

Sycamore Row Study Guide

Sycamore Row by John Grisham

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Contents

Sycamore Row Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-10.....	5
Chapters 11-20.....	8
Chapters 21-30.....	11
Chapters 31-40.....	14
Chapters 41-48.....	17
Characters.....	20
Symbols and Symbolism.....	23
Settings.....	25
Themes and Motifs.....	26
Styles.....	28
Quotes.....	29



Plot Summary

Sycamore Row is a novel by John Grisham. Returning to his roots, the author brings back the beloved characters of *A Time to Kill* to take on a new case. Seth Hubbard, dying of cancer, has taken his own life. Before doing so, however, he sends a handwritten will to Jake Brigance with orders to defend it at all costs. This will leaves the largest fortune ever seen in Ford County to Mr. Hubbard's maid at the exclusion of his two grown children and four grandchildren. Determined to prove that this will was made from undue influence by the maid, Mr. Hubbard's children sue. Once again Jake finds himself in a questionable position as the past comes back to haunt the legacy of the Hubbard family. *Sycamore Row* is a return to the legal thriller that will feel familiar to his fans and bring a new generation of readers.

Seth Hubbard hangs himself from a sycamore tree on his family property. An employee finds him and immediately calls the police. At his home, a specific suicide note is found that not only expresses that Seth has killed himself of his own free will, but also gives specific instructions for his funeral. Seth was something of a recluse, but everyone knew he was dying of cancer and are not unduly shocked by his death.

Jake Brigance finds an envelope in his mail on the Monday after Seth's death that includes a will and a letter instructing Jake to make sure the will is enforced no matter what. Jake does as he is told, waiting until just moments after the funeral to file the will in court. The following day, another will is presented, one that benefits Seth's two grown children rather than the maid who receives the bulk of his estate in the new will. When the family learns of the new will, they immediately hire lawyers and begin to fight.

Jake finds himself embroiled in yet another big, controversial trial. The opposition brings in a large number of lawyers, all from the city and ready to fight, while Jake is just a street lawyer from Clanton. The maid, Lettie Lang, hires a Memphis lawyer who only gets in the way and causes trouble in regard to the jury pool. Lettie's husband, too, begins to cause trouble. Simeon has always been trouble, drinking too much and sometimes getting violent. However, when he learns his wife is set to inherit more than twenty million dollars, he tries to become a model husband. In the end, however, the draw of the liquor proves to be too much. Simeon is arrested for manslaughter when he causes an accident that kills two popular high school kids.

As Jake prepares for trial, his old boss Lucien tries to find a reason why Seth Hubbard would leave his fortune to Lettie, a woman he had only known for three years. In this investigation, Lucien discovers that Lettie is part of a family, the Rinds, who disappeared from Ford County shortly after Seth's father came to own eighty acres that belonged to Sylvester Rinds. Finding Seth's younger brother, Ancil, finally answers a great number of questions that have been unanswered for many years.

At trial, Jake is convinced that he is losing when Lettie is caught lying on the stand about a will a previous employer had written that left her fifty thousand dollars. The other side also proves that Seth had an eye for young, black women and might have



had an affair with Lettie. However, when Lucien delivers a videotape deposition from Ancil that claims he and Seth watched their father murder Sylvester Rinds in order to steal his land from Rinds' widow, Jake wins the case.

Appeals would have dragged out the case for many years to come, but the judge hammers out a settlement that leaves all sides with a little something. At the same time, Ancil Hubbard is finally able to put the past in the past and move on with his life after running from it for fifty years.



Chapters 1-10

Summary

Chapter 1

Seth Hubbard is found hanging from a sycamore tree by an employee he asked to meet him there. The police come and cut Seth down before finding a suicide note at his house.

Chapter 2

Jake, as usual, stops at a local café for breakfast Monday morning before going to work. At the café, he hears about the suicide of Seth Hubbard.

Chapter 3

Jake's secretary, Roxy, brings in the mail when she arrives, late, at the office. Among the bills and other correspondence, Jake finds an envelope from Seth Hubbard. Jake, understanding the importance of this item, takes it directly to his office and carefully opens it. A letter and a handwritten will are inside. The will leaves the bulk of Seth's estate to his maid, Lettie Lang, and the letter instructs Jake to fight for the will at all costs. Jake makes copies of the letter and will before going to see Ozzie, the local sheriff. Ozzie is able to tell Jake a little about Lettie Lang.

Chapter 4

Herschel Hubbard, Seth's only son, arrives at his father's house. Lettie is there and Herschel treats her like a servant. Ramona, Herschel's sister, joins him a short time later with her husband, Ian. The three of them talk about Seth, but their main interest seems to be their inheritance. They search the house for any financial records, but do not find any.

Chapter 5

Jake does some simple research on Seth Hubbard, first checking out land deeds and later visiting Harry Rex, the lawyer who handled Seth's second divorce. Jake learns that Seth lost everything in the second divorce but built up a sizable fortune in the ten years that followed. Lettie goes home after listening to Herschel and Ramona speak of nothing but the money they hope to be inheriting, worried about how she will care for her large family with no income and a missing husband.

Chapter 6

Jake and Ozzie go to the funeral together. They both find Ramona and Herschel to be fakes. Jake briefly speaks with Russell Amburgh, the executor named in the will. Jake



immediately goes to file the will as soon as the funeral is over, as instructed in the letter from Seth. Later, that night, Lettie is sitting in the yard speaking to Simeon, her husband who has surprisingly returned home, when Jake arrives. Jake pulls Lettie aside and tells her that Seth left a will in which she is a benefactor.

