# September 1992

Damien Echols, age 17, is released from a psychiatric hospital in Little Rock, where he received treatment for major depression. Damien was transferred to the hospital after incidents at a detention center that included sucking blood from the wound of another detainee and threatening to kill his father. He is known to Arkansas officials to have an interest in witchcraft (and is suspected by them of being involved in "Satanism").

# May 5, 1993 6 P.M.

Christopher Byers, Michael Moore, and Stevie Branch are seen riding their bicycles on North Fourteenth Street, heading in the direction of Goodwin.

# May 5, 1993 8 P.M.

John Mark Byers telephones the West Memphis police to report a missing child, eight-year-old Christopher Byers. Ten minutes later, an officer shows up to interview Byers. By 8:30, Byers reported later, he began searching a wooded area where his boy sometimes played, Robin Hood Hills.

# May 5, 1993 9 P.M.

Two mothers (Dana Moore and Pamela Hobbs) call to report that their eight-year-old sons (Michael Moore and Stevie Edward Branch) are missing.

# May 5 between 9:30 and 10 P.M.

Narlene Hollingsworth, according to what she later tells police, sees Damien Nichols and another boy (both in muddy pants) walking near the Blue Beacon, on the edge of Robin Hood Hills. Prosecutors will later argue that the murders of the three boys takes place during this time frame.

# May 6, 1994 between 1 and 5 A.M.

According to Dr. Frank Peretti, the medical examiner who autopsied the three boys, the murders most likely took place during this time frame.

# May 6 A.M.

Gary Gitchell, chief inspector of the West Memphis police department, announces that three boys are missing and that he will direct the search efforts.

# May 6, 1993 1:45 P.M.

Officials discover the body of a naked boy in a gully in a wooded area of West Memphis called Robin Hood Hills.

# May 6, 1993 4 P.M.

The coroner arrives on the scene and pronounces the three boys dead.

# May 7, 1993

Steve Jones, a juvenile officer, and Lt. Sudbury question Damien Echols about the murders, but take no notes of their interview.

# May 8, 1993

Detective Bill Durham and investigator Shane Griffith question Damien Echols and Jason Baldwin, a friend of Damien's. Damien and Jason tell them they've never heard of any of the three boys who were killed.

# May 10, 1993

Damien, unaccompanied by a lawyer, is interviewed at the police station by Lt. Sudbury and detective Byrn Ridge. He then was administered a polygraph interview by detective Durham. According to Ridge's notes, Durham "reported that Damien had been untruthful, and according to the polygraph, was involved in the murders."

# May 12, 1993

Police question Pam Echols, Damien's mother. She tells them that on the night of the murders Damien was home with her, talking on the phone to two girls who lived in Memphis.

# May 19, 1993

Vicki Hutchinson, a private citizen and volunteer detective conducting her own investigation of the case, travels with Damien Echols and Jesse Misskelley (according to what she later tells police) to an esbat (gathering of witches) in a field north of Marion, Arkansas, where she sees about ten young people, with arms and faces painted black, taking off their clothes "and touching each other." (Misskelley is a borderline retarded (IQ between 67 and 75) neighbor of Hutchinson's, who she used to make contact with Damien.) She asks Damien to take her home, and they leave Jesse at the esbat/orgy. (This report is highly questionable, given the fact that Damien didn't have a car and was never known to have ever driven one.)

# May 27, 1993

Police interview Vicki Hutchinson, who tells them of evidence suggesting that Damien Echols and Jesse Misskelley were involved in both cult activities and the murders of the three boys. Aaron Hutchinson, Vicki's eight-year-old son, tells police that he and the three murdered boys often visited Robin Hood woods together, and that they had at times seen five men in the woods sitting in a circle, singing songs to the Devil, and doing "what men and ladies do."

# June 2, 1993

Police give Vicki Hutchinson a polygraph interview, and police report that she was truthful.

# June 3, 1993

Convinced by the polygraph results that they had their murderers, police question Jesse Misskelley about the murders. They tell Jesse there was a $35,000 reward for information leading to convictions in the case. In a polygraph interview, Jesse initially denies participating in either Satanic rituals or the murders. Detective Durham tells another officer Jesse is "lying his ass off." After hours of harsh questioning by Gitchell and Ridge, Jesse begins to tell the officers what they want to hear: that he and Damien and Jason committed the murders. Officers are troubled by inconsistencies (such as Jesse saying the murders occurred in the daytime when they actually occurred at night, or that they tied up the boys with rope when the actual murderer used shoelaces) and work to shape Jesse's story to match the known facts of the case. Some five hours after picking Jesse up, police begin taping Jesse's "confession."

# June 3, 1993 9 P.M.

Authorities appear before a municipal court judge to request search warrants to search the homes of Jesse, Damien, and Jason. The warrants are issued.

# June 3, 1993 10:30 P.M.

Police arrest Damien, Jason, and Jesse. They charge each with three counts of capital murder.

# June 4, 1993 9 A.M.

Gitchell holds a press conference to announce the arrests. Asked how confident he felt about the case, on a one-to-ten scale, Gitchell says, "Eleven."

# June 7, 1993

A state judge appoints lawyers to represent each of the three defendants.

# June 9, 1993

Police interview eight-year-old Aaron Hutchinson, who now tells them that he witnessed the actual murders of the three boys.

# August 4, 1993

Echols, Baldwin, and Misskelley attend a pretrial hearing before Judge David Burnett in Marion, Arkansas. Judge Burnett rules Misskelley should be tried separately. Later, in other important ruling, Burnett allows decides that the state can introduce Misskelley's confession, despite evidence that it was obtained under coercive circumstances, and that the defendants could be tried as adults rather than juveniles.

