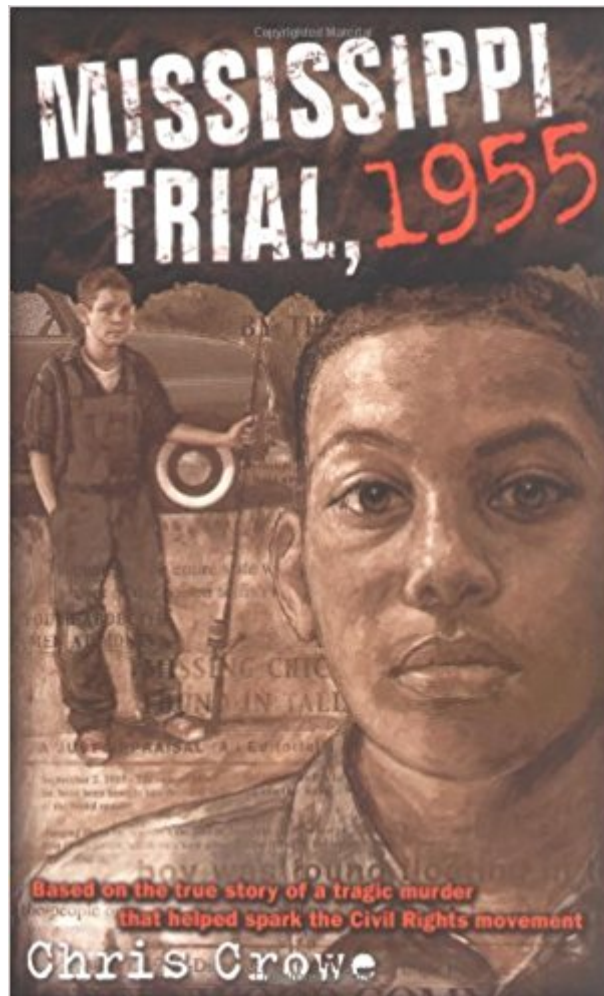




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# Mississippi Trial, 1955



## Synopsis

Winner of the 2003 International Reading Association Award for Young Adult

Novel. This gripping read is based on the true events of the murder of Emmett Till, one of the nation's most notorious crimes that helped spark the Civil Rights Movement. At first Hiram is excited to visit his hometown in Mississippi. But soon after he arrives, he crosses paths with Emmett Till, a black teenager from Chicago who is also visiting for the summer. Hiram sees firsthand how the local whites mistreat blacks who refuse to "know their place." When Emmett's tortured dead body is found floating in a river, Hiram is determined to find out who could do such a thing. But what will it cost him to know?

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0870 (What's this?)

Mass Market Paperback: 231 pages

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Language: English

ISBN-10: 0142501921

ISBN-13: 978-0142501924

Product Dimensions: 4.2 x 0.6 x 6.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 86 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #22,690 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 in Books > Teens >

Historical Fiction > United States > 20th Century #18 in Books > Teens > Mysteries & Thrillers > Historical #23 in Books > Teens > Mysteries & Thrillers > Law & Crime

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Basing his promising debut novel on historical events, Crowe adopts the point of view of a white teenager confronting racism in the 1950s South. Hiram Hillburn has resented his civil-rights-minded father ever since the age of nine, when his parents moved him from his adored grandfather's home in Greenwood, Miss., to the more liberal climate of an Arizona college town. Now that he is 16, Hiram has finally been permitted to visit Grampa Hillburn again. Crowe takes a bit too much time before arriving at the central action: the lynching of Emmett Till, a black teenager from Chicago who reputedly made "ugly remarks" to a white woman, and the nationally publicized trial, in which the