Chapter 7

Jake discusses the case with his wife. Carla is the first to question if there was a sexual relationship between Seth and Lettie. Jake also gets a report on the background of Seth and Amburgh, but it does not give him much he did not already know.

Chapter 8

Jake meets with Russell Amburgh. Amburgh tells him that Seth built up his fortune by making purchases of multiple businesses on credit. When it all began to pay off, Seth consolidated all the business under one corporation and then sold it. With the proceeds, Seth paid off all his debt, leaving him with something in the neighborhood of twenty million dollars. When Amburgh learns he details of the new will, he becomes upset and tells Jake he wants nothing to do with it.

Chapter 9

Lettie is at Seth's house when a group of lawyers arrive to speak to Ramona, Ian, and Herschel. The lawyers tell them that they have a will that leaves eighty percent of Seth's money to them. The lawyers have not filed the will for probate yet, but they assure the heirs that it will be a simple process. Ian and Herschel begin to dream of how they will spend the money as they are both in need of cash for different reasons. When Herschel prepares to leave, he pays Lettie for the last few days and then fires her.

Chapter 10

The lawyers from the Rush law firm who have Seth's other will arrive at the courthouse to file their will, but are shocked to learn another has already been filed. The lawyers immediately go to Jake to ask him to withdraw his will, but he refuses. Later, Jake has lunch with Lucien and discusses the case with him.

Analysis

The author of this novel has returned to beloved characters from his first novel to give his readers a new legal thriller. Jake Brigance is the lawyer from the novel, *A Time to Kill*, who fought against overwhelming odds to get an acquittal for a father who killed the two men who raped and beat his daughter, leaving her to die. Jake won that case, but at great sacrifice to him and his family when their home was burned down and their dog killed. In this novel, Jake again finds himself in the middle of a controversial case when Seth Hubbard, a local business man, kills himself and leaves behind a handwritten will with instructions to Jake to defend at all costs. The will leaves nearly everything to



Seth's maid of three years, Lettie Lang, to the exclusion of his grown children and grandchildren.

Jake is no stranger to controversy and he takes this case with gusto, especially since it means a steady income to his law firm that has been struggling to stay afloat. Jake was only paid nine hundred dollars for his biggest case and often represents people who have no money or simply will not pay their bills. Jake and his wife are still fighting the insurance company over the pay out on their former home and living in a tiny rental. The case can only bring good things to the Brigance family as it promises a steady income.

The first question on everyone's mind when they learn of Seth's new will is why he chose to leave everything to his maid and not his children. The reader, too, must wonder this. Seth's children are unpleasant, selfish people. However, the reader cannot imagine that this would cause such a man to disinherit them, especially when the prior will left nearly everything to his children. It must be something huge that caused such a shift and the reader eagerly anticipates finding out what it is.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Seth Hubbard kill himself? Where does he do it? Where does he leave the suicide note?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Jake take on the case of defending Seth Hubbard's will? How is this case sure to be controversial? Does this aid in Jake's decision to take it?

Discussion Question 3

How much money does Seth Hubbard leave behind? Where did he get it? Who feels most entitled to the money? Why?

Vocabulary

Managed, inherit, attic, estate, predominantly, combination, reflection, consider, valuable, divorces, managed, executor, decision, managed, jury, fascinating, demand, deposit, contest, disbarred, scratched, assuming, readiness, adjusted, refolded, consideration, humor, meddling, assure, relatives, asset.



Chapters 11-20

Summary

Chapter 11

Ian is dreaming of how the money from Seth's will can help him pay off many of his business debts when he gets the call from the lawyers about the new will. Herschel hears the news as he dreams of the new car he will buy with the money. Lettie visits Jake's office and learns the details of the new will for the first time. Lettie is shocked because she had no idea how much Seth had left her. Jake cautions Lettie about getting a lawyer. Later, Jake speaks with the local reporter, Dumas Lee, trying to brush him off as questions about the will come up. Then Lucien shows up, making Jake nervous as he is afraid Lucien plans to retake the bar and return to the law.

Chapter 12

A hearing is held in regards to the will. Jake is not happy that Lettie has hired an outrageous lawyer from Memphis. It seems that everyone concerned has a lawyer, making the number of lawyers present nearly twelve. The judge is clearly annoyed by this and instructs the lawyers to par things down some. Mr. Amburgh requests to be taken off the case, and the judge agrees. Sistrunk, Lettie's lawyer, then makes a spectacle of himself by asking that Jake be removed from the case. He asks the law firm to replace Jake as both the lawyer of record and the executor. The judge denies his motion. Later, the judge instructs him on whom to choose as executor and tells him how much he will be paid per hour for his work.

Chapter 13

Harry Rex warns Jake to get rid of Sistrunk or he will lose the case before it even goes to trial, something Jake already knew. A short time later, Jake learns that his old nemesis, Rufus Buckley, has agreed to be the local counsel working with Sistrunk. Jake and Buckley faced off in the Hailey trial when Buckley was the district attorney, a role he has since relinquished when he lost the last election. Jake then gets the latest gossip and checks into the case that sent Lettie's eldest son, Marvis, to federal prison. At the same time, Ian's lawyer tries to convince Ian to get Herschel to fire his lawyer and sign on with him.

Chapter 14

Jake goes to the Berring Lumber Company, one of Seth's many companies and where he kept his main office. Jake speaks to the employees there and learns that a man posing as a lawyer spoke to them and encouraged them to lie about Seth's state of mind in the days leading up to his death. Jake goes through Seth's records and speaks to each employee individually.