# September 1993

Prosecutor John Fogleman conducts a series of under-oath interviews with various potential trial witnesses, including with members of the defendants' families.

# November 10, 1993

Judge Burnett rules that Misskelley's trial will open in Corning, Arkansas in January and that the trial of Echols and Baldwin will take place in Jonesboro, beginning in February.

# November 17, 1993

Divers hired by the Arkansas State Police search a lake behind the trailer where Baldwin and Echols lived. They find a nine-inch long knife with a serrated edge in water about 50 feet behind Jason's trailer.

# December 30, 1993

Defense attorney Ron Lax interviews neighbors of the Hutchinson and is told that Aaron Hutchinson was at the trailer park at the time of the murders, not in Robin Hood Hills witnessing the murders, as he had told police.

# January 18, 1994

Jury selection begins in the Misskelley trial.

# January 26, 1994

John Mark Byers is questioned by police about a knife belonging to him (and that he had given to documentary film producers). The knife was found to have blood on it consistent with that of his stepson, Christopher Byers (as well as John Mark Byers--even though the two were not biologically related).

# February 5, 1994

A jury convicts Misskelley on one count of first-degree murder and two counts of second-degree murder. He is sentenced to forty years in prison. He is sent to a facility in Pine Bluff.

# February 17, 1994

After being pressured by prosecutors, and receiving a promise that his girlfriend would be allowed to visit him in jail, Jesse tells prosecutors he will testify against Echols and Baldwin in their upcoming trial. He makes a statement under oath accusing Echols and Baldwin of murdering the three boys.

# February 18, 1994

Jesse changes his mind again and decides that he will not testify in the upcoming trial.

# February 19, 1994

The Echols/Baldwin trial opens in Jonesboro, Arkansas. Jury selection begins.

# February 28, 1994

Opening arguments are presented in the Echols/Baldwin trial.

# March 17, 1994

Jury deliberations begin in the Echols and Baldwin trial.

# March 18, 1994

The jury finds Echols and Baldwin guilty of capital murder in the deaths of the three children.

# March 21, 1994

In the sentencing phase of the trial, the jury sentences Jason to life in prison and Damien to death. The date for Damien's execution is set for May 5. Jason is incarcerated in the penitentiary at Pine Bluff, while Damien is sent to death row in the state's maximum security prison near Varner, Arkansas.

# May 1994

Echols, Baldwin, and Misskelley appeal their convictions.

# February 19, 1996

The Arkansas Supreme Court issues a decision upholding the conviction of Jesse Misskelley.

# 1996

The film Paradise Lost: The Child Murders of Robin Hills Hood premieres. The film suggests that Echols, Baldwin, and Misskelley were wrongfully convicted. A website, wm3.org, dedicated to securing justice for the Memphis Three is established.

# December 23, 1996

The Arkansas Supreme Court issues a decision upholding the convictions of Damien Echols and Jason Baldwin.

# June 17, 1999

Judge Burnett denies a petition for a new trial, filed under Arkansas Rule 37, for Echols.

# December 1999

Damien Echols marries Lorri Davis, of New York, in a Buddhist ceremony performed at the prison.

# March 2000

The film Paradise Lost 2: Revelations premieres on HBO. The film suggests that John Mark Byers was the actual murderer.

# February 2001

Edward Mallett, attorney for Echols, files a writ of error coram nobis in the Arkansas Supreme Court, arguing that Echols should never been tried in 1994 because of his mental condition at the time.

# April 2001

The Arkansas Supreme Court rules that Judge Burnett failed to give sufficient attention to Echols's arguments in his rejection of Damien's Rule 37 petition. The Supreme Court sends the case back to Judge Burnett for further consideration of the issues presented in the petition.

# 2002

Devil's Knot: The True Story of the West Memphis Three, a book by Mara Leveritt, is published. The book strongly suggests a miscarriage of justice occurred in the Memphis Three trials.

# October 2003

In an interview with an Arkansas Times reporter, Vicki Hutcheson says that everything she told the police was a lie, and suggested that the police warned her that if she did not cooperate in their investigation that her child would be taken away.

# 2007

When DNA collected from evidence collected at the crime scene is tested, none is found to match the DNA of Echols, Baldwin, or Misskelley. A hair found in a knot used to tie up one of the victims is found to be "not inconsistent with" Terry Hobbs, stepfather to Stevie Branch. John Mark Byers tells the media that he now believes the three young men convicted were innocent. At a Little Rock rally, Dixie Chicks singer Natalie Maines implies Hobbs was involved in the killing of his son and the other two boys.

# July 2008

Evidence surfaces that Kent Arnold, the jury foreman in the Echols and Baldwin trial, discussed the case with an attorney prior to deliberations and advocated in the jury room for conviction.

# September 10, 2008

Judge Burnett denies the request for a retrial, holding that the DNA evidence produced by the defendants was inconclusive.

# November 4, 2010

The Arkansas Supreme Court orders a trial court judge to determine whether newly discovered DNA evidence or evidence of juror misconduct justifies either a new trial or exoneration of the three defendants.

# August 19, 2011

Echols, Baldwin, and Misskelley are released from custody following a deal in which the three men agreed to admit guilt on murder charges (while still maintaining their innocence) in exchange for their release without parole.

# 2012

The film West of Memphis, produced by Peter Jackson and directed by Amy Berg, premiers at the Sundance Film Festival. The film suggests that Terry Hobbs was likely the murderer of the three boys. A book by Damien Echols, Life After Death, is published