

THE SUN DOES SHINE

YOUNG READERS EDITION

ANTHONY RAY HINTON *with* LARA LOVE HARDIN
and OLUGBEMISOLA RHUDAY-PERKOVICH

“No one I have represented has inspired me more than Anthony Ray Hinton and I believe his compelling and unique story will similarly inspire our nation and readers all over the world.”

—Bryan Stevenson, attorney and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Just Mercy*

In the Young Readers Edition of *The Sun Does Shine*, Anthony Ray Hinton’s heartbreaking and powerful story of wrongful incarceration and monumental abuses of power intersects with the larger story of an unjust criminal justice system, the enduring power of faith and imagination, the complexity of forgiveness, and the continued legacy of the racism that is embedded in the roots of the United States.

In 1985, at twenty-nine years old, in his home state of Alabama, Hinton was arrested and charged with two counts of capital murder. Certain that it would soon be revealed as the mistake that it was, he believed that everyone would know what he knew—that he was innocent—and the truth would set him free.

Instead, for almost thirty years, Hinton lived in the hopelessness of death row, resisting the bleakness of his reality with the power of his imagination, and as a beacon to other prisoners, showing them the ways that reading and stories build community, character, and hope in the face of even the most tragic of circumstances. With the help of the acclaimed civil rights attorney Bryan Stevenson, Hinton won his release in 2015, and continues to light a path that shines brightly today as he uses his story to empower people of all ages.

With themes both timely and timeless, such as the impact of the intersection of racism and poverty, police misconduct, and corruption in the justice system, *The Sun Does Shine* also amplifies voices of love, hope, and commitment to justice. Stevenson’s forward is a rousing call to action and a reminder that each person has the power to create change. Hinton’s memoir shares his thirty-year journey through unimaginable pain and immersion in a culture of death to a life committed to prison reform, and a path for humanity.

“Hinton’s story reminds us how betrayals of self and others add up to injustice and an accompanying climate of fear. But little rituals of attempted righteousness—of remembrance and self-regard—add up, too. Small, meaningful actions can change the course of human events. In the telling of his tale and his determination to find common cause with unlikely others, Hinton endures by being nimble and refusing to reduce his soul to the size of someone else’s fear.”

—David Dark, *Toward Justice*,” Chapter 16 (<https://chapter16.org/toward-justice/>)

https://www.nashvillescene.com/arts_culture/anthony-ray-hinton-s-i-the-sun-does-shine-i-comes-to-young-readers/article_4a8baaa8-38fa-11ed-9cd5-8fdd1820b796.html



ABOUT THE BOOK

SUBJECTS

- Biography & Autobiography
- Juvenile Nonfiction
- Law
- Sociology
- Prison Reform
- Activism
- Religion
- Racism
- Criminal Justice System