Chapter 15

Lettie is growing frustrated with the growing number of family members suddenly showing up at her house. If not for a loan from Sistrunk, she could not even afford to feed them all. Lettie sends Simeon to get some groceries, but he goes to a bar to gamble instead. When Simeon is kicked out of the bar and tries to drive home, he is arrested. Ozzie arranges to have the case postponed with help from Jake.

Chapter 16

Jake and Carla go to the parole hearing of one of the men convicted of burning down their house. While at the prison, Jake visits Lettie's son and talks him into convincing Lettie to fire Sistrunk.

Chapter 17

Word spreads around town that Lettie and her family has moved into a larger house closer to the white side of town. This does not sit well with a lot of people as it looks like she is already spending money she has not yet inherited. Gossip also spreads about Sistrunk and rumors that he often had as many money problems as his clients.

Chapter 18

At another hearing for the case, Sistrunk and Buckley cause such a disruption when the judge asks them to move away from one of the tables in order to let Jake sit down that the judge has them both arrested for contempt. Buckley is horrified, but Sistrunk has clearly gotten what he wanted.

Chapter 19

Buckley promptly apologizes to the court the following day when given the opportunity, but Sistrunk refuses, preferring to take the publicity that followed. Afterward, a young woman named Portia Lang arrives in Jake's office offering to help with the case. Portia is Lettie's daughter and she has recently returned home after serving in the Army. Jake convinces Portia to convince her mother to fire Sistrunk.

Chapter 20

Ancil Hubbard has been on the run most of his life, using false identities for the past fifteen years. Now Ancil is in Juneau Alaska, working as a bartender and thinking about doing a drug deal for some extra cash.

Jake, Portia, and Lettie have a meeting in the judge's chambers with Atlee and Sistrunk. Lettie fires Sistrunk and the judge informs the lawyer that he is no longer welcome in his courtroom.



Analysis

Jake quickly begins working the case, but things get out of hand when Lettie hires an outrageous lawyer from Memphis who wants to make everything about race. Jake can see how this man is poisoning the jury pool against Lettie and wants to run him out of town. However, the lawyer seems to have the same feelings for Jake. In the end, however, the lawyer from Memphis seems to underestimate the judge and ends up in jail for contempt. It might be just a ploy to raise his publicity, but it leads to Lettie finally standing up to her husband and firing the lawyer.

Lettie's relationship with her husband has always been a difficult one. Simeon is a drunk and a womanizer who has never made a steady paycheck. This has caused a great deal of difficulty for Lettie as she struggles to raise five kids essentially on her own, not to mention her sick mother. Now, with the news that she is about to inherit a great deal of money, Lettie finds herself with relatives coming out of the woodwork and a husband who is bouncing back and forth between being the perfect husband and getting himself arrested for DUI. It is clear that Lettie needs to take control of her life and start laying down boundaries, but she is a gentle woman who very rarely stands up for herself, so it is unlikely she will.

Discussion Question 1

Why are there so many lawyers in the courtroom at the first hearing for the will? How does the judge respond to this?

Discussion Question 2

What is an executor? Why does Amburgh quit as the executor? What does this mean for Jake?

Discussion Question 3

Who is Portia? Why does she become involved in the case?

Vocabulary

Adjourned, command, significant, citation, contempt, preside, suppress, stranded, observation, interested, review, common, terminate, scratched, paragraph, reporter, hustled, action, comfortably, motions, recognize, lawyer, managed, bluntly, federal, violations, comply, lawsuit.



Chapters 21-30

Summary

Chapter 21

Jake hires Portia as an intern because she wants to become a lawyer and he needs someone to do research. Jake sees the first inventory on Seth's estate and is happy to see it is as big as Amburgh predicted. Later, he goes to the judge to get his first paycheck and to discuss certain aspects of the case.

Chapter 22

The lawyers begin the depositions with Lettie. Before they can begin, Buckley comes in and insists that he represents Simeon, but the judge throws him out since Simeon is not directly involved in the case. The depositions proceed with the lawyers interviewing all the major players by the end of the week. Lettie drops the bomb that she was with Seth when he wrote out the new will, but she knew nothing about it. Herschel and Ramona try to make their relationships with their father seem better than they were.

Chapter 23

Jake has drinks with Herschel's lawyer who asks him to settle, but Jake refuses. Later he speaks with Harry Rex who tells him a friend, Willie Traynor, is selling his Victorian home and wants Jake and his wife to have it.

Chapter 24

Lucien corners Jake on the weekend and tells him his theory that Lettie, whose biological mother died when she was a toddler, was a member of the Rind family, a family that left Ford County mysteriously in 1930. That is the same year Seth Hubbard's father came to own a piece of land that once belonged to Sylvester Rind. Lucien does not have a connection between the land and the Rinds leaving the area yet, but he believes it all has something to do with why Seth would leave Lettie all his money. Jake gives him permission to pursue it. Christmas comes and goes. Jake and Carla are given the option of buying Willie Traynor's house for half the market value.

Chapter 25

Wade Lanier, Ian's lawyer, finds evidence that Lettie Lang once was the recipient of a large inheritance in a will handwritten by a previous employee. Lanier has his investigator find the will and steal copies of it. At the same time, Portia searches for a connection to the Rind family.

Chapter 26



Jake fires his secretary, Roxy, and promotes Portia to secretary. That Friday, Jake goes to see the judge at his home to discuss expenses involving the case and to be paid again. They discuss the case and the judge warns Jake not to buy a new house at the moment because it could look bad.

