**To Do (horrrrrrrray) :) yayyyyy**

**Website:** [**http://justmercybook.github.io/**](http://justmercybook.github.io/)

**Header: Just Mercy**

**Subheader: A story of justice and redemption**

* **Story: Prosecutor vs Defendant, Verdict**
  + **K to provide bullet-point arguments for both sides**
  + **J to put on website**
* **Profiles**
  + **K to make into paragraphs**
  + **J to put on website**
* **Analysis**
  + **K to make into paragraphs**
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* **Citations**
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**Analysis**

**Theme**

One of the overarching themes of Just Mercy is that we need to see the suffering of the vulnerable and to help them. In reading this book, we realize that this all of this outrageous injustice occurred not so long ago, and remains an issue that demands attention today. We may already know that there is still racism present in the world, but perhaps not really to what extent. We are moved only when we get close to these people and realize that their stories are true. It is only when we hear the cases of those wrongly convicted and become acquainted with the characters that we see the notorious prevalence of discrimination.

It is not just about the wrongly convicted however. Even those that have committed crimes deserve mercy and justice. Stevenson “Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done” (17). It is important to see the whole picture. Just Mercy teaches that we cannot judge people until we know and apply the truth, and urges that we seek this truth to fight bias and injustice.

**Author’s Tone**

Stevenson intended his book to be powerful and moving. He wanted to open people’s eyes to the prejudice, racism, and profiling that still occurs in the world without many of us really knowing. The book is infused with the passion he feels for his work and for the people he meets. The tone can be painful and aggrieved at times when Stevenson recalls some of the cases.

However, he also tries to be understanding of all people and their situations, saying that “Fear and anger can make us vindictive and abusive, unjust and unfair, until we all suffer from the absence of mercy and we condemn ourselves as much as we victimize others. […] I believe it’s necessary to recognize that we all need mercy, we all need justice, and—perhaps—we all need some measure of unmerited grace” (18). Throughout the book, Stevenson attempts to deliver justice without being mean, and to not judge people based on their appearance and first impressions. There was one story that he told that I felt embodied this idea. While working on one of his cases, he met a prison guard that treated him with minimal respect and tried his hardest to make the experience visiting as inconvenient as possible. After sitting through the trial of one of the prisoners, however, he became a different man. He was truly moved by Stevenson’s work and after apologizing, revealed to him that he, too, had been brought up in foster care and grown up with rough experiences. The guard realized that the reason he had been so abrasive was because he had been angry about life. This account shows that there is often more to people than meets the eye. As this is often the case, Stevenson must be aware of all of the facts and backstories, which reflects in the author’s tone when he wrote this book.

**Reader’s Mood**

When I read Walter’s story, I was struck by how a system that was supposed to administer justice had been so outright indifferent and biased. It made me angry that they presented evidence and used such obviously false testimonies to convict an innocent man of capital murder, and sentence him to death row. For six years he stayed in prison, mistreated by the prison staff and living in constant uncertainty as to when they would send him to the electric chair. Even after he was released, some in the community still believed him to be a dangerous murderer. This case followed him for the rest of his life and eventually caused his death, the tragic part being that he did not even commit the crime.

The book and the manner in which the facts are presented in are intended to stir up the reader. Throughout the Just Mercy the reader experiences a wide range of emotions including sadness, outrage, determination, and hope. Aside from the main case involving Walter McMillian, there are many others sprinkled in that reveal the horrors of poverty, abuse, and the legal system. The author tells of uncared for children and mentally disabled that have been sentenced to prison for life, women that have been thrown in jail for pregnancies that go wrong, and inhumane treatment of prisoners in facilities throughout America.

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K’s Paragraphs

**Profiles**

**Bryan Stevenson** is the author of Just Mercy, a book about one of his first cases as a young lawyer in the 1980s. He created the nonprofit organization Equal Justice Initiative in 1989. Based in Montgomery, Alabama, the EJI represents prisoners that may not have received a fair trial or conviction, or might not be able to afford representation in court. He first met McMillian in his late 20s.

**Walter McMillian** was born to a poor sharecropper family. His mother managed to get him into a colored school, but he had to discontinue his education at around age eight to help his family with cotton picking. As an adult, he started a pulpwood business, which allowed him to have a stable income and support his family in an honest way. Since it was an independent business, he had much freedom. McMillian also earned the respect of the people he worked with, as well as many in the community. As for his personal life, he had a wife, Minnie, and three kids. However, he was known to be romantically involved with other women. The tendency to have affairs led to trouble in court.