REVIEWS

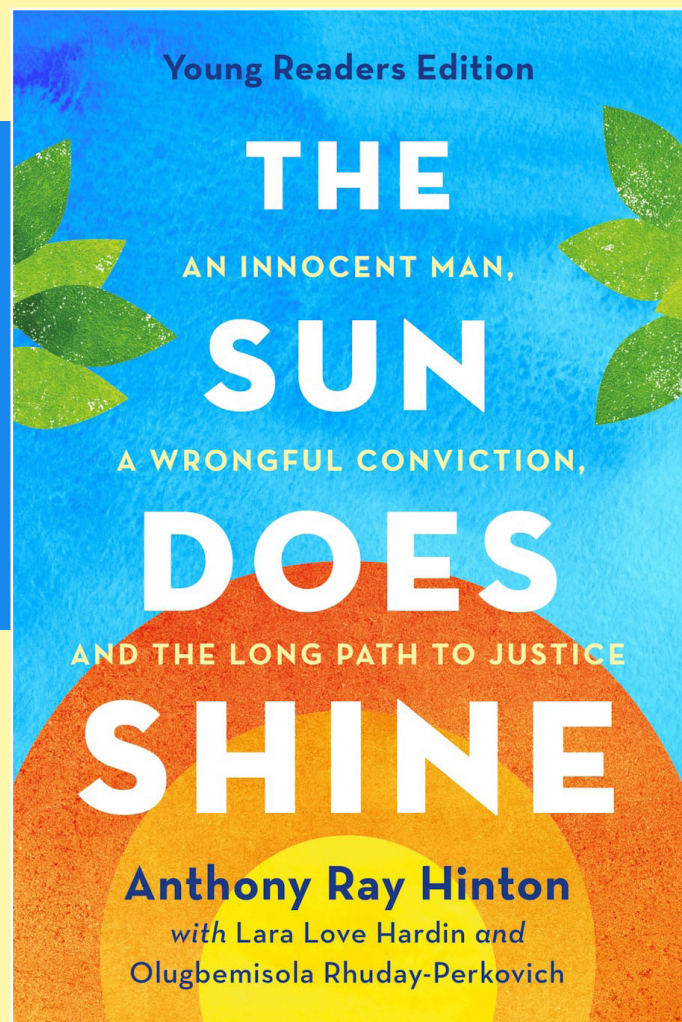
“In this accessible young readers’ adaptation of Hinton’s adult memoir, middle-grade readers will learn of Hinton’s wrongful conviction and deep flaws within the U.S. criminal justice system . . . Periodically, chapters end with compelling facts and statistics on the American criminal justice system, grounding Hinton’s emotional and human story in important, objective context; citations are provided for this information, and quotes are incorporated throughout. Though profoundly tragic, Hinton’s story is ultimately one of hope and an undeniable call for change.” —*Booklist*, starred review

“Legal proceedings are explained in a clear and non-patronizing way, while the events and dialogue are utterly engrossing . . . This is a must-have for any collection, and a necessary read to inspire the next generation to fight for social and racial justice.” —*School Library Journal*, starred review


PREPARATION

This memoir touches on a number of challenging and painful topics, including racism, violence, hate crimes, and poverty. In order to foster rich and productive learning, we recommend that educators take time for reflection in advance of engaging with students.

1. Examine your own thoughts and beliefs on capital punishment, racism, and the criminal justice system. Where do you need to build your own knowledge? What are your feelings about capital punishment? Do you intend to share your views with your students?



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YOUNG READERS EDITION • *An Educator's Guide*

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2. How will you develop an understanding of what your students know or think about the issues addressed in *The Sun Does Shine*? Will you use journal prompts, class discussion, and one-on-one conversations?
3. Think about the context you will be working in. Are there community members who will have familiarity or direct experience with the situations described? What resources or supports will you have available? How do you plan to create a safe environment for inquiry and expression? Will you create a set of discussion guidelines with the students? How do you plan to promote dialogue? Through full class discussions, small group conversations, etc.?
4. What outside resources do you plan to include?
5. How will study and activities planned for this book intersect with other coursework? Are there opportunities for collaboration across subjects?
6. What follow-up or concluding activities might be possible for students who want to engage in further work, such as advocacy, journalism, events, etc.?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Start the Year with Community Agreements

<https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/sel-tip-start-year-community-agreements>

How Do I Handle a Heavy Circle?

<https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/how-do-i-handle-heavy-circle>

Creating an Anti-Bias Learning Environment

<https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/creating-anti-bias-learning-environment#.VafFgflVhHw>

PRE-READING: COMMUNITY-BUILDING AND FRAMING ACTIVITIES

The Sun Does Shine delves deeply into the relationship that Hinton has with his mother. These two picture books amplify the ways that family relationships are impacted by the criminal justice system, and can be shared with students of any age.

See You Soon, Mariame Kaba and Bianca Diaz

A child is worried and has questions when separated from her mother, who is in jail. The focus is on efforts to maintain the loving relationship.

<https://www.haymarketbooks.org/books/1891-see-you-soon>

Visiting Day, Jacqueline Woodson and James Ransome

A parent and child joyfully prepare for their monthly reunion on visiting day; they are part of a supportive community of families who must travel long distances to see loved ones in prison.