Chapter 27

A stranger shows up at Lettie's home claiming to be a relative. This man is part of the Rind family and he has a family tree that Portia finds exciting. However, the relative has nothing new to add to the history of the family and only seems to be after money.

Chapter 28

There is another hearing over the case in which the judge accepts the stipulation from both sides that Seth wrote the handwritten will, reducing the number of experts necessary for the case. Jake suggests a change of venue, but this is argued against by the other lawyers and the judge. The judge later suggests a settlement, but Jake refuses on the grounds that Seth wanted him to fight at all costs. Later that night, two local high school boys are killed when Simeon, drunk driving, hits them head on. Jake rushes to the hospital to console Lettie and is shocked when Dumas Lee accuses him of being the lawyer that postponed Simeon's previous DUI.

Chapter 29

Carla tells Jake how to handle the implication that he is partially to blame for the deaths of two local high school boys because of his role in Simeon's previous DUI. Jake goes to the local café and makes it clear that he had nothing to do with Simeon. Portia informs Jake of threatening phone calls her family has been getting. Ozzie sends a patrol car to Lettie's house. Lettie gives the deputy a letter for the family of the boys killed in the accident.

Chapter 30

Harry Rex arranges for a friend to represent Simeon at his first court appearance, taking Jake's name off the record. That Friday, the father of the two boys killed in the accident shows up and asks Jake to tell Lettie and Simeon that he and his wife forgive Simeon for the accident. When Jake hears this, he tells the man Portia is Simeon's daughter and has him give his message to her.

Analysis

Work on the case progresses and things seem to be looking up for Jake now that Sistrunk is gone. The judge even chases away Buckley when he tries to be part of the depositions. The depositions go well. Lettie is honest with all she knows, even shocking the other side by admitting to being with Seth the day he wrote the will. Everything seems on track. However, two things go wrong. First, the opposing side finds evidence that Lettie has been in this position once before with another employer. Second, Lettie's



husband is in a drunk driving accident that kills two local high school boys. This poisons the jury pool against Lettie, especially when it looks like Jake might be blamed for representing Simeon in a previous DUI and getting it postponed. Jake is able to mitigate the damage, but it still seems Lettie might have trouble getting a fair jury.

Jake hires Portia, much like he did Roark in the previous novel. Portia proves to be helpful when she does most of the research for Jake. However, Portia also finds herself embroiled in Lucien's scheme to find a reason why Seth left the money to Lettie. Lucien thinks that Lettie is part of a family that once owned land that is now owned by Seth and that the land might have been taken in such a way that it caused all the members of that family to leave the area and never come back. It is an interesting theory, though Lucien and Portia are finding it difficult to find evidence to support it.

Discussion Question 1

Who are the Rinds? Why does Lucien think Lettie is a Rinds? What would it mean if she is?

Discussion Question 2

What is a deposition? What is revealed during Lettie's deposition? What could this mean for the case?

Discussion Question 3

How does Simeon's drunk driving accident impact the case? Why is Jake careful to keep his own name out of the situation?

Vocabulary

Corporation, extreme, proponents, unravel, handwritten, harassment, complaint, dismissed, incomprehensible, visual, revenge, forgiveness, victory, slaughtered, humanly, forgive, importance, hatred, grief, heartfelt, conveyed, meditation, received, horrified, nightmare, service, proof.



Chapters 31-40

Summary

Chapter 31

Lanier's investigator finds a woman who sued Seth Hubbard for sexual harassment and won an out of court settlement. This woman is black. Ian finally convinces Herschel to fire his lawyer and join Ian's. Simeon Lang is served with divorce papers.

Chapter 32

Jake learns that Herschel fired his lawyer and that Lettie has gotten a job. Portia also tells him that she thinks she has found someone who can give them information on the Ford County Rinds. Harry Rex promises to get a settlement from the insurance company for Jake and Carla so they can buy Willie Traynor's house.

Chapter 33

Jake meets with the judge again. This time the judge refuses to approve the expense of a jury consultant for Jake. Portia and Lettie go to visit the Rinds relative Charlie sent them to see. This man tells them that Sylvester Rinds was killed by white men.

Chapter 34.

Portia shows Jake a court docket that shows a case over a property dispute between Cleon Hubbard and Sylvester Rinds in 1928. The fact that Sylvester still owned the property in 1930 when he apparently died suggests he won the case, an unusual fact for the time. However, Portia cannot find any more information about the case.

Chapter 35

At a pretrial hearing, Jake is annoyed when Lanier gives him a long list of witnesses he did not previously have. The judge also instructs Lanier to take lead at the trial even though there are still three separate lawyers representing the Hubbard children and grandchildren. Both sides receive the list of potential jurors and spend the night trying to get as much information on them as possible.

Chapter 36

Ancil Hubbard is injured in a bar fight. Shortly afterward, the police raid his rooms and find cocaine. Ancil's name is entered into a database where it is spotted by the investigators Jake has hired to find him. Jake sends Lucien up to find out if the man is really Ancil Hubbard. Lucien sneaks into the man's room and asks him repeatedly what happened to Sylvester Rinds.



Chapter 37

Jake and Portia work hard trying to memorize information on the jurors. Harry Rex gives Jake a check for the insurance settlement. Jake spends the evening with his wife celebrating the settlement. Afterward, they stop by the Traynor house where Willie insists on making a verbal deal on the house immediately.

Chapter 38

As everyone prepares for the case, Lucien meets the man he believes to be Ancil Hubbard for the first time. That night the man calls Lucien and asks to meet.

