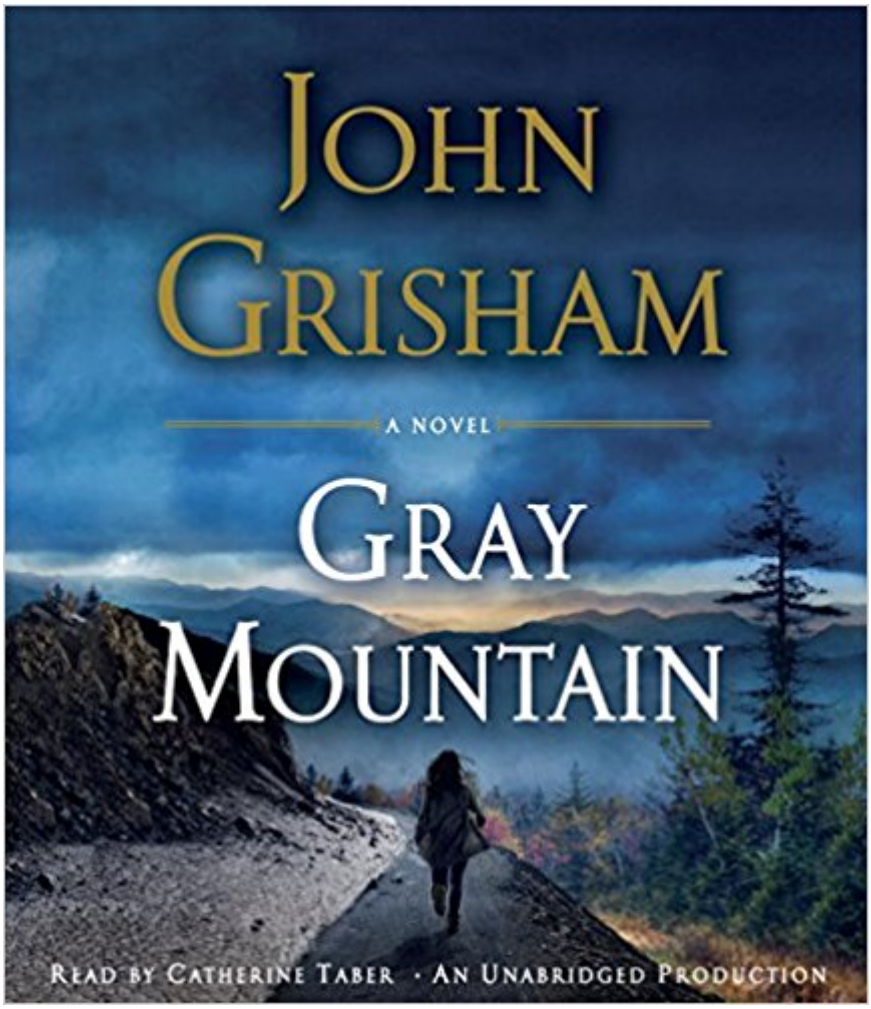
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# Gray Mountain: A Novel




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## Synopsis

John Grisham has a new hero . . . and sheÃ¢â ¬â„¢s full of surprises The year is 2008 and Samantha KoferÃ¢â ¬â„¢s career at a huge Wall Street law firm is on the fast trackÃ¢â ¬â •until the recession hits and she gets downsized, furloughed, escorted out of the building.Ã Â Samantha, though, is one of the Ã¢â ¬Å“luckyÃ¢â ¬Â• associates. SheÃ¢â ¬â„¢s offered an opportunity to work at a legal aid clinic for one year without pay, after which there would be a slim chance that sheÃ¢â ¬â„¢d get her old job back.In a matter of days Samantha moves from Manhattan to Brady, Virginia, population 2,200, in the heart of Appalachia, a part of the world she has only read about. Mattie Wyatt, lifelong Brady resident and head of the townÃ¢â ¬â„¢s legal aid clinic, is there to teach her how to Ã¢â ¬Å“help real people with real problems.Ã¢â ¬Â• For the first time in her career, Samantha prepares a lawsuit, sees the inside of an actual courtroom, gets scolded by a judge, and receives threats from locals who arenÃ¢â ¬â„¢t so thrilled to have a big-city lawyer in town. And she learns that Brady, like most small towns, harbors some big secrets.Her new job takes Samantha into the murky and dangerous world of coal mining, where laws are often broken, rules are ignored, regulations are flouted, communities are divided, and the land itself is under attack from Big Coal. Violence is always just around the corner, and within weeks Samantha finds herself engulfed in litigation that turns deadly.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“An important new novel . . .Ã Â GrishamÃ¢â ¬â„¢s workÃ¢â ¬â •always superior entertainmentÃ¢â ¬â •is evolving into something more serious, more powerful, more worthy of his

exceptional talent.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •Patrick Anderson, The Washington Post Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“John Grisham makes a powerful closing argument against Big Coal, but the message never obscures a satisfying, old fashioned, good guy-bad guy legal thriller.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Christian Science Monitor Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Grisham has written one of his best legal dramas in quite some time with this dive into small-town politics. There's a mystery, but that's a minor portion of the story. The main thrust that will engage readers is Samantha Kofer and the cast of characters that help her discover her passion.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Associated Press