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/317982/visiting-day-by-jacqueline-woodson-illustrated-by-james-e-ransome/>

FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR WRITING PROMPTS

“I believe that there are some defendants who have earned the ultimate punishment our society has to offer by committing murder with aggravating circumstances present. I believe life is sacred. It cheapens the life of an innocent murder victim to say that society has no right to keep the murderer from ever killing again. In my view, society has not only the right but the duty to act in self defense to protect the innocent.” —Jeremy Mull, prosecuting attorney (<http://www.clarkprosecutor.org/html/death/death.htm>)

“The penalty of death differs from all other forms of criminal punishment, not in degree but in kind. It is unique in its rejection of rehabilitation of the convict as a basic purpose of criminal justice. And it is unique, finally, in its absolute renunciation of all that is embedded in our humanity.” —Justice Potter Stewart, on *Furman v. Georgia*

“The weight of the death penalty is disproportionately carried by those with less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds or belonging to a racial, ethnic or religious minority. This includes having limited access to legal representation, for example, or being at greater disadvantage in their experience of the criminal justice system.”
—Amnesty International

What do you think prisons are for? Are they important to the health of communities? Why or why not?

Why do you think there is capital punishment in the United States? Why does it differ from state to state?

Do you believe that there are instances when the death penalty is justified? Why or why not?

How do people and institutions support their positions on capital punishment? What do you think draws them to their positions? How are those opinions supported by facts?

Death Penalty Fact Sheet:

<https://documents.deathpenaltyinfo.org/pdf/FactSheet.pdf>

History of the Death Penalty:

<https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/facts-and-research/history-of-the-death-penalty>

Capital Punishment Around the World:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty/>

Race, Mental Illness, Disability, and Other Issues Relating to Capital Punishment in the United States:

<https://www.aclu.org/issues/capital-punishment>

Answers to Common Questions about Capital Punishment:

<https://ejusa.org/resource/people-are-asking/>

TERMS AND CONCEPTS TO DISCUSS

- prison abolitionist movement
- prison industrial complex
- school-to-prison pipeline
- mass incarceration
- restorative justice

FOR REFLECTION

How do I feel about what I have learned? Have my opinions on capital punishment changed? What additional questions do I have?

GUIDED READING QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What were Hinton's childhood dreams for his future? Why do you think he felt safe in his community despite conditions in Birmingham, Alabama? What were the challenges he faced as he grew older?
2. Why do you think Hinton decided to keep that car for two years? What do you think about the consequences of his actions?
3. What was Hinton's perspective on the criminal justice system before he was arrested for murder? Was there anything that surprised you about his arrest and jailing? What were the ways that he was dehumanized in the process? Why did the police officer tell him that he would be convicted of murder? What do you believe about racial profiling? How do you think racism played a part in Hinton's story?
4. "There's an awful lot about our criminal justice system that is dysfunctional. Everyone who sets foot in a criminal courtroom will see myriad ways the system is dysfunctional." —Chesa Boudin, former San Francisco district attorney

After reading this book, do you see ways that the system is dysfunctional? What do you notice? Why do you think Hinton called his trial a "legal lynching"? How do you think that lynching is related to the U.S. system of capital punishment? The Equal Justice Initiative argues that lynching was a form of terrorism in the United States (<https://eji.org/reports/lynching-in-america/>). How do they make this argument? Do you think that lynching has an impact on race relations in this country? If so, how?

5. How do you think Hinton's legal representation affected his trial? What do you think Sheldon Perhacs thought about Hinton and his case? How do you think it affected his work? How did Perhacs differ from Bryan Stevenson? What are your thoughts on the system of court-appointed legal representation? Why is it important? What are the challenges? How do you think money plays a role in the criminal justice system?
6. What do you notice about the jury selection process? What role has race and gender played historically in the jury process?