Chapter 39

The potential jurors arrive at the courthouse and begin the process of being interviewed and chosen. It takes one day to seat twelve jurors and two alternatives.

Chapter 40

Lucien spends the next day playing cards with the man he believes to be Ancil. The man refuses to admit the truth; however, until Lucien tells him he will inherit a million dollars from Seth's estate. Jake spends the evening debating over whether to tell the jury how much the estate is worth. Lucien calls him with news of finding Ancil Hubbard. Traynor tells Jake that one of his jurors has a prejudice against blacks because his cousin was attacked by a couple of black men in Memphis.

Analysis

As the trial date nears, Jake begins working harder to assure he wins his case. Jake once again goes through the preliminaries, trying to make sure his side as all the same advantages, or maybe more, than the opposing side. At the same time, Lucien and Portia continue to chase down the Rinds family in hopes of finding out why Lettie was Seth's chosen heir. Lucien believes there is something to it, but Jake does not seem interested.

Ancil Hubbard, Seth's long lost brother, has been found in Juneau. Lucien goes to speak to him, convinced that Ancil knows something about the Rinds family. Seth's letter mentions something Seth and Ancil saw as children and Lucien seems to think this is connected to Seth's motives. Unfortunately, the man in Alaska will not even admit to being Ancil until Lucien tells him of his inheritance. Now the reader must wonder about the honesty of the man..

Discussion Question 1

Who is Julina Kidd? Why is she important to the case? How does Lanier plan to use her testimony?



Discussion Question 2

Why does the judge make Lanier the spokesman for the opposing side? What does this say about Lanier's experience and the difficulty he might pose for Jake?

Discussion Question 3

Who is Ancil Hubbard? Why is Lucien searching for him? What impact might he have on the case?

Vocabulary

Prohibition, selection, eager, normally, reference, generally, inherit, impossible, journalist, answers, register, information, courtroom, arrested, committed, cousin, remembered, suicide, conversation, intrigued, eventually, determined, cocaine, surprises, painkillers, mentioned, fatigued, weary.



Chapters 41-48

Summary

Chapter 41

Both sides make their opening arguments. Jake begins by putting Ozzie on the stand and showing the suicide note and funeral instructions found after Seth's suicide. Jake then calls Calvin Boggs, the worker who found Seth's body. Jake then calls the county coroner and then his ex-secretary, Roxy, who testifies to the arrival of the letter containing Seth's will. Jake then enters the letter and the will into evidence. Quince Lundy testifies to the inventory of the estate and its net worth.

Chapter 42

Lucien returns to the hospital to find Ancil missing. Later that night, however, Ancil finds him. In court, Jake proceeds by interviewing churchgoers who saw Seth the day he died. Jake then puts Seth's oncologist on the stand who spoke of Seth's illness and his reluctance to take his pain meds. Jake then calls Seth's executive assistant who testified that Seth had been at work regularly up to the week he died. However Lanier has her testify to the fact that Seth made some poor business deals before he died. Another of Seth's employees testifies to the fact that Seth seemed confused quite often about details of some of the business deals they worked on together. After court, Jake and Harry Rex practice with Lettie for her testimony.

Chapter 43

Jake calls Lettie to the stand and she does well under his questioning. Lanier only asks her a few questions, most of them focused on her previous jobs. Lanier then calls a witness he claims will prove Lettie was lying on the stand. This witness, Fritz Pickering, claims Lettie worked for his mother and that he fired her when he discovered a handwritten will in which his mother left Lettie fifty thousand dollars. This makes Lettie look she has done this habitually. At the same time, Lucien takes Ancil to a local lawyer for a taped deposition.

Chapter 44

Jake is angry and upset to be caught unaware with the Pickering will. He wants to give up and quit, but Harry Rex will not allow it. After lunch, Lanier puts Herschel, the Ramona, and then Ian on the stand. Each one clearly lies about a close relationship to Seth. Then Lanier calls Julina Kidd to the stand. Jake protests, but her testimony is allowed.

Chapter 45



Lucien attempts to get home quickly, but his flights are either canceled or he misses a connection. Lucien becomes very drunk and when he finally lands in Memphis, he is arrested. Lanier and crew feel they have won the case, and Jake agrees. Thursday morning, Lucien calls Jake and tells him about the deposition. Jake sends Ozzie to get Lucien out of jail. Lanier calls a line of medical experts who testify to the effects of Seth's type of cancer and the painkillers he was taking. Lanier then has a lawyer from the Rush law firm testify to the previous will and has a tax attorney explain the details of the will.

Chapter 46

Ozzie manages to get Lucien out of jail with help from Sistrunk. They then go to the airport to track down Lucien's briefcase. They then return to Clanton in separate vehicles. The following morning, Jake watches the taped deposition. He is deeply affected. Jake takes the deposition and insists that the judge and the other lawyers watch it. Atlee agrees to enter it into evidence and it is played to the jurors. The deposition has Ancil telling how he saw his father and a group of local men hang Sylvester Rinds. A few days later, Ancil's father convinced Sylvester's wife to sign over the land belonging to the Rinds. A few days after that Ancil's father and the sheriff ran the Rinds off of the property.

Chapter 47

The lawyers give their closing statements. After a short deliberation, the jurors return with a verdict in Jake's favor.

Chapter 48

Judge Atlee meets with Portia and Jake to discuss a settlement. Atlee does not want his case to be overturned by the state supreme court. Portia thinks her mother will agree when Atlee offers her the original eighty acres that belonged to the Rinds, two million dollars, and an educational trust for Rinds family members. Ancil comes to Ford County, sees the tree where his brother died, the same one he thinks Sylvester Rinds hung from, and meets Lettie Lang.