JOHN GRISHAM is the author of twenty-seven novels, one work of nonfiction, a collection of stories, and four novels for young readers.Ã Â www.doubleday.comwww.jgrisham.comwww.facebook.com/JohnGrisham

The author provides enough details of the challenges that coal miners face daily and the health issues that they deal with long term to give the reader insight into the coal industry but yet not so much to get bogged down in legal jargon. The book abounds with legal actions from both the miners seeking compensation and the high powered law firms thar represent the coal companies. Interesting book that exposes some of the abuses that seem inherent to the coal mining but no mention of the benefits that that industry provides to the nation. I see a need to balance the good and the bad or I might as well not read a book like this but tune into a progressive focused station (TV or Radio).

Another fine novel by Grisham. This covers Appalachia and the removal of coal. We need the coal for energy, I do not want the administration to shut down coal production. The novel deals with the destruction of the environment in those concerned states and it is horrible. There is no thought on how to mine without being destructive, and destructive they are. I hate to involve the government but it is clear from the book that there is nothing being done to save the land. The companies will mine all the coal out and then depart, after all the owners don't live there, including the owner from Russia.

Not up to expected John Grisham standards; more of a political correctness novel taking on the coal barons of today by a young lawyer who must do some bono work while she waits for the recession to turn a corner. It will hold your attention, but the grand ending expected by this phenomenal author isn't there.

I was intrigued at first that this Grisham story was told in the perspective of a female, a first for him. However, I don't think he pulled it off. The story has a lot of potential for something interesting to build from the plot, but nothing ever really happens. The story instead plays out like a bad romance thriller. The basic synopsis sounds believable with the main character being a burned-out big-city lawyer looking for a change, but that is about as deep as it goes. Naturally there is a romantic interest in the tiny country town she moves to, with an initial Mr. Darcy feel with the tension between them. Of course, the damsel gets into distress several times and her love interest has to help/save her. Snooze... the remainder of the story is like the mildly interesting case you know lawyers get 90% of the time, rather than the exciting cliffhanger case that is worth telling. You want to care about these Appalacian workers and their struggles with the Man, but the empathy never developed for me since the main character only interacts with a total of about 5 people in the whole town. I think Grisham should stick to what he does best: male characters in big cities.

As much as I enjoy reading John Grisham, neither his characters nor his plots are subtlety nuanced. Gray Mountain is no exception. The heroine, Samantha Kofer, loses her job as a very junior associate at New YorkÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s fictional Wall Street giant, Scully & Pershing, during the collapse of the investment banking houses in 2008. As its clients go under one by one, Big Law is forced to layoff anyone and everyone, including its partners. Everyone associated with Big Law wears a decidedly black hat. On the rather thin premise that a year of pro-bono legal work mightÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œemphasis on mightÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ put her back on her way to Scully & Pershing partnership, Samantha and finds her way to Mattie WyattÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Mountain Aid Legal Clinic in the small town of Brady, Virginia. Mattie, her colleagues, and her clients wear very white hats. Samantha immediately realizes that two years on Wall Street proofreading contracts for an exorbitant paycheck has netted her zero legal experience. Like every other Big Firm associate, she does not know how to file a lawsuit, which side of a courtroom to stand on, or even how to have a defendant served with process. But under MattieÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s tutelage, Samantha puts on her own white hat and begins to blossom as she begins to serve the legal aid clients, mostly poor miners and their families. Brady is in the heart of coal mining country, and the coal mining companies wear the blackest hats of all. MattieÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s attractive-but-married-but-separated nephew, Donovan, also of the white hat persuasion, has dedicated his career as a trial attorney to attacking the coal mining companies who have destroyed the land, lied to regulators, and injured and abandoned the miners and their families. Donovan and

his investigator brother Jeff, another white hat, and not afraid to play dirty tricks against the coal companies. The plot revolves around their dirtiest trick of all, the one that causes them to carry guns and constantly watch their backs. The plot of Gray Mountain has the suspense of GrishamÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s earliest novels, but his plot is slowed down by the pedantic way he presents information about the horror of mining in Appalachia and the lives of the miners and their families. While the reader does need a certain amount of this background to appreciate DonovanÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s desperate tactics, it grows wearisome and heavy handed after a bit. In the end, unlike most Grisham protagonists, Samantha does not turn her back on the practice of law and head off to life on a tropical beach forever. Nor does she become rich through cleverly secreting the bad guyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s money off-shore. Rather, she makes a decision about her future that is in harmony with what she has learned. Unlike some reviewers, I did not find Samantha at all one dimensional. Her fear of losing her job, itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s eventual loss, her doubts about her expertise as a lawyer, her attraction to Donovan, and her sympathy for the miners and their families made her an interesting and sympathetic heroine. I liked her, and I enjoyed Gray Mountain even more than GrishamÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s last novel (which I also enjoyed) Sycamore Row.

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