

Name: Anonymous

School: Yorba Linda High School

Grade: Senior

Book title: *Just Mercy*

Book author: Bryan Stevenson

Rating: 5/5

*Just Mercy* tells the real story of a lawyer named Bryan Stevenson who has dedicated his career to helping Americans off death row. Stevenson shares his insights about the justice and prison systems as they relate to racial disparity and the weaponization of institutions in the name of racial prejudice. Stevenson shares this story through the main anecdote of him working with the wrongfully accused Walter McMillian. Although the evidence which put Walter behind bars was fabricated by a fellow prisoner who hoped to get a lighter sentence, Stevenson's initial efforts seem to be in vain as racist law enforcement and legal officers refuse to hear or fairly consider the appeal. Stevenson shares the additional stories of other clients he takes on as he founds the Equal Justice Initiative, dedicated to giving legal assistance to those who might be otherwise unfairly represented. The book shows Stevenson's real-life impact as he argues in front of the Supreme Court to ban the conviction of children to life without parole and execution of people with mental illness.

Although *Just Mercy* deal with heavy topics, I found it quite inspiring. Stevenson pushes through several obstacles—including bomb threats to his office and home—with a conviction to make a difference. Even his own clients are skeptical of his legal counseling after years of being battered around by the legal system, but Stevenson is able to understand their stories with compassion and represent them fairly. Beyond the individual, it's uplifting to know that Stevenson really did argue landmark cases in front of the Supreme Court, meaning he's made a long-lasting systemic change. The entire book is a testament to his perseverance and genuineness.

I would recommend this book to everybody. I think there are lessons about a virtuous life that can apply to all. I also think this book is eye-opening and gets the reader to consider many new perspectives, so anybody who wants to expand their societal awareness will enjoy *Just Mercy*.