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**Story**

On November 1, 1986, eighteen-year-old Ronda Morrison is found dead, shot in the back three times. She had been a kind, popular girl and was viewed as the daughter of the community. Devastated, they turn to the police, who fail to arrest anyone. Tom Tate is elected the new country sheriff in hopes that he will bring some change.

Meanwhile, Walter McMillian tries to end his relationship with Karen Kelly, a younger married white woman. Her husband had discovered the affair and pressed charges against Walter in court. Under stress, Karen gets into drugs and crime, and starts associating with Ralph Myers, a white man with a badly disfigured face and a long criminal record. Shortly after this, Myers and Kelly are arrested for the murder of a girl from a nearby county named Vickie Lynn Pittman. While in custody, Myers tells the police that Kelly’s old boyfriend, Walter McMillian, had also been involved in Pittman’s murder, and furthermore, is responsible for the murder of Ronda Morrison. With the public’s building dissent, Sheriff Tate is pressured to charge someone. The police try to get information out of Myers to find a reason to arrest Walter, and suggest that he might have sexually assaulted Myers. Latching onto this idea, Myers testifies against Walter and Walter is arrested for sodomy. After several testimonies from various “witnesses,” Walter is eventually convicted of capital murder and put on death row.

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| Prosecutor (Alabama) | Defendant (Walter) |
| · Myers’ story was that he was getting gas when Walter forced him at gunpoint to get in his truck and drive to Jackson Cleaners in Monroeville. He could not drive himself because his arm was hurt. There, Myers bought some cigarettes and waited while Walter went inside. When Walter came back he admitted to killing the store clerk. Then they drove back to the gas station so Myers could get his car. Walter threatened to kill him if he ever told anyone.    · Walter drove to the cleaners in his truck.              · Myers accused Walter of sexually abusing him.  · Myers worked with Walter to kill Ronda Morrison.  · Bill Hooks testified that he had driven past the cleaners and seen two men in a truck on the Saturday Ronda Morrison was killed. As the second witness the court could convict McMillian of capital murder.  · Bill Hooks described Walter’s truck that day as a “low-rider.”  · Myers provided a true account of what happened that day. As primary witness, the court could deem Walter guilty.  · Karen Kelly agreed that Walter had murdered Ronda Morrison.    · Myers specified the location of the body of Ronda Morrison in the store. | · On the morning of Ronda’s murder, Walter was hosting a fish fry at his house, surrounded by friends, church members, and family. A local officer even stopped by to buy a sandwich and recorded this in his log.  · Why did Walter get someone else to drive when he had driven himself to the gas station? What was his motive? (Walter was known to be a hardworking man and had no criminal record. He did not seem the type to rob a store.)    · On that Saturday, Walter had decided to change the transmission in his truck. He called his mechanic friend Jimmy Hunter, and together they had the transmission removed by 9:30 that morning. Therefore he could not have driven his truck to the cleaners at that time.    An Alabama Bureau of Investigations agent asked Myers to identify Walter McMillian in a store to prove that he knew him. Myers failed to point him out, and had to ask the store owner for assistance.  · A man named Darnell Houston denied that Hooks ever drove past the cleaners that day, because they had been working together at NAPA auto parts the morning Ronda was killed.  · A white mechanic named Clay Kast confirmed that he did not convert Walter’s truck into a low-rider until 6 months after that day.  · After being questioned by Stevenson, Myers revealed that his original allegations were false, and that the police had forced him to say them.  · There are tapes of the original interrogations in which the police can be heard insulting Myers and threatening him with death row if he did not testify against Walter. These tapes were withheld from court.  · Kelly told Stevenson that “ ‘Ralph is a fool’ ” (137) and that Walter had been framed for a crime that he did not commit. She confirmed that Myers did not know Walter before the Morrison murder.  · Woodrow Ikner, a police officer that had testified as being the first on the crime scene, said that Ronda Morrison’s body had not been found in that place that Myers had said. |

**Verdict**

1933- McMillian is deemed not guilty, and is released from prison after six years of being on Alabama’s death row.

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K’s Citations

* Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson
* Credits for Pictures used on Website

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Other websites/sources/etc that might be useful

* <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/03/us/alabama-releases-man-held-on-death-row-for-six-years.html?pagewanted=all>
* <http://www.eji.org/deathpenalty/innocence/mcmillian>
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_McMillian>

Katherine Wang, Set 6

Could you do something like this at the end?? Like you did for the Elon Musk website:

(J: Of course!) :)