Analysis

The trial begins. At first it appears that Jake is doing really well. Jake puts on a near flawless case. However, the opposing council has some secrets that shake Jake to his core, changing the course of the trial. Nothing could help Jake win at this point and he begins thinking of settling despite the fact that he has resisted the idea from the beginning. Everything changes when Lucien delivers a deposition taped in Alaska featuring Ancil Hubbard.

From the beginning, Seth referred to something he and his brother had witnessed as children. Now Ancil testifies to seeing his father kill Sylvester Rinds and stealing his land from his widow. It is a dark time in the history of not only the Hubbard family, but the



state of Mississippi. It also appears to change the minds of the jurors as they come back with a verdict in Jake's favor. However, even Lettie understands that this is not the end. The will will continue to be caught up in litigation for years to come as each side repeatedly appeals the decision. For this reason, the judge forces a settlement, leaving everyone with a little of what they have always wanted. Seth's wishes are fulfilled, but so are those of his children. In the end, Jake has won again.

Discussion Question 1

Who does Jake represent in the case of Seth Hubbard's estate? What does that mean for Lettie?

Discussion Question 2

Did Lettie lie about never having seen a will? Does this suggest she likes to trick old people into giving her money?

Discussion Question 3

What impact does Juliana Kidd have on the case? Why does Jake fight her testimony? Why does he lose?

Vocabulary

Wondering, enthusiastic, amends, appeals, desperate, judgment, injustice, reservations, trust, witness, blindside, retrial, reason, anxious, argument, reversed, verdict, contestants, forcefully, education, curiosity, pleasantries, exchanged, commented, preferred, leech, grateful, trusted, admissibility, celebrated, debated, trouble.



Characters

Jake Brigance

Jake Brigance is a lawyer who works in Clanton, Mississippi. Jake previously won a notorious case in which a black man murdered the two men who raped, beat, and left for dead his nine year old daughter. Jake continues to live in the shadow of that case, both living in fear of the men who burned down his home and in infamy for the publicity that case got him. Jake is handed the Seth Hubbard estate case when Seth sends him his last will. Jake fights to win the case, in part because of the notoriety it could get him and in part because of the request made by Seth in a letter addressed to him. Jake also likes making money for once. In the end, Jake wins his case and then allows it to be settled in light of pending appeals.

Harry Rex

Harry Rex is a much hated divorce lawyer in Clanton. Harry Rex and Jake have been friends for a long time. Harry Rex helped with the Hailey case and helps Jake once again on the Seth Hubbard estate case. Harry Rex also helps Jake get the insurance money for his previous house that was burned down during the Hailey case so that he and his wife can buy a new home.

Lucien Wilbanks

Lucien Wilbanks was once Jake's boss. Lucien comes from a long line of lawyers. Lucien's family is an old southern family that often was involved in unfortunate acts of brutality against blacks. Lucien has devoted himself to be an open minded man who defends blacks, as is illustrated by the fact that he was the first white man in Ford County to join the NAACP. Lucien is a drunk who has been disbarred and spends his time drinking on his front porch. Lucien toys with the idea of retaking the bar exam and having his credentials reinstated, but ruins it when he is arrested for public intoxication. Lucien, however, plays a key role in getting Ancil's testimony about his father's role in Sylvester Rinds death.

Lettie Lang

Lettie Lang is a housekeeper who worked for Seth Hubbard in the last days of his life. Lettie is just as surprised as everyone else when she learns Seth has left the bulk of his large estate to her. Lettie does not know why Seth would do this, but it appears that Seth somehow knew that Lettie was part of the Rinks family, though she did not know this herself, and left her the money to make amends for the fact that his father took part in the murder of her grandfather and stole her family's land. Lettie ends up settling for the land, a house, and two million dollars.



Simeon Lang

Simeon Lang is Lettie's husband. Simeon has always been a terrible husband, rarely working and often taking off to drink and be with other women. Simeon was even abusive toward Lettie for a time. When Simeon learns that Lettie might inherit a lot of money, he tries to be a better husband, but the call of the road cannot be ignored. Simeon is eventually charged with manslaughter in the deaths of two high school boys after he drives drunk and runs into their car head on.

Portia Lang

Portia Lang is Lettie's daughter. Portia was in the Army and now wants to be a lawyer. Jake hires her as an intern and then as a receptionist to help with the research on the case. Portia becomes interested in the possibility that her mother was part of the Rinds family and helps Lucien track down information on the family.

Wade Lanier

Wade Lanier represents Ramona Hubbard Dafoe in the will contest against the handwritten will Jake represents. Lanier uses some illegal tricks to get information on Lettie Lang and her past in order to make her look like a liar and a con artist who would use sex to get what she wants from a vulnerable old man. Lanier nearly wins his case against Jake until Jake enters into evidence Ancil Hubbard's deposition that seems to suggest Seth Hubbard left money to Lettie because his father killed her grandfather to steal his land.

Herschel Hubbard

Herschel Hubbard is Seth Hubbard's only son. Herschel is a recently divorced, middle-aged man who owns a bar that is a college hangout. Herschel lives with his mother because he cannot afford a place of his own. Herschel hopes to get money from his father that he can use to gain some independence.

Ramona Hubbard Dafoe

Ramona Hubbard Dafoe is Seth Hubbard's only daughter. Ramona is an alcoholic stuck in an unhappy marriage. Ramona hopes to get a large inheritance from her father so that she can divorce her husband and move on with her life.

