



The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle

By Lawrence M. Friedman

Download now

Read Online ➔

The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle By Lawrence M. Friedman

The trial of O. J. Simpson was a sensation, avidly followed by millions of people, but it was also, in a sense, nothing new. One hundred years earlier the Lizzie Borden trial had held the nation in thrall. The names (and the crimes) may change, but the appeal is enduring—and why this is, how it works, and what it means are what Lawrence Friedman investigates in *The Big Trial*.

What is it about these cases that captures the public imagination? Are the 'headline trials' of our period different from those of a century or two ago? And what do we learn from them, about the nature of our society, past and present? To get a clearer picture, Friedman first identifies what certain headline trials have in common, then considers particular cases within each grouping. The political trial, for instance, embraces treason and spying, dissenters and radicals, and, to varying degrees, corruption and fraud. Celebrity trials involve the famous—whether victims, as in the case of Charles Manson, or defendants as disparate as Fatty Arbuckle and William Kennedy Smith—but certain high-profile cases, such as those Friedman categorizes as *tabloid trials*, can also create celebrities. The fascination of *whodunit trials* can be found in the mystery surrounding the case: Are we sure about O. J. Simpson? What about Claus von Bulow—tried, in another sensational case, for sending his wife into a coma.? An especially interesting type of case Friedman groups under the rubric *worm in the bud*. These are cases, such as that of Lizzie Borden, that seem to put society itself on trial; they raise fundamental social questions and often suggest hidden and secret pathologies. And finally, a small but important group of cases proceed from *moral panic*, the Salem witchcraft trials being the classic instance, though Friedman also considers recent examples.

Though they might differ in significant ways, these types of trials also have important similarities. Most notably, they invariably raise questions about identity (Who is this defendant? A villain? An innocent unfairly accused?). And in this respect, *The Big Trial* shows us, the headline trial reflects a critical aspect of modern society. Reaching across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the latest outrage, from congressional hearings to lynching and vigilante justice to public punishment, from Dr. Sam Sheppard (the 'fugitive?') to Jeffrey Dahmer (the 'cannibal?'), The Rosenbergs to Timothy McVeigh, the book presents a complex picture of headline trials as displays of power—moments of 'didactic theater?' that demonstrate in one way or another whether a society is fair, whom

it protects, and whose interest it serves.

 [**Download** The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle ...pdf](#)

 [**Read Online** The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle ...pdf](#)

The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle

By Lawrence M. Friedman

The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle By Lawrence M. Friedman

The trial of O. J. Simpson was a sensation, avidly followed by millions of people, but it was also, in a sense, nothing new. One hundred years earlier the Lizzie Borden trial had held the nation in thrall. The names (and the crimes) may change, but the appeal is enduring—and why this is, how it works, and what it means are what Lawrence Friedman investigates in *The Big Trial*.

What is it about these cases that captures the public imagination? Are the "headline trials" of our period different from those of a century or two ago? And what do we learn from them, about the nature of our society, past and present? To get a clearer picture, Friedman first identifies what certain headline trials have in common, then considers particular cases within each grouping. The political trial, for instance, embraces treason and spying, dissenters and radicals, and, to varying degrees, corruption and fraud. Celebrity trials involve the famous—whether victims, as in the case of Charles Manson, or defendants as disparate as Fatty Arbuckle and William Kennedy Smith—but certain high-profile cases, such as those Friedman categorizes as *tabloid trials*, can also create celebrities. The fascination of *whodunit trials* can be found in the mystery surrounding the case: Are we sure about O. J. Simpson? What about Claus von Bulow—tried, in another sensational case, for sending his wife into a coma? An especially interesting type of case Friedman groups under the rubric *worm in the bud*. These are cases, such as that of Lizzie Borden, that seem to put society itself on trial; they raise fundamental social questions and often suggest hidden and secret pathologies. And finally, a small but important group of cases proceed from *moral panic*, the Salem witchcraft trials being the classic instance, though Friedman also considers recent examples.

