

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.

The teaching unit focuses on Stevenson's multiple award-winning life writing text *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* which was first published in 2014 and has also been adapted to a film in 2019. In his memoir Stevenson talks about his career as a defense attorney fighting for legal representation of his disadvantaged clients. The memoir thereby gives first-hand insights into the injustices of 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 chapters of the book document Stevenson's work on cases with clients who were convicted either wrongfully or in an unjust manner: Most of them people of color, some of them still children when they committed the crime for which they received a life sentence, others coming from unstable homes, or being mentally impaired and thus should not have been held accountable for their crime in the same manner as non-disabled people. 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 some 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). 2019. *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). 2019. *True Justice: Bryan Stevenson's Fight for Equality* [Film]. HBO Documentary Films; Kunhardt Film Foundation. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfZPl4CFEuc>>