Ian Dafoe

Ian Dafoe is Ramona Hubbard Dafoe's husband. Ian is from a wealthy family that lost their fortune. Ian has made many bad business decisions over the years and hopes to



use Ramona's inheritance from her father to repay some of those loans. Ian hires Wade Lanier as his attorney.

Ancil Hubbard

Ancil Hubbard is Seth Hubbard's younger brother. Ancil was eight when he and Seth watched their father kill Sylvester Rinds and steal his land from the widow before running the Rinds family out of Ford County. After his brother's death, and news that Seth left the bulk of his estate to the granddaughter of Sylvester Rinds, Ancil makes a videotaped deposition discussing this event, giving motive to his brother's actions.

Seth Hubbard

Seth Hubbard is an elderly man who has been diagnosed with fatal lung cancer. Seth has amassed a large fortune in the last ten years with multiple businesses he owned. Seth, who has been in terrible pain, decides to kill himself. Before he does, however, he handwrites a new will and sends it to Jake Brigance with orders to defend it at all costs.



Symbols and Symbolism

Seth's Handwritten Will

Seth Hubbard hand wrote a will the day before he commits suicide that leaves the bulk of his estate to his main, a portion to his church, and a portion to his brother. This will is contested by Seth's children who get nothing if it is upheld.

Seth's Letter to Jake

Seth sends his will with a letter addressed to Jake Brigance asking Jake to fight for the will at all costs.

Seth's Suicide Note

Seth leaves a suicide note with careful details for his funeral attached.

Pickering Will

Lanier produces a witness and a handwritten will during the trial that suggests Lettie has tried to get money from a dying employer before.

Rush Will

The Rush law firm has a will they wrote for Seth Hubbard more than a year before his death. This will gives most of Seth's estate to his children and grandchildren.

Insurance Check

After fighting in court for more than three years, Jake finally settles with his insurance company over the fire that destroyed his home during the Hailey trial.

Video Tape

Lucien produces a videotape deposition on which Ancil Hubbard tells the story of how his father participated in the murder of Sylvester Rinds, stole his land from his widow, and forced the Rinds out of Ford County. This tape is used to give motive to why Seth would leave money to Lettie Lang, thought to be the granddaughter of Sylvester Rinds.



Newspaper Article

Jake reads several newspaper articles about the case in the local paper, but one worries him the most before he finally sees it, the one dealing with Simeon's arrest on manslaughter charges.

Yellow Legal Pad

Jake often uses yellow legal pads to take notes or just as props during the trial.

Old Court Records

Portia finds old court records that suggest the Hubbards and the Rinks were often at odds over the land each owned beside the other.



Settings

Clanton, Mississippi

The novel takes place in Clanton, Mississippi, in 1988-1989. This setting is familiar to reader who have read the author's first novel, *A Time to Kill*. This is the setting of the Hailey trial that was the main plot of the first novel. This novel includes some of the same characters, such as Jake Brigance, Lucien Wilbanks, and Harry Rex. Not much has changed in this little town except the excitement and racial tensions of the Hailey trial have settled down.

Memphis, Tennessee

Memphis is not far from Clanton, Mississippi. Several of the initial lawyers in the will contest trial are from Memphis, including Sistrunk who made such a spectacle and nearly encouraged Jake to quit. It is also here that Lucien is arrested upon his return from Alaska with Ancil's deposition.

Juneau, Alaska

Ancil Hubbard lives in Juneau, Alaska under an assumed name. After he is injured in a bar fight and police find cocaine in his room he is listed in several databases under several names, including Ancil Hubbard. Jake is alerted to his location and sends Lucien to speak to him. Lucien eventually convinces Ancil to admit to his real identity and tell a story that seems to explain why his brother left nearly twenty million dollars to his maid.

Sycamore Row

Sycamore Row is a nickname once given to a small settlement of black people on property that belonged to the Rinds family. The settlement had this name because of a row of sycamore trees nearby. It is here that Sylvester Rinds was killed and thought to be the same place where Seth later committed suicide.



Themes and Motifs

Estate Law

Much of the novel takes place in a law office or a court. The trial this time is not a heated criminal case, but a civil case. Seth Hubbard has died and left behind two wills. It is the court's job to decide which will should be upheld. Seth wants his maid to get the majority of his estate, but Seth's children claim that an earlier will says that they should get the bulk of the estate. In the fight, Jake must prove that Seth made the will while he was in his right mind and knew what he was doing, but was not influenced by someone else.

As Jake fights the contest of this will, he seems capable of proving Seth was in his right mind thanks to the methodical way in which Seth died and the neatness with how he left his estate. However, the other side seems determined to prove that Lettie, the maid, was having a sexual affair with him and this caused him to want to leave her his money instead of his children. While the other side is never able to prove an affair, they are able to produce enough reasonable doubt to sway the jury.

In the end, Jake must prove that Seth wrote his will without any influence from Lettie. Jake does this by delving into the past and given a reason why Seth would want to repay Lettie for a horrible wrongdoing on his father's part. Jake ends up winning his case.

Family

Family is an important theme of this novel on several levels. First, if not for family, there would have not been anyone to fight the last will Seth left. Seth cut his own children out of his final will and this left his children scrambling to prove his final will was made while Seth was mentally incapable of making such decisions. The children want the money and they feel they deserve it simply because they are related to the dead man.

A second reason family is important in this novel is the impact it has on Lettie when word spreads that she might inherit twenty million dollars. Lettie begins finding family on her doorstep at all times of the day and night, people determined to get a piece of the pie. Lettie becomes frustrated and eventually even stops going to church because of the number of hands that are out.

