The Runaway Jury

by John Grisham

SUMMARY

Philippye is one of the ‘Big Four’ tobacco companies in the USA. They are being sued by Celeste Wood, the widow of a man who died from lung cancer after smoking cigarettes all his adult life. But the ‘Big Four’ have a secret fund of money, managed by Rankin Fitch, which they use, by any means they can, to win their court cases. First, Fitch and the lawyer for Wood, Wendall Rohr, decide which of the jurors they want to decide the case. The jury is selected, but Fitch cannot find out anything about one of them, Nicholas Easter. This is not his real name, and he has an interest in trials involving tobacco companies, but Fitch doesn’t know this.

Then Fitch receives a note from a woman called Marlee, who gives him secret information about members of the jury and what they will do. All her information turns out to be accurate and Fitch realizes that he has a source of information that he can use to get a favorable decision for the tobacco companies. Fitch uses all the means he can to persuade the members of the jury to vote his way.

Fitch and Marlee agree on a deal because Fitch knows that she can deliver the verdict he wants. But Wendall Rohr, the prosecutor, tries to buy another juror, Angel Weese, and Easter plants incriminating evidence on another juror and has him replaced.

The defense case sounds very good and Fitch is convinced that he will win.

Marlee demands ten million dollars from Fitch to get the right verdict and the tobacco companies agree to pay. Marlee uses the money to trade in shares of the companies, forcing their value down. Fitch finally discovers that Marlee’s parents both died of lung cancer caused by smoking and, too late, discovers that he has been tricked. The jury find the tobacco companies guilty and award Celeste Wood $400 million in damages. Nicholas and Marlee buy tobacco shares at a very low price and make a fortune. Finally, Marlee confronts Fitch and returns the $10 million, but warns him that she will not let him escape.

ABOUT JOHN GRISHAM

John Grisham was born on February 8, 1955, in Jonesboro, Arkansas. His father was a construction worker and moved his family all around the southern states of America, stopping wherever he could find work. Eventually, they settled in Mississippi.

Graduating from law school in 1981, Grisham practiced law for nearly a decade in Southaven, specializing in criminal defense and personal injury litigation. In 1983, he was elected to the state House of Representatives and served until 1990.

Grisham’s novel, The Firm, was one of the biggest hits of 1991, spending 47 weeks on the New York Times bestseller list. Grisham was then able to give up law and concentrate on writing. All his books have now been bestsellers and six have been made into movies.

Grisham lives with his wife and two children in Mississippi and Virginia.
the end, they return the money that he has paid them, knowing that the loss of the court case will do the tobacco companies irreparable damage.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK
1. Ask students to read the Introduction on page v and answer these questions.
   (a) Where was John Grisham born?
   (b) How old was he when he wrote *A Time to Kill*?
   (c) Where did he go to university?
   (d) How many of his books are now movies?
2. Put students into small groups to discuss this question.
   Should people be allowed to smoke if they want to? Why/Why not?
   Then take a class poll to see how many are in favor or against.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION
Chapters 1–3
Before the class, write about ten sentences to summarize the story so far. Write each sentence on a separate card. Photocopy them as many times as necessary. In class, put students into small groups, and give each group a set of sentences. Ask students to put the events on the cards into the right order. Note down the order on the board.
Each group then prepares a short dialog around one part of the story. Groups take turns reading or acting out their dialogs.

Chapters 4–6
Ask students to work in groups. They should discuss the various ways in which, Fitch, Rohr, Marlee and Nicholas try to influence people in the case. They make a list of the people, who try to influence them and state how.

Chapters 7–9
1. Put students into small groups. Ask them to discuss who the lawyers and jury consultants try to influence. How do they do this? Are they successful?

2. Ask students who they think will win the case – The plaintiff or the defense?

Chapters 10–12
Ask students to work in small groups. They should discuss how they think the case will end now. Have they changed their minds after reading these chapters? What events in these chapters made them change their minds?

Chapters 13–15
Put the class into small groups. Ask them to discuss what feelings they had when they read the book and to write them down. Ask the groups for their words and write them all on the board. Have a class discussion and put the words into order of depth of feeling. Then ask the class to discuss how Grisham creates these feelings in his readers.

Glossary
It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practiced in the “Before You Read” sections at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the *Longman Active Study Dictionary*.)

Chapters 1–3
- chambers (n) offices used by a lawyer or judge
- foreman (n) the leader of a jury
- lawsuit (n) a charge brought against a person or company in a court of law
- plaintiff (n) someone who brings an action against someone in a court of law
- sue (v) to make a legal claim against someone
- summons (n) an official order to appear in a court of law
- testify (v) to give evidence in a court of law
- verdict (n) a decision made by a jury in a court of law
- versus (prep) used to show that two or more people, etc are against each other

Chapters 4–6
- allegiance (n) loyalty to a leader, etc
- authorize (v) to allow someone to do something
- fax (n) a document sent by telephone
- goon (n) a violent criminal who is paid to frighten or attack people
- litigation (n) the process of taking claims to a court of law
- motel (n) an inexpensive hotel along a road where you can park your car in front of your room
- nicotine (n) a substance in tobacco that makes it difficult for people to stop smoking
- pledge (n) a promise
- real estate (n) houses or land for sale
- research (v) to study something carefully
- sequester (v) to force a group of people, especially a jury, to stay away from other people
- settle (v) to pay a debt
- testimony (n) a statement that something is true, especially one that is made by a witness in a court of law

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These activities can be done alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only activities are marked.

