

2022 SHU Reads! Essay Contest/Book Review Prompt

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson

This assignment calls for a 3- to 5-page book review on Bryan Stevenson's *Just Mercy*. A successful essay will utilize features of the various book reviews that are discussed in the Core English I text, *Everyone's An Author*, including:

- A clear sense of audience
- A concise summary of the plot
- An evaluation of the text and the author's argument and rhetorical choices
- A recommendation for your audience (see below regarding audience)

More specifically, be sure to consider the following, especially in your pre-writing:

- What did you like/dislike/find intriguing about the book's portrayal of **one or more of the following themes**: the U.S. criminal justice system, the U.S. prison system, mental health treatment, poverty, homelessness, post-traumatic stress syndrome, childhood sentencing, legal representation for the poor, antiquated laws, disproportionate numbers of men of color in prisons, and/or other relevant themes?
- Do your thoughts on these themes affect your recommendation? **Choose one of these issues above**; that subject matter will be the focus of your review.
- How did *Just Mercy* either change or reinforce your ideas about **(insert your chosen topic here)**?

Audience/Venue:

Depending on your chosen topic(s), choose a magazine, journal, blog, website, social media platform/thread, or other medium as a potential publication venue and audience for your review. Your professor may need to approve the publication. **Make sure you identify the audience and the purpose of this publication in some way early on in your essay.**

Summary:

In short, you will write a **3-5 page analytical book review** for your publication of choice addressing Stevenson's handling of this issue and why readers should, or shouldn't, read this book based on its potential contributions to society, its handling – or mishandling – of said topics, and its overall readability as well as your personal insights and analysis on the book. **It should end with a recommendation to the particular audience based on the subject matter chosen.**

In writing the paper, you will need to refer to the book; therefore, you will need to include in-text references and a Works Cited page.

If you have any questions, please be sure to check with your instructor or Dr. Kelly Shea, Associate Professor of English/Director of the First-Year Writing Program and SHU Reads! committee member, Kelly.shea@shu.edu.

If this essay is being submitted for the SHU Reads! Essay Contest, it will be due on November 1, 2022. Instructions for submission will be supplied by your instructor.