



Book of the Week

***A Time for Mercy* by John Grisham**

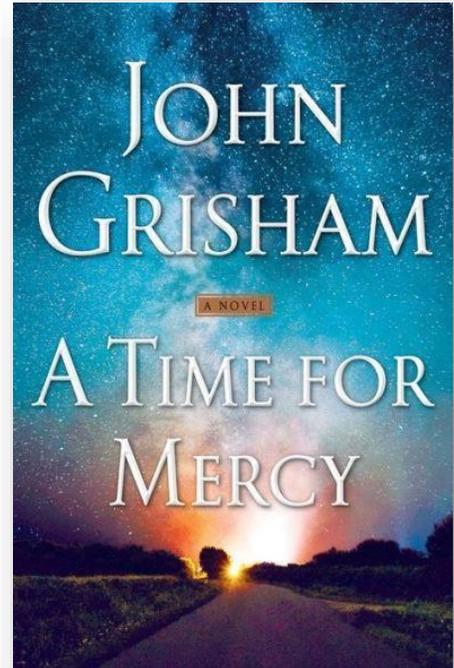
Book Review by Maureen Lang

A Time for Mercy by John Grisham is another new book that is available in the Starkville Public Library. For those of you Grisham fans, this book does not disappoint. It brings us back again to interact with Jake Brigance, the likeable, earnest lawyer that we first came to know in *A Time to Kill* and again in *Sycamore Row*.

Once again Jake is caught up as a defendant in a case that is unpopular. A 16-year-old boy, Drew Gamble, is the victim of his tragic circumstances, and through a series of horrible situations kills Stuart Kofer, the off-duty deputy policeman and boyfriend of his mother whom he has lived with in fear for over a year. The policeman is well liked and supported by the whole North Mississippi town of Clanton. He is hardworking and respected; but he becomes a whole different person after hours. Jake is coerced by Judge Noose into defending the boy who appears at least two years younger than he really is. Jake and Drew both become the enemy of most of the town, leading to threats of physical danger and emotional stress. Throughout the book, we experience all the twists and turns in an attorney's defense plan; and we find ourselves rooting for him. We see how Jake builds up sympathy and support where there was initially overwhelming antagonism.

At the same time as the trial time is nearing, another possible big money case is also coming on the docket. This is particularly important since Jake is in very a precarious state financially. He has little money, lots of bills, and is trying to get a second mortgage on his house just to keep the law practice running. The murder case is undermining Jake's bargaining position in the settlement of this unrelated case. Lots of pressure is falling on Jake and his family in many ways.

The story ends with the trial of Drew and includes many mitigating circumstances that really have a large part in driving Drew into committing the crime he is charged with. Grisham really forces the reader to



examine the whole idea behind the death penalty for murder and if it should be used with youth offenders. This was a really engaging read and hard to put down. I found myself wanting to pick up the book throughout the day just to see how it would end. The history of Drew's tragic upbringing was one that had a definite impact on me as we so often see this same result taking place around us. Grisham has left the book in a place where a sequel seems imminent. This looks good for future reads! I recommend you check this book out. It is an interesting, quick moving, and well-developed story. It would be the perfect book to take on your next vacation or even a quick getaway at home.

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