



The Testament

John Grisham

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Troy Phelan, a 78-year-old eccentric and the 10th-richest man in America, is about to read his last will and testament, divvying up an estate worth \$11 billion. Phelan's three ex-wives, their grasping spawn, a legion of lawyers, several psychiatrists, and a plethora of sound technicians wait breathlessly, all eyes glued to digital monitors as they watch the old man read his verdict. But Phelan shocks everyone with a bizarre, last-gasp attempt to redistribute the spoils, setting in motion a legal morality tale of a contested will, sin, and redemption.

Our hero, Nate O'Riley--a washed-up, alcoholic litigator with two ruined marriages in his wake and the IRS on his tail--is dispatched to the Brazilian wetlands in search of a mysterious heir named in the will. After a harrowing trip upriver to a remote settlement in the Pantanal, he encounters Rachel Lane, a pure-hearted missionary living with an indigenous tribe and carrying out "God's work." Rachel's grave dedication and kindness impress the jaded lawyer, so much that a nasty bout of dengue fever leads him to a vision that could change his life.

Back in the States, the legal proceedings drag on and Grisham has a high time with Phelan's money-hungry descendants, a regrettable bunch who squandered millions, married strippers, got druggo, and befriended the Mob. The youngest son, Ramble, is a multi-pierced, tattoo-covered malcontent with big dreams for his rock band, the Demon Monkeys. Will Nate get straight with Rachel's aid? Do the greedy heirs get theirs? What's the real legacy of a lifetime's work? *The Testament* is classic Grisham: a down-and-out lawyer, a lot of money, an action-packed pursuit, and the highest issues at stake. It's not just about great characters; it's about the question of what character is. --*Rebekah Warren*

The Testament Details

Date : Published February 2nd 1999 by Doubleday Books

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Author : John Grisham

Format : Hardcover 435 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Thriller

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From Reader Review The Testament for online ebook

Venkatesh says

This book is a shining light of what is really important in life. We all struggle in some ways. You just need to stay focused on what is really important

Donna says

What I learned from this book:

- 1) Everyone should have a fully executed will.
- 2) A poorly written Will is bad estate planning.
- 3) If you have lots of money and hate your family, make them think you are giving them \$11 billion and then swap the Will that gives them nothing, and then jump off a building plunging to your death so that they can't do anything but settle with the estate.

This is my first Grisham book. And many more to come, I am sure!

Quentin says

SPOILER WARNING!

One of the best books I have ever read. Grisham does a great job of blending the law genre and the adventure genre. Nate O' Reilly, the main character is a lawyer fresh out of rehab, for the fourth time. Nate travels to South America to find out more about Rachel Lane, mysterious illegitimate heir to Troy Phelan's 11 billion dollar will. Out of Troy's 3 marriages, dozen's of children, Rachel Lane gets it all. Nate travels to Corumba, Brazil in hopes to find Rachel Lane, a missionary working in the Patanal swamp. Not only does Nate find her, he befriends her. But, she is unwilling to receive the 11 billion dollars. Nate finally leaves to come back to D.C when he contracts Dengue Fever, and almost dies. He is sent back to the states after recovering, but misses Corumba. Rachel was able to show him the ways of god and help him quit alcohol and drugs. Nate decides to reinvent himself and visit the family from his broken marriages. First stop is Salem, Oregon where he visits his young children. Next he travels to Detroit to visit his older son, who had flunked out of college. When he gets back he is ready for the trial. Two Weeks after, the dispositions all done, it was time for the official trial. Afterwards Nate travels back to Corumba to get Rachel's signature on the papers. Only to find out that she contracted Malaria and died. She had left a holographic will of herself, taking the fortune she received in the will of Troy Phelan and putting it in a trust that Nate was in charge of. The book ends on Nate's journey back to the states. John Grisham

Elizabeth says

I'm going to write a review. I'm going to do it. Why? Personal reasons.
ahem

first of all, I feel like John Grisham tries too hard to make this book seem action packed and suspenseful, when really, it's very predictable, cliché and slow moving. You always know what's coming. I found myself only reading one chapter, then putting it down. Then coming back hours later, reading another chapter maybe two, then putting it down again, etc. It didn't hold much interest. The only reason I read it so fast is because a friend lent it to me, and I wanted to give it back as soon as I could.

