



Just Mercy

Dorothy Van Soest

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Bernadette Baker lives through every mother's worst nightmare when her adopted sixteen-year-old daughter, Veronica, is brutally murdered in a shocking and random act of violence. Ten years later the murderer, Raelynn Blackwell, is facing execution for her crime, and despite being united in their grief over Veronica, the Baker family is deeply divided on the subject of the death penalty. On one side is Veronica's deeply spiritual and sensitive brother who believes that the death penalty is the last thing his baby sister would have wanted. On the opposite side is their tough-as-nails older sister who vehemently believes that death is the only way justice will be served. In the center is Bernadette, who is deeply ambivalent and longs for a resolution that will help her family move forward. After Raelynn receives a last-minute stay of execution, a secret is revealed that changes everything and leads to an unlikely bond between Raelynn and Bernadette. Just Mercy is a heart-wrenching and ultimately redemptive family drama of forgiveness, destiny, and the true nature of justice.

Just Mercy Details

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Author : Dorothy Van Soest

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From Reader Review Just Mercy for online ebook

Heather Osborne says

Reviewed on behalf of Readers' Favorite

Just Mercy by Dorothy Van Soest is a novel about one woman's personal struggle to overcome the murder of her daughter. Bernadette Baker has waited many years to see the woman who brutally murdered her youngest daughter, Veronica, come to justice. After trials, appeals, and waiting, Raelynn Blackwell is going to be executed for her crime. Yet, with a stay of execution, Bernadette finds herself thrown into a journey of self-discovery, and learning how far a person can go to find forgiveness. After a program where she has the chance to confront Raelynn for her crime, Bernadette feels she has to seek out the offender's mother, trying to make peace between the neglectful mother and incarcerated daughter. However, when a shocking fact comes to light, will Bernadette still feel the same about seeing Raelynn put to death for her crimes?

I have always been one to appreciate a well-researched novel, and Just Mercy is certainly that. Miss Soest has taken the time to really explore the many faceted sides of the legal system, and how each individual person is impacted by a crime. Just Mercy has an excellent flow, and the story kept my attention from page one. My heart broke for Bernadette and her family. I work with victims of crime, and I can say from experience, how each of her family members felt about the execution is a fair representation of what families of victims go through. I admired Bernadette as a character, and found her very realistic. Just Mercy by Dorothy Van Soest is an excellent novel, well worth the read for anyone faced with a difficult decision in their path, and desiring the strength to overcome it and find peace.

Mary Avery Kabrich says

Excellent! Dorothy takes a complex emotionally laden issue and provides us with authentic characters who struggle to come to an understanding. She does an excellent job of portraying the many ways grief can be expressed. And, the story itself is a page-turner.

Susan Sunflower says

Reviews:

JUST MERCY by Dorothy Van Soest - This is a well told story of a huge issue in our time - the death penalty. Also the way of drugs, though this is on the sidelines.

It's a well told story of the victim's family as they deal with the years after the murder of a daughter. Each watches the slow progress of punishment of the killer - a poor, woman with no memory of the incident, due to drugs. One supports the death penalty, one doesn't, the others deal with their emotions in relation to their principles ... The main character is the mother, who reaches out to the murderer, as she learning more about her than any of us would want to know, as she also wishes for the end of the story, death as appropriate.

The end is surprising, as is the mother's ability to balance her feelings, those of her family, and of the young murderer. Bernadette and her husband work hard to keep a strong family balanced as they deal with this increasingly frequent horror our everyday lives.

I strongly recommend this book!

Susan Sunflower
North Carolina

Lisa says

Just an okay read. Writing was mediocre at best.

Vivian Murray says

Dorothy Van Soest's book "Just Mercy" painted a vivid picture relative to the process of healing after a family tragedy. Van Soest's knowledge of the prison system, and what goes on behind the bars, gives the reader an insight at what the guilty, and sometimes non-guilty, prisoners may experience as they take the walk to the execution chamber. And, her portrait of the individual family members made me feel their loss of their daughter/sister/aunt and the path they each took to deal with such a tragic journey. Well done!

Fran C C says

I like the different aspects within the family dynamics but for some reason I felt no emotional attachment. I would recommend the book to others. I was not surprised by the twist of the narrative. I will meet the author this week. Im excited!

