

Susman Godfrey & Co-Counsel File Federal Class Action Copyright Infringement Suit Against Anthropic on Behalf of Authors For Taking and Exploiting Pirated Books

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Lawsuit alleges Anthropic's Claude AI language models compromise authors' ability to earn a living via improper and unauthorized ingestion and use of their books.

On August 19, 2024, Susman Godfrey, Lief Cabraser, and Cowan DeBaets Abrahams & Sheppard, LLP filed a federal class action copyright infringement lawsuit in the Northern District of California on behalf of a class of authors of an array of works of fiction and nonfiction against Anthropic PBC.

AI-company Anthropic released the first iteration of its flagship large language model Claude in March 2023, and has since released multiple additional versions. The Claude models are available for use on a number of operating systems and also as an application programming interface, which allows developers to build custom generative AI tools using Claude as the base. Claude has been commercially successful, but, as Plaintiffs allege, this success is at the expense of working writers.

The Complaint alleges that Anthropic's large language models were built using troves of pirated books that Anthropic "fed" to the Claude models, including works authored by Named Plaintiffs Andrea Bartz, Charles Graeber, and Kirk Wallace Johnson. According to Plaintiffs, Anthropic could not have built a model capable of generating complex text outputs without its exploitation of class members' works.

As the Complaint summarizes, "Anthropic did what any teenager could tell you is illegal. It intentionally downloaded known pirated copies of books from the internet, made unlicensed copies of them, and then used those unlicensed copies to digest and analyze the copyrighted expression—all for its own commercial gain."

The lawsuit seeks to give authors what they are owed: consent and compensation. Specifically, Plaintiffs seek damages from Anthropic for the large-scale infringement of copyrighted works, as well as injunctive relief to prevent such improper conduct from ongoing and recurring.

Partner [Justin Nelson](#) is serving as co-lead counsel on the matter. He is joined by partners [Rohit Nath](#), [Alejandra Salinas](#), and [Jordan Connors](#) and Associate [J. Craig Smyser](#).

For more information, please contact Justin Nelson at jnelson@susmangodfrey.com or Rohit Nath at rnath@susmangodfrey.com.