The dialogue was bland, there was way too much legal jargon that no one cares about, his descriptions of scenes and people didn't really leave much to the imagination, and the plot was pretty weak. An old, reclusive, very rich man who hates everyone commits suicide in the lamest way possible and leaves his fortune to a long lost illegitimate daughter who's a missionary in some far away country, so a lawyer has to find her and give her the money. Big deal. And of course, it wouldn't be complete if the lawyer who has to find the Christian woman is a drunken, drug addicted slob whom she helps to find God and he is "reformed" simply because she taught him to say "Forgive me God. Kthnxbai" and your slate is wiped clean.

I guess that's all it takes nowadays.

And don't even get me started on her so-called "Christian teachings."

I think I only gave it two stars because it gave me something to do.

Bibliophile Rose says

It was a quite enjoyable read.

The Plot:

So, this story is about, An American billionaire named Troy Phelan. He's an 80years old man with three divorced wives and six heirs. Troy suffered from his illness so he decided to commit a suicide (he's kinda crazy man). After his death, all his heirs and his wives wanted to read his will, his testament, (I know you're thinking about all his money and his lucky heirs but you have to read till the end!!) And all his money was left to his **Illegitimate Daughter** (Rachel Lane) I told you he's a crazy man but wise at the same time. Rachel Lane is a missionary of world's tribes, she lives in somewhere in Brazil with the Indians, she knew just a little about her biological father.

Troy's lawyer decided to find Rachel and inform her about her father and his will, but he couldn't risk his life in the third world, so he sent his an old friend (Nate O'reily) to find Rachel.

Will Nate find Rachel in a middle of nowhere? And will Rachel Accept this will?

My Opinion :

This is my first John Grisham's book reading. Actually, my teacher of oral expression gave us some recommendation of books and told us to read one of them and it will be your exam mark, so I chose this book, and I really enjoyed it.

The story was kinda boring at the beginning, it was hard for me to remember the names of the characters, especially Troy's heirs and wives and their lawyers but when Nate went to Brazil, The fun began!!!

Nate was my favorite character in the story, he was an adventurous, funny, and good man. His life was a mess but he really knew how to fix it.

Oh, Oh!!! and Braziiiiiiil!!! I'm in love with this country!! I hope one day I'll make an adventure in Pantanal river just like Nate did and meet the alligators, the piranas, and the Ipicas.

The author did a really great job describing this amazing place in the world when I was reading I felt like I was there with Nate in the canoe, discovering a new dangerous place, I felt excited and afraid, afraid to get

lost or eaten by the alligators.

Huuh, All these words can't describe what I felt when I was reading this amazing book.

Thank you, My Teacher, for recommending me this amazing book.

sarafem says

An overly preachy and hastily written Grisham novel with his typical battle of big money versus the good of heart. I am always drawn to Grisham for a good rainy day read and the premise sounded pretty good, but from page one this one is a waste of time. Too many characters bogged the story down and it dragged on and on, especially when Grisham started getting preachy. By the end of the book, it felt like Grisham had tired of the story himself, and just threw something together to be done with it.

Think of me what you will, but I don't like missionary work, and it bothers me that the protagonist here is painted saintlike (perhaps that is a poor choice of words) because she chose this occupation in order to hide from the world (the idea of God is just an afterthought). Even though I am a Christian, I don't like to assume that my path is the only way to know God, and missionary work feels more selfish than selfless because of this assumption. Go into the jungles and deserts of the world and give out medicine and build houses without trying to put another notch on your belt for Jesus, and instead teach about the goodness we can all do for one another, and then I'll approve of the mission. Until then it's not going to happen, and I was very annoyed with Rachel's character and the way in which she was exalted for what to me were shady motives.