Finally, family is important because of the motivation finally revealed for Seth's actions. Seth apparently has given Lettie all his money because he believes that she is the granddaughter of a man Seth's father helped to kill. After the murder, he stole the man's land. Seth is trying to fix a wrong his family did to Lettie's. By doing this, Seth opened a can of worms, but he also made it possible to begin the journey of forgiveness for a family that was not even fully aware of their own history.

Greed

Greed is an important theme of this novel. Without it, none of the characters in this novel would have had a reason to fight Seth's final will. In part, Jake begins working on the case because of Seth's request that he fight for the will at all costs. At the same time, Jake has not had a good paying client in some time, and he wants the large amounts of money he can make from this case.

Jake's opponents, Wade Lanier and the other lawyers, stand to gain a great deal of money when they win this case and take a third of the money inherited by their clients. This could be a great deal of money, leaving these lawyers desperate for a win. At the same time, their clients are struggling with their personal finances and could use the money to change their current situations and repay debt owed. For this reason, they are fighting the will at all costs, just like Seth asked Jake to do.



Styles

Point of View

The novel is written in the third person omniscient point of view. The author uses multiple characters as his narrators, from Jake to Lettie to Wade to Ian. Most of the important characters have a go at narrator in this novel, allowing the reader to see all events in the plot of this novel through multiple eyes.

The point of view of this novel works because it allows the reader to see multiple aspects of the story, not just what one character sees or does. The reader is allowed to follow Jake through the trial, feel Lettie's confusion after Seth's death, and the greed that motivates Seth's children. By using the omniscient point of view, the author gives the reader a well-rounded story with a great deal of detail into every aspect of the plot.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is simple English. The novel is written without any foreign words or phrases that might confuse the reader. The language is simple enough for a young reader, but it is authentic enough to the characters that the reader feels they are round characters with a great deal of personality.

The language of the novel works with the plot because it is authentic to the characters, the setting, and the intended audience.

Structure

The novel is divided into forty-eight chapters. Each chapter varies in lengths and often includes multiple scenes and sometimes multiple narrators. The novel is told in both narration and dialogue, making it a fully rounded story.

The novel includes one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows Jake's attempts to defend the final will of Seth Hubbard. One subplot follows Lucien's search for the motive behind Seth's decision to give Lettie his estate. Another subplot follows Simeon's criminal behavior. All the plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.



Quotes

Later evidence would reveal that Seth had been a man on a mission.

-- Narrator (chapter 1 paragraph 4)

Importance: This quote implies all that will come out in the book, including the fact that Seth planned his own death, wrote a new will, and left everything to a woman to whom he felt his family owed a huge apology.

There had been efforts at reconciliation, usually at Herschel's urging, and Seth, to his credit, had hung on for a while and tried to tolerate his son, and his grandkids.

-- Herschel (chapter 4 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote shows the estrangement between Seth and his kids and grandkids.

It was no surprise that Seth Hubbard hated the lawyers in Clanton. Most litigants, divorce or otherwise, who ran afoul of Harry Red Vonner were miserable for the rest of their lives and loathed everything about the legal profession. Seth wasn't the first to commit suicide.

-- Jake (chapter 5 paragraph 5)

Importance: This quote shows how ruthless Harry Rex, Jake's best friend can be, and adds some humor. It also touches on the fact that Harry Rex was the attorney for Seth's second wife. That divorce spurred him to make his millions.

More than once I became convinced Seth was determined to flame out in some glorious bankruptcy, with the loot hidden offshore, of course, he became fearless, and it was frightening.

-- Russel Amburgh (chapter 8 paragraph 17)

Importance: This quote shows how Seth made his money and touches on his fearlessness in business, something that will later become an issue.

Each of the three lawyers attempted to say something at once, but none could do so.

-- Narrator (chapter 10 paragraph 13)

Importance: This quote shows how the attorneys for the Rush firm respond to discovering Jake has beat them to filing for probate for Seth Hubbard.

After a week in the courtroom with Booker Sistrunk, they would see through his intentions and void the will.

-- Jake (chapter 13 paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote shows what Jake thinks of Sistrunk and his chances of winning with Sistrunk as Lettie's attorney.



While the contestants of the will jockeyed for position, the proponents fought among themselves.

-- Jake (chapter 16 paragraph 3)

Importance: This again shows infighting as the will contest begins with too many lawyers.

Three times they had voted for him in overwhelming numbers, but the last time around, last year with the bitter Hailey verdict still fresh on their minds, the good people of Ford County turned him out.

-- Rufus Buckley (chapter 18 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote touches on Jake's old nemesis and how Jake's last win affected him.

The Law Offices of Jake Brigance had never used an intern.

-- Jake (chapter 21 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote notes changing times as Jake hires Portia as his intern.

It was a will handwritten by their mother, and in it she left \$50,000 in cash to Lettie Lang.

-- Randall Clapp (chapter 25 paragraph 6)

Importance: This is evidence Lanier plans to use against Lettie to try to prove she has had undue influence on other elderly, ailing employers.

The woman looks bad, man, sneakin' round, gettin' old white folks to change their wills.

-- Tully Still (chapter 45 paragraph 6)

Importance: Ozzie learns from the husband of a juror that Lanier has swayed them to his side with testimony from Fritz Pickering.

Jake stared at the back of his head and thought about the trial, and now the appeal.

-- Jake (chapter 45 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote begins to show the reader how long the appeals process will take despite the fact Jake won.