed that Bart should fail the test. The question of Bart's grade in the course was more difficult, however. Some jurors believed that Bart should fail the course to symbolize the seriousness of any breach of the Honor Code, however small. These jurors reasoned that since Bart had graduated from Haverford with 2.5 more credits than required and had successfully completed a doctorate degree, the highest level of academic education, a failing grade on his undergraduate transcript would be of no consequence to his academic or professional career. Nonetheless, they argued, a failing grade would be severe enough to serve as a private recognition of the seriousness of his behavior.

Other jurors disagreed, stating that Bart should not fail the entire class over his conduct on one question on one test. Failing the course would do nothing productive for Bart, they maintained, and the jury's time would be better spent creating other, more constructive resolutions.

After an extended debate, the jury agreed that Bart should fail the test, and that his course grade be changed accordingly.

The jury then turned its attention to resolutions directed at helping Bart to repair the breach of trust which had occurred during his violation. The Chair pointed out that since the breach of trust had occurred so long ago, attempts at reconciliation directed towards the current community of the College would not technically make amends to the original group of people affected by his violation.

The jury agreed that Bart should apologize to the professor on whose exam the violation had occurred. They considered a number of possible resolutions, including an essay, a letter of apology to be sent to members of the class or to be published in the "letters" section of the alumni magazine, and suggesting that Bart attend a pre-first year weekend in his area to talk with admitted students about Haverford and the Honor Code. Due to various inadequacies, logistical difficulties, and issues of confidentiality, however, the jury was reluctant to make any of these recommendations.

Since Bart had come forward after so much time had passed to admit to a relatively small violation of the Code, it was clear to the jury that he was sincere in his wish to make amends for his past behavior. The jury decided that Bart should be trusted to determine for himself the best way in which to do this. Since the original community in which Bart had committed his violation was no longer intact, the jury decided to allow Bart to choose a means of reconciliation for himself, a resolution which the jury hoped would allow Bart to meditate upon the implications of his violation before reaching a sense of closure. The jury reached final consensus on the following resolutions, which Bart did not appeal:

1. "The jury suggests that Bart fail the exam and that his course grade be changed accordingly."

2. "Bart will write a letter of apology to Professor X. In addition, the jury asks Bart to consider who else his actions affected and to seek to make amends in whatever way he feels appropriate."