

A Time to Kill

by John Grisham

Main Characters

Jake Brigance	defense attorney
Carl Lee Hailey	defendant
Rufus Buckley	prosecutor
Billy Ray Cobb	killed by Carl Lee Hailey
Willard	Billy Ray Cobb's accomplice, also killed

The film takes place in Canton, Mississippi. Tonya Hailey, the 10 year-old daughter of Carl Lee Hailey, is brutally raped and beaten by two young men named Billy Ray Cobb and Willard. Fearing that the two will not be punished, Carl Lee Hailey shoots and kills both of them as they are being led to their arraignment. The killing occurs in front of many witnesses, so there is no question of Carl Lee's guilt. Jake Brigance, Carl Lee's lawyer, must try to keep Carl Lee from being sentenced for the murders. During the trial, at least one of the witnesses for the prosecution is sympathetic to Carl Lee, and tensions are high in town due to the racial nature of the trial. Jake's impassioned closing to the jury leads to a shocking verdict that is cheered by some and booed by others.