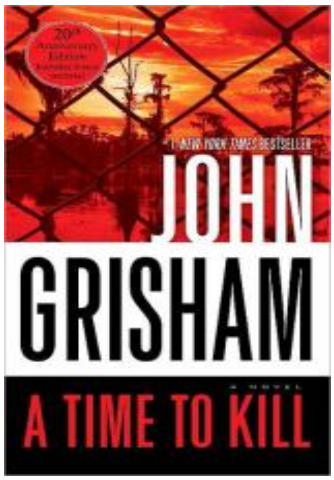
A Time to Kill

by John Grisham



About the Book

In this searing courtroom drama, best-selling author John Grisham probes the savage depths of racial violence... as he delivers a compelling tale of uncertain justice in a small southern town...

Clanton, Mississippi. The life of a ten-year-old girl is shattered by two drunken and remorseless young man. The mostly white town reacts with shock and horror at the inhuman crime. Until her black father acquires an assault rifle -- and takes justice into his own outraged hands.

For ten days, as burning crosses and the crack of sniper fire spread through the streets of Clanton, the nation sits spellbound as young defense attorney Jake Brigance struggles to save his client's life... and then his own...

Discussion Guide

1. How would you describe Sheriff Ozzie Walls?

2. Why did Tonya envision her father running "desperately" through the woods?

3. Talk about the town's reaction to Tonya's rape. What role does race play in the way the townspeople respond?

4. Why does Carl Lee Hailey shoot Cobb and Willard? What are the chances that the two men would have been convicted and sentenced? What were your feelings when Hailey shot them?

5. Is Carl Lee Hailey sane...or insane?

6. Why does Jake Brigance decide to take Carl Lee Hailey's case? What, according to Brigance, would a similar case normally cost?

7. Why does Brigance hang a portrait of William Faulkner in his office? What does Faulkner represent to him? And what is implied by the fact that, as Brigance notices, no streets or buildings are named after Grant or Lincoln?

8. Talk about the three families: the Haileys, Cobbs and Willards. How different are they? Do they have anything in common?

9. What do lawyers fight for?according to Chapter 10?

10. Describe Rufus Buckley. How do he and Jake Brigance compare with one another?in their beliefs, motivations and in the way they approach the law? Now compare Omar Noose. Why does Brigance liken him to Ichabod Crane?

11. How does Brigance's respond to Ethel's concern about the phone calls? What does this reveal about his state of mind?

12. What does Brigance reveal about himself during the *New York Times* interview?

13. Talk about the various decisions that Jake Brigance makes throughout the book? Are they ethical? Is Jake ethical?

14. What about Reverend Agee, who collects donations for the Hailey fund? Is he fair?

15. What is later revealed about Tonya? Has she recovered from her ordeal?

16. Talk about the role of court testimony by psychiatrists? How credible...or non-credible are they?

17. What have you learned in this book about way the legal system works? What are preliminary hearings, grand juries, and arraignments? Does the system work the way you believe it should?

18. Talk about the volunteer/pro bono team that assists Brigance. What do you think of Ellen Roark, for instance? What assets and liabilities does each team member bring to the Hailey case?

19. What is the significance of Jake's vomiting and weeping? How is this trial changing him? What is the (non-literal) meaning of the sentence, "Jake sipped his beer and searched for daylight through the window"?

20. Talk about the Ku Klux Klan and its role in the trial.

21. Examine Brigance's closing argument: how does he endear the jury to Dr. Bass and reestablish the relevance of the doctor's testimony? How does Brigance portray Buckley as a father figure? What part of Looney's testimony does he call to mind? Does his recalling the rape scene from Tonya's perspective help the insanity plea?

22. Talk about the jury...and the way in which it reaches its decision. Why are members unwilling to deadlock? How does Wanda Womack's proposal sway them?

23. After reading this book, has your attitude toward the legal system changed in any way?

Author Bio

John Grisham is the author of more than 50 consecutive #1 bestsellers, which have been translated into nearly 50 languages. His recent books include THE FRENCH ILLUSION, THE WIDOW, FRAMED, CAMINO GHOSTS and THE EXCHANGE: After *The Firm*.

Grisham is a two-time winner of the Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction and was honored with the Library of Congress Creative Achievement Award for Fiction.

When he?s not writing, Grisham serves on the board of directors of the Innocence Project and of Centurion Ministries, two national organizations dedicated to exonerating those who have been wrongfully convicted. Much of his fiction explores deep-seated problems in our criminal justice system.

John lives on a farm in central Virginia.

Critical Praise

"Grisham's pleasure in relating the Byzantine complexities of Clanton (Mississippi) politics is contagious and he tells a good story...An enjoyable book."

? Library Journal

"Grisham excels!"

? Dallas Times Herald

"Grisham is an absolute master."

? Washington Post

"Grisham enraptures us."

? Houston Chronicle

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Publication Date: June 1, 1992
Mass Market Paperback: 515 pages
Publisher: Island Books
ISBN-10: 0440211727
ISBN-13: 9780440211723