I saw Rachel as no less selfish than the other characters, even if there was a different motivation and product. Even without the let-down of an ending and the overabundance of obnoxious characters, the idea of the missionary as the protagonist in the good-of-heart role would have turned my stomach enough for a poor rating on this book.

Jenny Maloney says

I'm impressed that I made it through to the end. At first it seemed like a cool idea...guy goes down to jungle and comes out a changed man. Instead it's more about finding God within a malaria-fevered haze. Grisham entering his 'very-preachy' stage.

Una Tiers says

It wasn't until the window scene that I remembered reading this book before. It contained two parallel story lines about parenting. It is a terrific example of the imagination of Grisham. Some parts were a little tedious. The ending was something the reader anticipates.

Carol says

Second Read: I totally forgot that I have already read this book just over four years ago. I really liked it then, and really like it now. Highly recommend if you like good courtroom.

First Read: Fascinating!! I was extremely intrigued by this Grisham. His writing is above par, and definitely good enough to keep the readers at grasp and wondering what will happen next. I'm not too much into suicide, but the grip of it keeps us reading and wondering what the story is fully about.

Though different from many of his other books, I think *The Testament* becomes one of my Grisham favorites. Troy Phelan, a self-made billionaire, jumps to a spectacular death after signing a will leaving his fortune to an unknown daughter, Rachel Lane, and spurning his six other children by three failed marriages, all of whom are circling like vultures waiting for their lucky day to finally arrive. The wrinkle is that Rachel is a missionary in a remote part of Brazil, and is totally out of touch with the Western world except for two phone calls a year. So Josh Stafford, Troy's long-time lawyer, dispatches one of his associates, Nate O'Riley, on a mission to find Rachel.

Nate is fresh out of drug rehab (his fourth trip), and is coming to terms with the wreck his life has become, with a failed marriage and kids he doesn't stay in touch with, on top of federal charges that jeopardize his law practice and good intentions but little hope of true sobriety and recovery. Josh sees this little trip as a chance to get Nate back on his feet, and also keep him away from trouble for a little while. Rachel Lane is a missionary there with World Tribes Missions, a group that seeks to evangelize unreached peoples by sending missionaries in to live with tribes permanently and to get to know them and earn their trust. Nate, with the help of a couple local guides, finally tracks Rachel down in a remote village, only to learn that she doesn't want the money. This to Nate is of course shocking, and as he spends a few days with Rachel, he comes to see the deep contrast between her contentment and his own searching and floundering.

While in the jungle, Nate catches malaria, and narrowly escapes death after convalescing in a Brazilian hospital for a number of days. Once back in the States, he begins acting as Rachel's lawyer, in defense of the will, since the other Phelan heirs are contesting the will and seeking their own share of the vast estate. In the end, a settlement is offered to the other heirs, solving the legal troubles, except for the need for Rachel's signature. When Nate makes a return trip to Brazil, he learns that Rachel died of Malaria. But before her death, she signed the necessary papers, giving Nate control over the vast fortune in the form of a trust to benefit World Tribes, the spread of the gospel, and the betterment of the people of Brazil.

This book has the legal intrigue of Grisham's other books, with some comical but also interesting heirs and their lawyers battling for control of billions of dollars. But it is in the characters that this book excels. Grisham shows the devastation that money and greed can bring in the lives of the three ex-wives and six heirs-apparent (whom I absolutely can't stand) to the Phelan fortune. And he does a great job of contrasting this with the contentment that can be found elsewhere. Rachel is a very authentic character, and adds great depth to the book. In my opinion, the best character proves to be Nate O'Riley. His journeys to Brazil parallel the searching in his own life, and his encounters with the Phelan heirs and with Rachel cause him to refocus his own life. He re-focuses his life with new purpose and meaning. His journey shows how painful the past can be, but also how liberating God's truth and forgiveness is. The journey isn't easy for him, but Grisham has cast it just right, to make it authentic without being shallow and moralizing or preachy.

