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Crimes Of The Century: From Leopold and Loeb to O.J. Simpson

By Gilbert Geis, Leigh B. Bienen



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In compelling narrative, the authors probe the sensational cases of Nathan F. Leopold, Jr., and Richard A. Loeb, the Scottsboro "boys," Bruno Richard Hauptmann, Alger Hiss, and O.J. Simpson, highlighting significant lessons about criminal behavior and the administration of criminal justice.

Each case study details the crime, the police investigation, and the court proceedings, profiles the major players, and examines the outcome and aftermath of the trial. The authors untangle the perplexities surrounding the cases and illuminate the many mysteries that remain unsolved today. These celebrated trials reveal issues of overzealous prosecution, sloppy police work, judicial bias, race, class, and ethnic struggles, and the role of wealth in securing a competent defense. They also show how the temper of the times and frenzied media coverage heightened the intensity of drama in the cases.



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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Noted criminologist Geis and law school lecturer Bienen present vivid accounts of five of the most famous crimes and trials of the 20th century. The cases of Leopold and Loeb, the Scottsboro boys, the Lindbergh kidnapping, Alger Hiss, and O.J. Simpson certainly merit inclusion, though the Sacco-Vanzetti case is inexplicably missing. Though each case is covered from crime through punishment (or acquittal) in fewer than 50 pages, the depth of historical detail and legal analysis is remarkable. The authors are particularly adept at placing these crimes within both their immediate historical settings and the larger societal issues (e.g., racism, Cold War anxiety, pre-World War II isolationism) that run below the surface. They likewise provide considerable insight into the effects of highly publicized trials on the popular perception of the administration of justice. After the discussion of each trial, the authors include an extensive and informative guide to books for further reading. Highly recommended for all libraries. —Patrick Petit, Catholic Univ. Law Lib., Washington, DC

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From [Booklist](#)

Geis is a professor of criminology at the University of California, Irvine; Bienen is a lecturer in the law school at Northwestern University. In their recounting of five important trials, they rarely break new ground in revealing facts of the cases, though many of the previously known but obscure facts are quite interesting to those with only passing familiarity with some of them. However, the author's primary concern is the political and social background that make the cases so sensational. They describe with chilling effect the racial environment that allowed the travesty surrounding the Scottsboro "boys" trials. In the case of Alger Hiss, the authors hold up a mirror to the rapidly widening schisms in our post-war political culture. Many of the details of the Simpson trial are familiar, but Geis and Bienen offer interesting perspectives on why some important witnesses were perceived as credible. For legal scholars as well as social historians, this work is a valuable tool, and laymen should find it an enjoyable read. *Jay Freeman*

From Kirkus Reviews

A look at five famous trials that transfixed a nation. Geis, a criminologist, and Bienen, who teaches at Northwestern School of Law, contend that the five cases they discuss—Leopold and Loeb, the Scottsboro boys, the Lindbergh baby, Alger Hiss, and O.J. Simpson—have left a major imprint on our collective consciousness because they represent a mystery such as the ambiguity of rebuttable evidence or a defendant's unwavering claims to innocence, or, in the case of Alger Hiss, the impeccable credentials of the accused and the disreputableness of his accuser. Successful trials are overly dependent on skilled, high-priced lawyers and on the passions of the times. They also argue that these cases highlight the tensions, the inadequacies, and the underlying processes of our justice system. The O.J. Simpson case, they argue, underscores the sloppiness with which judges give warrants to the police—a sloppiness that passes unremarked on until a high-priced legal team is able to publicize it. The authors offer a fair analysis of celebrated cases that address the need to see that true justice is done. — Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

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Shirley Smith:

The event that you get from Crimes Of The Century: From Leopold and Loeb to O.J. Simpson will be the more deep you looking the information that hide into the words the more you get interested in reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to understand but Crimes Of The Century: From Leopold and Loeb to O.J. Simpson giving you buzz feeling of reading. The author conveys their point in specific way that can be understood through anyone who read the item because the author of this e-book is well-known enough. This book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. It is therefore easy to understand then can go along with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having this Crimes Of The Century: From Leopold and Loeb to O.J. Simpson instantly.

Mary Parker:

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