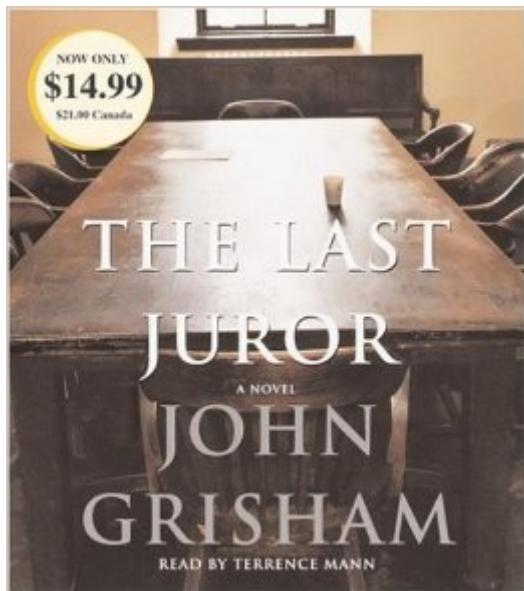


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# The Last Juror



## Synopsis

In 1970, one of Mississippi's more colorful weekly newspapers, The Ford County Times, went bankrupt. To the surprise and dismay of many, ownership was assumed by a 23 year-old college dropout, named Willie Traynor. The future of the paper looked grim until a young mother was brutally raped and murdered by a member of the notorious Padgett family. Willie Traynor reported all the gruesome details, and his newspaper began to prosper. The murderer, Danny Padgett, was tried before a packed courthouse in Clanton, Mississippi. The trial came to a startling and dramatic end when the defendant threatened revenge against the jurors if they convicted him. Nevertheless, they found him guilty, and he was sentenced to life in prison. But in Mississippi in 1970, "life" didn't necessarily mean "life," and nine years later Danny Padgett managed to get himself paroled. He returned to Ford County, and the retribution began. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Random House Audio; Abridged edition (January 3, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0739333305

ISBN-13: 978-0739333303

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 1.1 x 5.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 7 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars Â See all reviews Â (1,054 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,015,102 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #43 in Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > ( G ) > Grisham, John #1694 in Books > Books on CD > Mystery & Thrillers #2020 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers & Suspense > Legal

## Customer Reviews

After the travesty that was "King of Torts," John Grisham returns with a novel that appears, on the cover, to be another legal thriller but is, in fact, something else entirely. This is not about courtroom theatrics or terrible murders or greedy, corrupt lawyers seeking justice that will benefit their pocketbooks. No, "The Last Juror" is much, much different than your typical Grisham fare. It is a story of humanity. John Grisham has entered a new field while treading on familiar territory. He has written something that touches the pulse of the 1970's in Ford County. This is the story of Willie Traynor, newspaper editor, and his friendship with Callie Ruffin, a black woman and mother of eight, and a fledgling newspaper founded on obituaries. Danny Padgett's actions are known fairly early on,

and there truly is no question as to his guilt. There are some courtroom theatics here, but they are secondary to the relationship between Willie and Miss Callie; indeed, the courtroom scenes are secondary to the character development and onset of desegregation that the denizens of Ford County are faced with. If anything, "The Last Juror" is the sort of novel one would expect to read in a 20th Century literature class. There is a fair amount of suspense, and there is some criticism of the legal system (70's and current) and of course a bit of preaching, but it all works. Grisham has crafted one of his best novels and given us a slew of memorable characters; the Ruffin family will stay with you long after completing the novel. As will Willie and the eclectic bunch of "old folks" who dominate the town. Social criticism is also a bit heavy, with the arrival of Bargain City and the Padgett clan's unsavory vocations.

Last week I finished listening to John Grisham's The Last Juror during my daily commute. I was very impressed. The first notable thing about this story is that while there is some courtroom time, it is NOT about a court case or a lawyer, etc, like many of Grisham's books. Grisham is a fine writer, but in this story about a small southern town and it's very young, very green newspaper editor/writer, he outdid himself. I'll warn that it doesn't have quite as much "excitement" and "suspense" as you occasionally find in his courtroom thrillers. It's more laidback than those, although there is some suspense and a touch of blood and gore. This story is about people. It's about a town that changes over time and the townsfolk who change with it - some with relish and some kicking and screaming. It's about Willie Trainer, the newspaper owner who comes to town, an outsider, buys the newspaper, and over time gains the respect, loyalty and love of the town he serves. The true beauty of this book, though, is the incredible way that Mr. Grisham introduces you to the characters and the townspeople. Each character in this book is a story finely woven. You're not reading/hearing that Joe Blow eats eggs for breakfast and is wearing black pants and a blue shirt. You learn about these people: their past, their present, and you look forward to their future. The writing is masterful in the creation of characters that we care about, are interested in and who shape this story. When I finished the story, I actually left the radio off for the rest of my ride home just so I could think about what a wonderful story it was and how much I enjoyed it. Following Grisham's other non-courtroom drama's, specifically A Painted House, I see his talent is truly in character development.

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