murderers were acquitted. However, the author takes a nuanced approach to ethical dilemmas and his plotting seems lifelike. Events force Hiram to question his willingness to stand up for his beliefs and to reevaluate his understanding of the animosity between his grandfather and father. The characterizations are sketched with care, from the white lawyers who mock the black witnesses they cross-examine, to R.C., the bully whom Hiram suspects of participating in the crime, to R.C.'s sister, whom Hiram likes. If the conclusion feels a little hasty, Crowe's otherwise measured treatment will get readers thinking. Ages 12-up. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Grade 6-8-While visiting relatives in Mississippi, Emmett Till, 14, spoke "ugly" to a white woman and was subsequently tortured and murdered. Two men were arrested and tried for this heinous crime, but in spite of substantial evidence, were found not guilty. Crowe has woven the plot of his novel around these historical events. Hiram, the fictional main character, had lived with his grandparents in Mississippi as a child. Now 16, he returns to visit his aging grandfather, where he meets Emmett Till. He also renews a childhood acquaintance with R.C. Rydell, a redneck bully. When Emmett's mutilated body is found, Hiram immediately suspects that R.C. was involved. In a predictable twist at the end, he learns that it was his grandfather, not R.C., who helped the murderers. The Deep South setting is well realized. Descriptions of the climate, food, and landscape are vivid and on target. Likewise, Southern racial attitudes from the period are accurately portrayed. Grampa is a racist but Hiram enables readers to see his good qualities as well. Hiram himself seems rather naive. He is unable to fathom the racial prejudice at the root of his father's alienation from his grandfather. Nor does he feel the aura of racial fear and hatred that hangs over the entire region. The novel succeeds in telling Emmett Till's story, but there is an emotional distance that keeps readers from caring as deeply as they should about this crime. Still, it is a story that needs to be told. This book belongs in all collections to show young readers the full range of American history. Bruce Anne Shook, Mendenhall Middle School, Greensboro, NC Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

I bought this book in recognition of the author, Chris Crowe, who has studied the topic of Emmett Till's gruesome murder and farcical trial at length. Well-written in the voice of white teenager Hiram Hillburn, it is full of details to enable visualization of rural Mississippi in the 1950's. I always think it's playing with fire when we try to factionalize history, but Crowe pulls it off in a credible fashion, especially the generational gap between father, son and grandfather. I wish there had been more

detail as about Emmett and his family in the story, as their characters were thin on the ground. Mamie Till Mobley deserved to be mentioned by name and her campaign to get the world to recognize this atrocity for what it was should have been worked into the story. After all, Hiram could have read papers and listened to the radio, which were full of this tragic news in 1955. All in all, it's a reasonable introduction to the topic for a high school English or Social Studies course, but nothing beats actual sources!

My grandson read it in his English class. It was well written. It explain the history and culture of that time. He learn a lot about the beginning of the civil rights

Well written. A page turner. Sad story, but hopefully it help give rights to people of color. It's sad that some people can be so hateful.

This book gave me another perspective on the struggles with racial discrimination through American history. Even though I liked this point with the book, I gave it a four do to the graphic details Taft may not be for everyone. Other than that, I %100 recommend this book.

Great

Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Montgomery Bus Boycott, Freedom Rides, and the March on Washington. But one name and event is often missing: Emmett Till, a fourteen-year-old black boy from Chicago who was brutally murdered, his body dumped in the Tallahatchie River, for allegedly whistling at a white woman. Told through the eyes of Hiram Hillburn, a white teenager who has come to spend the summer with his grandfather, the reader is taken into the heart of racism at a time when the passions of the south were volatile and violent. Hiram sees changes in his beloved south, his friends, and even his grandfather; changes which make him doubt his own safety. Hiram witnesses R.C. Rydell force Emmett to eat a raw fish at knife-point. Hiram's grandfather offers no sympathy, warning that "colored boys should know better than to push themselves on white folks." After Emmett is murdered, Hiram doesn't want to stay silent, he wants the truth to be told, even if it uncovers secrets about his own family. Discuss of racism as it stands in our country today, and what can be done to prevent it.

Very well written book for any age group, but especially for middle school who is learning of this

very troubling time period in our history.

I don't think I'd read it again. The subject sparked my interest at first, and then it only depressed me after I read it. It's okay because I need to know about this in our country's history.

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