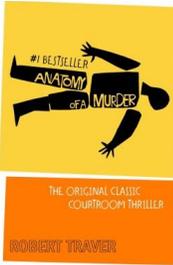


# Books by the Stack



## **Anatomy of a Murder by Robert Traver**

America's original courtroom thriller, it is also the story of that most sensational of all proceedings in the American justice system: the murder trial. Exactly how far will one man go to convince his peers he is innocent of murder – and just how much would you risk to help him?

**Why you'll like it:** *Upper Peninsula setting, courtroom procedural, semi-autobiographical.*

**About the Author:** Robert Traver (1903-1991), the pseudonym for John D. Voelker, was an associate justice of the Michigan Supreme Court when his novel "Anatomy of a Murder", later made into the classic movie with Jimmy Stewart, rocketed him to national fame. Soon afterward, in his mid-fifties, he quit the bench in order to write, fish and hunt morels near Ishpeming, Michigan. His eleven books include "Hornstein's Boy", "The Jealous Mistress", "Anatomy of a Murder", and "Small Town D.A."

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. Manion's culpability—if you were on the jury how would you vote?
2. Insanity pleas—are we rational or irrational beings? To what degree are we responsible for our actions? Are there extenuating circumstances?
3. The central irony of the work—how the justice system seems to subvert truth. How is truth skewed in this novel? Is justice achieved? Is Traver's portrayal realistic—or simply poetic license? If realistic, what are the real life implications?
4. Whom did you root for and why? Do you feel Travers manipulates his readers?
5. Did Paul Biegler lead Lt. Manion to an insanity defense by explaining the possible defenses and what would work best before asking him to think about what he remembered? Did you think this was ethical? How does this influence the course of the trial?
6. Do you feel that an irresistible impulse is truly a case for the insanity defense? What do you think really drove Lt. Manion's actions?
7. Since the trial was about Lt. Manion shooting Barney Quill, why would Claude Dancer imply Laura Manion was a loose woman in the cross examination? What benefit would that give the prosecution?
8. Is the trial truly about the guilt or innocence of Lt. Manion? What do you think the jury was deciding?

**9.** After the trial was over, did you feel justice was done?

**10.** Do you feel the theme of the book questions how sound our justice system is if lawyers can bend the truth and manipulate witnesses and juries?

*(Questions by LitLovers and Northern Michigan University)*



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