



***Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson**

Discussion Questions

1. How does Stevenson get close to the incarcerated people he is helping?
Can you be an effective criminal lawyer without getting close?
2. How does Stevenson's work shape his understanding of the justice system? Do his experiences make him more or less empathetic to those in the justice system?
3. As a result of his work with low income and incarcerated people, Stevenson concludes that "the opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice" (p 18). What does this statement mean? What examples in the book inform Stevenson's position on poverty and justice?
4. Why do you think black people are excluded from the juries of black defendants? What factors should influence jury selection?
5. Why do you think mental illness often goes unaddressed at trial? Should it be considered? What is our responsibility to people with mental health issues when these individuals become involved in the justice system?

6. Did Stevenson's examples resonate with you or were you shocked?

Consider your reaction and how it would differ if you were of a different race or class; were the victim of a serious crime; or had personal experience with the justice system.

7. The United States' use of the death penalty differs from other countries' use. What do you know about other countries and their position on and enforcement of capital punishment? How might politics, religion, culture and/or history play a role?

8. Does it matter whether Stevenson's clients are truthful? Should their honesty affect how well he defends them? Why?

9. What did this book teach you about the legal process in the United States that you did not know already?

10. Are you compelled to take action after reading the book? If so, what would that action look like? Are there local or national groups that you would work with to make your action more powerful?

(Go Big Read: UW-Madison Common Book Program)

Find additional copies of printable discussion questions here:

www.sussexlibraries.org/just-mercy-adepted-young-adults