(The American Bar Association on Jury Selection: https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/resources/law_related_education_network/how_courts_work/juryselect/_) Race and Jury, The Equal Justice Initiative: <https://eji.org/reports/race-and-the-jury-overview/>

7. Why do you think Hinton believed that “the best chance for his life was to get sentenced to death”?
8. “The Crime TV genre, which reaches hundreds of millions of people in America and worldwide, advances debunked ideas about crime, a false hero narrative about law enforcement, and distorted representations about Black people, other people of color and women.” —from “Normalizing Injustice,” Color of Change

Do you watch crime TV? What do you notice about heroes and villains in this genre? What impact do you think it has on your beliefs about the criminal justice system? What kinds of stories do you think are important to share about the criminal justice system and its impact? If you were developing a film or TV show about the issues explored in *The Sun Does Shine*, which elements would be most important for you to share?

9. How did Hinton’s imagination help him in prison? How has your imagination helped you in difficult times? Do you think the power of imagination can transform lives and communities? Why or why not?
10. “The situation in Alabama and Mississippi which is spectacular and surprises the country is nationwide . . . Because until today, all the Negroes in this country in one way or another, in different fashions, North and South, are kept in what is, in effect, prison. In the North, one lives in ghettos and in the South, the situation is so intolerable as to become sinister not only for Mississippi or Alabama or Florida but for the whole future of this country.” —James Baldwin

What do you think Baldwin meant when he wrote that all Black people in the United States are “in prison”? Do you think that is true today?

11. What do you notice about Hinton’s mom throughout the book? How do you think her beliefs and behavior had an impact on his life in prison? What was important about his relationship with Lester?
12. How did Hinton’s beliefs about his arrest and conviction change from the moment he was first arrested to his arrival at Holman Prison? How did he spend his first few years at Holman? What made him change his behavior?
13. What kinds of conditions does Hinton describe in prison? What strikes you the most about his descriptions of life on death row? Where are the prisons in your state? Who is in them? What do you know about the conditions there? If you have the death penalty in your state, what rights do prisoners on death row have? What links do you see between the systems of slavery and mass incarceration?
14. Why did Hinton start the book club in prison? How did he convince the warden that it would be a good thing to do? Why do you think the warden agreed? In his famous slave narrative, Frederick Douglass wrote: “Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.” What were some ways that Hinton brought change to the lives of people while they were on death row? Why do you think it didn’t matter to him whether his book club members were innocent or guilty?
15. “You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read.” —James Baldwin

What do you think this quote means? How do you think reading can make someone feel less alone, or build community? What reading experiences have you had that brought you closer to others? What stories have inspired you to think about the world in new ways?

16. “Being kind in an unjust system is not enough.” —Sister Helen Prejean

Why do you think Sister Prejean wrote this? What differences did you notice in how the prison staff behaved or treated the prisoners? How do you think the people who worked in the prison and on death row were affected by the work that they did? There must exist a paradigm, a practical model for social change that includes an understanding of ways to transform consciousness that are linked to efforts to transform structures.” —bell hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*

17. Why do you think it could be important to think about transforming structures and systems in addition to the people involved in them?

18. “I’ve never thought what I do, I do just for my clients or I’m doing just for the people who I represent or the people who know I care about them. I’ve always felt like my work, our work, is for everybody. That is, we’re trying to save everyone from the corruption, from the agony of living lives where there is no mercy, where there is no grace, where there is no justice, where we are indifferent to suffering. Those kinds of lives ultimately lead to violence and animosity and bigotry, and I don’t want that for anybody.” —Bryan Stevenson, in conversation with Krista Tippet (<https://onbeing.org/programs/bryan-stevenson-finding-the-courage-for-whats-redemptive/>)

Some people, like Stevenson, have written that the system of capital punishment dehumanizes everyone who participates in it. Do you agree? Why or why not? What do you think our system’s message is about who has value in society? Do you believe that we can make decisions about who deserves to live or die?

19. How did Hinton choose joy while he was in prison? What helped him do that? Why do you think it was important for him to hold on to joy? Who did Hinton forgive, and why?

20. What was Hinton’s relationship to his faith while he was in prison? How do you think it changed, and why?

21. Review the books that Hinton’s book club read. Which are you familiar with? Why do you think they were important for the inmates to read?

