

# Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption (Bryan Stevenson)



## Info Sheet: Overview of 9 Lessons



The lessons have been designed by M.Ed. students in the course of the seminar *Teaching Life Writing in the EFL Classroom* by Prof. Dr. Susanne Heinz (summer term 2022) at Kiel University. Note that the teaching examples can be used in combination or as separate, short teaching units.

**About the book:** *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* is a memoir written by the US-American attorney Bryan Stevenson and was first published in 2014. The memoir focuses on the injustices in the US judicial system (with a particular focus on the issues of mass incarceration and death penalty), systemic racism, and other forms of discrimination. The memoir documents Stevenson's career as a defence attorney and his work with disadvantaged clients. The book alternates between chapters reporting Stevenson's efforts to free the wrongfully convicted Walter McMillan, who was sentenced to death, and chapters documenting Stevenson's work in cases with clients who were convicted either wrongfully or in an unjust manner. Some of them were still children when they committed the crime for which they received a life sentence, others came from unstable homes, or were mentally impaired and thus should not have been held accountable for their crime in the same manner as non-disabled people.

*Just Mercy* offers a non-fictional account of many individual lives impacted by the current US judicial system. Stevenson tries to give an encompassing and detailed description of his clients' lives of whom quite a few were victims of domestic violence, rape or social/racial violence and discrimination. **Teachers might consider giving a trigger warning about these passages before reading a chapter or chapters from the book in class.**

**Felix Neesen, Lena Wollschlaeger**

Chapter 2: "Stand"

**Pauline Haberland**

Chapter 6: "Surely Doomed"

**David-Nikolai Adam, Silas Mehrens**

Chapter 8: "All God's Children"

**Carolin Hinrichs, Jasmina Schmerer**

Chapter 10: "Mitigation"

**Nathalie Stagnier**

Chapter 14: "Cruel and Unusual"

**Tilmann Neu**

Documentary: *True Justice: Bryan Stevenson's Fight for Equality* (directed by Peter Kunhardt)

## References / Further Resources:



*Recommended for purchase by students:*

**Book:** Stevenson, Bryan. 2020. *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. London: Scribe Publications. First published in 2014.



**Film:** Cretton, Destin Daniel (Director). 2020. *Just Mercy* [Film]. Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.



**Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) webpage:** *About EJI and Just Mercy*. <<https://justmercy.eji.org>>



**HBO-Documentary:** Kunhardt, Peter (Director). 2020. *True Justice: Bryan Stevenson's Fight for Equality* [Film]. HBO Documentary Films; Kunhardt Film Foundation. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfZPI4CFEUC>>



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