Though they might differ in significant ways, these types of trials also have important similarities. Most notably, they invariably raise questions about identity (Who is this defendant? A villain? An innocent unfairly accused?). And in this respect, *The Big Trial* shows us, the headline trial reflects a critical aspect of modern society. Reaching across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the latest outrage, from congressional hearings to lynching and vigilante justice to public punishment, from Dr. Sam Sheppard (the "fugitive") to Jeffrey Dahmer (the "cannibal"), The Rosenbergs to Timothy McVeigh, the book presents a complex picture of headline trials as displays of power—moments of "didactic theater" that demonstrate in one way or another whether a society is fair, whom it protects, and whose interest it serves.

The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle By Lawrence M. Friedman Bibliography

- Rank: #915201 in Books
- Published on: 2015-05-04
- Released on: 2015-03-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.00" h x 5.80" w x 8.70" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 224 pages

 [**Download** The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle ...pdf](#)

 [**Read Online** The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle ...pdf](#)

Editorial Review

Review

"Friedman takes his analysis into current time, where he argues that the social changes and media developments have allowed the entertainment aspects of the didactic theater to overshadow its informative aspects."—*Reviews in American History*

"Engaging from the beginning, at both a theoretical and a very explicit, sometimes even sensational level. Thoughtful and though provoking."—*Choice*

"Lawrence M. Friedman, our legal historian with the widest range, explains the great variety in courtroom and related events that have attracted our attention in American history. His book is a must for anyone who becomes absorbed in a high-profile trial."—**Robert A. Ferguson**, George Edward Woodberry Professor in Law, Literature, and Criticism at Columbia Law School and author of the author of *The Trial in American Life*

"Witty and engagingly written, *The Big Trial* sheds important light on the social functions of 'headline trials' in American history, both before and during the age of mass media. Professor Friedman compellingly shows how big trials educate the public, impart moral messages, and above all, entertain us."—**Samantha Barbas**, author of *The Laws of Image*

About the Author

Lawrence M. Friedman is Marion Rice Kirkwood Professor at Stanford Law School. He is the author, among other works, of *A History of American Law*; *The Legal System: A Social Science Perspective*; *Crime and Punishment in American History*; and *The Human Rights Culture*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alyson Hardy:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important act, like looking for your favorite book and reading a e-book. Beside you can solve your condition; you can add your knowledge by the guide entitled *The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle*. Try to face the book *The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle* as your buddy. It means that it can to get your friend when you feel alone and beside regarding course make you smarter than in the past. Yeah, it is very fortunated to suit your needs. The book makes you much more confidence because you can know every little thing by the book. So , let's make new experience as well as knowledge with this book.

William Petterson:

The book *The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle* can give more knowledge and information about everything you want. Exactly why must we leave the best thing like a book *The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle*? Some of you have a different opinion about publication. But one aim in which book can give many details for us. It is absolutely correct. Right now, try to closer along with your book. Knowledge or

information that you take for that, you may give for each other; it is possible to share all of these. Book The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle has simple shape however, you know: it has great and large function for you. You can appearance the enormous world by available and read a e-book. So it is very wonderful.

David Unruh:

What do you regarding book? It is not important along with you? Or just adding material when you require something to explain what you problem? How about your time? Or are you busy person? If you don't have spare time to perform others business, it is make you feel bored faster. And you have time? What did you do? Everybody has many questions above. The doctor has to answer that question mainly because just their can do in which. It said that about book. Book is familiar in each person. Yes, it is suitable. Because start from on kindergarten until university need this kind of The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle to read.

Julie Ross:

Many people spending their moment by playing outside with friends, fun activity using family or just watching TV the entire day. You can have new activity to invest your whole day by studying a book. Ugh, do you think reading a book can really hard because you have to accept the book everywhere? It fine you can have the e-book, bringing everywhere you want in your Smart phone. Like The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle which is finding the e-book version. So , why not try out this book? Let's find.

**Download and Read Online The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle
By Lawrence M. Friedman #FV6JK5DR4B1**

Read The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle By Lawrence M. Friedman for online ebook

The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle By Lawrence M. Friedman Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle By Lawrence M. Friedman books to read online.

Online The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle By Lawrence M. Friedman ebook PDF download

The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle By Lawrence M. Friedman Doc

The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle By Lawrence M. Friedman Mobipocket

The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle By Lawrence M. Friedman EPub

FV6JK5DR4B1: The Big Trial: Law as Public Spectacle By Lawrence M. Friedman