Activities before reading the book
1 Read the Introduction at the front of the book, then close your book and answer these questions.
   (a) John Grisham has had two careers. What are they?
   (b) In what way was John Grisham involved in politics?
   (c) What was Grisham’s first bestseller?
2 Look at a map of the U.S.A and find Arkansas, Mississippi and Virginia.

Activities while reading the book

Chapters 1–3
1 In Chapters 1– who … ?
   (a) managed The Fund
   (b) is the boss of Pynex
   (c) is the plaintiff
   (d) is the lawyer for the plaintiff
   (e) is the foreman of the jury
   (f) is the main lawyer for Pynex
   (g) is the eleventh juror
   (h) is the only black man on the jury
   (i) phoned Fitch with some secret information
2 Answer these questions.
   (a) Why were the tobacco companies being attacked?
   (b) What is The Fund for?
   (c) Why did the plaintiff’s lawyers choose Biloxi for the case?
   (d) Why did Jacob Wood die?
   (e) When had Nicholas met Fitch before?
   (f) Who had hidden a secret camera in the courtroom?
   (g) Who tells the jury to stare at a woman in the courtroom?
   (h) Who thinks that people are stupid to smoke cigarettes and should give up?

Chapters 4–6
1 Put the beginnings (a–f) and endings (i–vi) of these sentences together without looking at the book.
   (a) Marlee tells Fitch that juror number two
   (b) Nicholas suggested to the jury
   (c) Lonnie was nervous about going to the golf club because
   (d) The price of Pynex shares rose because
   (e) Hoppy agreed to the Stillwater Bay deal because
   (f) Fitch studied the file from the Cimmino case because
   (i) that they swear the Pledge of Allegiance.
   (ii) the evidence from the plaintiff was so boring.
   (iii) he realized that Easter was the same person as Lancaster.
   (iv) there might not be any other black people there.
   (v) will wear a light blue shirt, faded jeans and running shoes.
   (vi) he thought he could make a lot of money.

2 The following sentences are false. Correct them.
   (a) On Friday morning, Marlee made her first phone call at 8 am.
   (b) Marlee’s third call that day was to Fitch.
   (c) Taunton explained to Lonnie that if the plaintiff won, the tobacco companies would make huge profits.
   (d) Jerry and Nicholas went to the casino alone.
   (e) The juror that Fitch really wanted to influence was Monica Coleman.
   (f) The motel was called the Fiesta Motel.
   (g) Krigler testified for the defense.
   (h) Krigler was paid $500, 000 never to testify again.
   (i) Hoppy doesn’t know Jimmy Hull Moke.

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Moke wants to be the consultant for the project.

Chapters 7-9
1 Who said these things? Who were they talking to?
(a) No please, not here. My office, please.
(b) What was the purpose of your meeting with Jimmy Hull Moke?
(c) This deal has nothing to do with the law. It’s political.
(d) The tobacco companies know that 3,000 kids start smoking every day and that nearly all adult smokers start as teenagers.
(e) Because the issue is addiction and an addict can’t make choices.
(f) How old were you when you started smoking?
(g) We could rent a big boat and go fishing.
(h) What are the chances of meeting without your goons hiding behind the bushes.

2 The following sentences are false. Correct them.
(a) The Hoppy scam would cost The Fund one hundred thousand dollars.
(b) Fitch broke into Nicholas’ apartment.
(c) Robilio had worked for the tobacco company for thirty years.
(d) 2,000 children start smoking every day in the USA.
(e) The report on Robilio came from the Justice Department.
(f) Rohr had presented twelve witnesses to the jury.
(g) Marlee wants Fitch to pay her after the jury have delivered their verdict.

Chapters 10-12
Put these events in the correct order.
(a) Hoppy showed Millie the false information about Robilio.
(b) Colonel Herrera was dismissed from the jury.
(c) Marlee demanded ten million dollars from Fitch.
(d) Agent Madden arrested Napier and Nitchman.
(e) Jankle was called as a witness.
(f) Hoppy met Millie in the motel room.
(g) Nicholas hid secret documents in Colonel Herrera’s room.
(h) FBI agent Madden phoned Marlee.
(i) Derrick had a meeting with Cleve.
(j) Fitch told each of the bosses of the Big Four tobacco companies to put two million dollars into The Fund.
(k) Jankle was questioned by Wendall Rohr.

Chapters 13-15
Answer these questions.
(a) Why does Marlee tell Fitch to relax when they meet?
(b) What does Fitch tell the CEOs of the tobacco companies at the beach house?
(c) Why did Nicholas put drugs in Herman Grimes coffee?
(d) Why did Marlee tell Fitch to transfer the money to Panama City?
(e) What did Nicholas tell the jury to do?
(f) How did Marlee make a lot of money?
(g) What did Fitch find out about Marlee’s parents?
(h) How did the jury decide on the amount of damages to be paid to Celeste Wood?
(i) What did Nicholas do after the trial had ended?

Activities after reading the book
1 Do you think that The Runaway Jury is a realistic novel? Give reasons for your opinion.
2 What do you think will happen now to these people?
Marlee and Nicholas
Fitch
Celeste Wood
Give reasons.