22. Hinton says, “I’d rather die for the truth than live a lie.” Why do you think he refused to accept any kind of deal or bargain? What do you think it cost him? How do you think it helped him? Why do you think many people confess to crimes they did not commit, or accept plea bargains?

23. How did Hinton feel when he was released after thirty years? How did his years in prison affect how he moved about in the world? What do you think he meant when he said, “The sun does shine.” Hinton has said, “I create an alibi for every single day of my life. I live in fear this could happen to me again.” Do you think that fear is reasonable? Why or why not? What do you think it means to live this way? Do you believe that Hinton is fully free? Why or why not? How do you think his future is affected by his thirty years on death row?

24. What inspires you about Hinton’s story? What challenges your beliefs?

25. Stevenson has said, “I think you’re either hopeful, or you’re the problem. There’s no neutral place. Injustice prevails where hopelessness persists.” He has also said that he believes “hope is our superpower.” Where do you see hope in this story? Where do you see hope for the future of the criminal justice system? Where can you go to learn more about the issues presented in this book?

26. Hinton has become an activist, speaking in schools and communities across the United States. Why do you think that is important to him? How do you think that it is effective work?

27. “The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.” —Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

What do you think Dr. King means? What are the ways that you see his statement as true? In what ways do you still wonder about it? Stevenson adds that he believes that the arc needs people to help it bend: “When you’re trying to do justice work, when you’re trying to make a difference, when you’re trying to change the world, the thing you need to do is get close enough to people who are falling down, get close enough to people who are suffering, close enough to people who are in pain, who’ve been discarded and disfavored—to get close enough to wrap your arms around them and affirm their humanity and their dignity.”

28. “Every person who reads this story has the power to make a difference in the world, to reject unjust and unfair treatment of other people. I believe we all have an obligation to do so.” —Bryan Stevenson

Do you believe this statement? How do you feel you can foster positive change in the world? How does Hinton’s story challenge you in that way? What are different ways that people can get involved in activism around criminal justice and capital punishment?

29. What are some alternatives to capital punishment? What are the challenges to their implementation? Why do you think restorative justice is important in communities? How do you see restorative justice practices impacting your community, school, or home?

SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Just Mercy: A True Story of the Fight for Justice (adapted for young adults), Bryan Stevenson

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, Michelle Alexander

The Real Cost of Prisons Comix, edited by Lois Ahrens

13th, a documentary directed by Ava DuVernay, available at <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5895028/>

The Marshall Project <https://www.themarshallproject.org/>

The Equal Justice Initiative <https://eji.org/>

Washington Post Live with Anthony Ray Hinton, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMeHyQngAWk>

“We Need to Talk About Injustice,” a TED Talk by Bryan Stevenson, available at <https://www.ted.com/talks/bryan-stevenson-we-need-to-talk-about-an-injustice?language=en>

Anthony Ray Hinton on *CBS News*, available at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/anthony-ray-hinton-alabama-death-row-childrens-book/>

“The Sun Does Shine: How Does an Adult Title Get Adapted for Young People? A Talk with Olugbemisola Ruday-Perkovich and Anthony Ray Hinton,” in *School Library Journal*, available at <https://afuse8production.slj.com/2022/05/12/the-sun-does-shine-how-does-an-adult-title-get-adapted-for-young-people-a-talk-with-olugbemisola-ruday-perkovich-and-anthony-ray-hinton/>

This teacher’s guide was written by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich who is a co-author of *The Sun Does Shine* (Young Readers Edition): *An Innocent Man*, *A Wrongful Conviction*, and the *Long Path to Justice*. She is also author of *It Doesn’t Take A Genius*, a Kirkus Best Book of the Year, *Operation Sisterhood*, and *8th Grade Superzero*, a Notable Book for A Global Society and Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People. She is the co-author of the NAACP Image Award nominated *Two Naomis*, its sequel *Naomis Too*, and the editor of *The Hero Next Door*, a 2019 anthology from We Need Diverse Books.