Mary says

You really need to read this book. I laughed, I cried, I got angry. outstanding. I LOVED the book. it is just wonderful!! I highly recommend it to anyone who has a heart and/or a social conscience. Dorothy Van Soest carries us into the lives of the Baker family, where one daughter is murdered, and through the shock and trauma of that event the family comes to grips with the meaning of each of their own lives and their personal stance toward the death penalty. But it is so much more than that. It is about love and forgiveness. It is about family. It is about personal strength and openness to change. It is about failed justice and restorative justice and, and, and. Just go read it!!

Nathan Seney says

This heart wrenching tale of a family's tribulations with homicide and the death penalty follows the family of a murder victim from the moment of the crime to the scheduled execution of the murderer a decade later. Dorothy Van Soest applies her research into real life death penalty cases in Texas to this fictional composite of victims, their families and the offenders themselves. It is an unapologetic and thought provoking look at the issue with many view points in a riveting page turner.

Jill says

Good story.

Rose says

Just Mercy is an excellent read! I received the book through Goodreads First Reads and I highly recommend it to all who appreciate a mystery grounded in the stark reality of capital punishment and the criminal and social justice system. Well-written and thoroughly researched, it is a must read for anyone who enjoys fiction with substance, one that goes beyond entertainment and deals with social issues. I thoroughly enjoyed it and I'm looking forward to her next novel based on her experiences with the child welfare system.

Winston says

This wasn't great. A friend suggested it, which forced me to stick it out. I wouldn't have finished it otherwise.

Characters were sort of one dimensional. The older sister was firmly about the execution, the brother wasn't. They were so ingrained in their own opinions, and they didn't attempt to resolve difference but just plowed ahead, regardless of the situation. The Dad definitely has other things to care about. He's probably the best character in the book

The Mom made wildly swinging decisions with a strangely fanatic commitments to whims, only to have they work out in shoehorned coincidence. Like the long time friend who she bumped into in the grocery store? She was introduced in the beginning of the chapter and promptly exited stage left after a dozen pages.

And then the characters just seem so wrapped up in the execution WHILE THE DAD GOES TO CHEMO BY HIMSELF??? Like. The author tries to show the concern they had about the execution by juxtaposing it to cancer, but that seemed out of touch with how a family would react.

Finally, the twist is so obscene that it failed to impress me. Maybe if the set up was better, or if the plot didn't have so many random coincidences, it might have elicited an emotional response. Instead it came off as additionally unrealistic.

In the end, the author seems to try to baby feed a view point to you, rather than allowing a situation to lend itself to an interpretation. It might be partially using a third person view, that allowed for narration that over explained and a plot that relied too heavily on coincidence for solutions.

Just my opinions. I'm sure other people can find good qualities and resonant sincerely with the text.

Linda Marie Marsh says

Is there mercy in justice? IS there justice in mercy?? Two questions that just might pop into your mind as you read this incredible book. A daughter and sister is murdered, and the killer is caught and is justly imprisoned awaiting execution. Simple enough right? Wrong.

Bernadette Baker (mother of the victim) is prepared to witness the execution of this killer and just wants to meet her face to face first. And the roller coaster of emotions begins....not for her alone but for her entire family. AND THE READER! The writing is so very real that you are totally immersed into the storyline. Good lord I wanted to shake people, vent MY thoughts and feelings and in the end? I wanted to pass the box of tissue I had by my chair.

Kat says

This is an excellent book I really liked the different attitudes of the family members and how each person dealt with the situations, I would have liked it perhaps to have been even more in depth but this didn't spoil the enjoyment of the book at all and would give it four and a half stars if I could ... A definite recommendation to read from me

Nancy Gisvold says

This book should be required reading for everyone. It is a true eye opener.

Kathy says

I received this as part of the Goodreads Giveaways and I couldn't wait to read it. The plot really intrigued me. Once I started, I didn't want to stop. The characters were interesting and I found myself trying to decide if the experiences and feelings they were having would be something I would go through or not. It is certainly an experience (having a daughter murdered and seeing the person responsible for that on death row) that not everyone will go through, but their reactions tell you that capital punishment is a volatile topic and one that isn't always black and white for people.

This is definitely one worth reading and would make a great book club choice just to have the opportunity to talk about it when you finally finish reading it!