In short, I loved this book. The setting was fun and different, the legal maneuvering is vintage Grisham, and the characters bring the story to life. And, best of all, it is a great "testament" to the source of true meaning in life, none other than God and the forgiveness that comes through Jesus Christ.

Corey says

Another solid tale by Grisham! It wasn't a typical Courtroom Drama either like most of his books are.

The Testament opens us with the ruthless self-made Billionaire Troy Phelan, who is in his 90's who is dying, has written out his last will with the help of his Lawyer Josh Stafford, and being observed by 3 psychiatrists to see if he is of sound-mind. Phelan commits suicide by jumping out a window just seconds after writing his Testament, which says the rest of his estate will instead of to his money=grabbing family, to his illegitimate daughter Rachel Lane, who none of Phelan's family or associates know about or have ever seen or met.

Now after Phelan's suicide, Josh Stafford calls upon his colleague Nate O'Reilly to find Rachel, who has become a missionary in Brazil, Troy paid her to go to college but disappeared into Medical School and Seminary, and went to Brazil. O'Reilly, who has been off and on drugs and alcohol many times, been married twice and both divorced, and has 2 grown-up children from both marriages. Nate travels to Brazil to track down Rachel, and meets up with her in the jungles of Brazil where she is a missionary for the Brazilian Natives. After meeting her Nate tries to convince her to take the money and return to America, but she rejects him saying she doesn't want the money and won't return and that she's happy where she is and happy with what she's doing, and Nate starts to grow feelings for Rachel.

I loved the story, great characters, I loved the Brazil/South America setting, and I feel the story delivers a great message. I highly recommend this to all Grisham fans!!

Ahmad Sharabiani says

The Testament, John Grisham

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Charissa says

I learned it's more important to forget the materialism of this world and be self-less for Christ like the heroine of this book was, than to get caught up in making a name for myself in my short time on earth. I forget the amount of family fortune she'd inherited, but she was so lost in her love for Christ that she was oblivious to the inheritance itself until a lawyer tracked her down from U.S to the Amazon to tell her/award her the inheritance. Her other-worldness was in stark contrast to the superficiality and artificiality of family members who showed up the moment they heard of their tycoon relative's death. Grisham does a great comical work of painting how insane we humans really look/are when we are money hungry and consumed with greed. I remember the book opened with the old rich father's death and how instantly his corporate office was swamped with relatives shamelessly hoping to cash in, some actually spending excess amounts of their own money before they realized that the old rich man never left them a cent. All the while our heroine who inherited everything was quietly, unfettered by all the greed and commotion, serving the Lord as a

missionary in South America. GoodRead! :)

Natalie Vellacott says

I used to be an avid reader of the likes of Grisham, Patterson etc but found myself moving away from secular fiction after I became a Christian. I remembered that a few of Grisham's novels had moral or Christian principles--*The Testament* is one of these.

The story centers around the suicide of billionaire Troy Phelan. He has effectively lived a careless life of self indulgence treating those around him with contempt. He married three times and was believed to have had six grandchildren whose lives he also ruined by spoiling them with million dollar payouts at intervals. No longer able to bear the weight of living he chooses instead to plunge to his death triggering an inevitable fight over his will. But what if there was a mysterious illegitimate daughter serving as a missionary in a remote country.....?

Nate is a recovering alcoholic. He is also a lawyer and assigned to the Phelan case. His task, to track down the elusive Rachel whilst resisting the allure of the bottle that has wrecked his life to date.

I enjoyed this the second time round. The biblical principle that the love of money is a route of all kinds of evil is clearly shown through this story. The author also does a good job in highlighting how an alcoholic will always struggle with the temptation to drink.

The author claims to be a Christian and as already noted I have seen these themes in his books at times. He states in his bio that a close friend of his is a Baptist missionary. In this novel he nearly explains the way of salvation in a manner understandable to all readers. However, he also states elsewhere that he believes that faith is a private matter....how can it be private when we have been given the Great Commission by Jesus Himself and when people are perishing on a daily basis? This author has a great platform for evangelism should he choose to use it. He has spent millions of dollars on football stadiums which maybe shows where his priorities are....

There are a few swear words in the book but it is not strong language. There is no graphic violence or sexual content apart from a few innuendos. I recommend this book.

Check out my John Grisham Shelf!

Mahlon says

The Testament is an above average effort, but I wouldn't put it among Grisham's best. The subject is probate, which Grisham seems to enjoy and always does well. This time an eccentric billionaire Troy Phelan(One of my favorite Grisham characters ever) jumps out of a window to his death, after writing a new will, leaving his \$11 Billion estate in limbo.

Despite being fully engaged by the story, there are a few things I didn't like about the book. I found the main character Nate O'reilly completely unsympathetic. I was very disappointed that the story started out with such a bang and then ended with a whimper. Once again, Grisham could have used a better editor.

I would recommend it cautiously, only because readers will probably get caught up in the story as I did and want to see where the money ends up.

Jane Stewart says

Not much suspense, but a good story with unique and interesting characters.

STORY BRIEF:

Eccentric billionaire leaves all his money to an illegitimate child Rachel no one knew about. His six grandchildren are greedy idiots who hire attorneys to contest the will. Josh is executor of the will. He needs someone to go to the jungles of Brazil to find Rachel who is working with tribes as a Christian missionary. Josh asks Nate to go. Nate was a high-powered litigator who has been in rehab several times for alcohol and cocaine. He is twice divorce with kids he never sees. The IRS wants to put him in jail for tax fraud. He is close to the end of his current rehab stay, but he leaves to go to Brazil.

REVIEWER'S OPINION:

This is not as powerful as some of the author's other books, but it's a fine story. His most popular books had more suspense and thriller. This is just a fictional story about lawyers and heirs to an estate. It's different. It's enjoyable and above average because of the author's skill. He's good at creating fun-to-watch characters. I chuckled at some of the wry comments. For example, Nate's life is so miserable and he's feeling such hangover pain, that he's in a fog about the dangers around him. It's like who cares if he has to fend off alligators. It's just another inconvenience. After one event he says in his dry uncaring monotone "oh, I'm still alive?" His reactions and acceptance of jungle threats were humorous in a dry, satirical way. In addition to alligators he sees anacondas, piranhas, rats as big as dogs, and mosquitos. Later Nate suffered through dengue fever. Josh saw him and said "You look awful. You're skinny as a rail." Nate said "You want to lose fifteen pounds, find the right mosquito." On another topic, I admired and liked the character Josh - smart, competent, but not perfect.

Maybe 40% of the story is lawyers for the grandchildren scheming to get money. The rest of the story is about Nate with some Rachel. I don't want to give away too much, but I enjoyed Nate's change. Many reviewers complained about the ending saying it was rushed and incomplete. I agree. I would have liked more. But it was acceptable to me. One part was a little sad, but my overall feeling at the end was "kind of nice."

NARRATOR:

The narrator Frank Muller was fabulous. He's very entertaining with the various personalities, especially with Nate's attitude and comments.

DATA:

Unabridged audiobook reading time: 14 hrs and 33 mins. Swearing language: moderate (one word used maybe once). Sexual content: none. Setting: current day Virginia and other east coast locations plus the jungles of Brazil and Bolivia. Book copyright: 1999. Genre: legal fiction. Ending: kind of nice but could have used more wrapping up.

OTHER BOOKS:

I've reviewed the following John Grisham books. Dates are copyright dates.

5 stars. The Firm 1991
5 stars. The Pelican Brief 1992
5 stars. The Client 1993
2 stars. The Chamber 1994
4 ½ stars. The Rainmaker 1995
5 stars. The Runaway Jury 1996
3 stars. The Partner 1997
3 stars. The Street Lawyer 1998
4 stars. The Testament 1999
4 stars. Playing for Pizza 2007
2 stars. Theodore Boone Kid Lawyer 2010 (for young adults)
