

Book Club Kits!



About the Author:

Ta-Nehisi Paul Coates is an American writer, journalist, and educator. Coates is a national correspondent for *The Atlantic*, where he writes about cultural, social and political issues, particularly as they regard African-Americans. Coates has worked for *The Village Voice*, *Washington City Paper*, and *Time*. He has contributed to *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Monthly*, *O*, and other publications. In 2008 he published a memoir, *The Beautiful Struggle: A Father, Two Sons, and an Unlikely Road to Manhood*. His second book, *Between the World and Me*, was released in July 2015. It won the 2015 National Book Award for Nonfiction, and is a nominee for the Phi Beta Kappa 2016 Book Awards. He was the recipient of a "Genius Grant" from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation in 2015.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ta-Nehisi_Coates



Inside the kit:

- (8) book copies
- (1) book club guide

About the Book:

From Goodreads:

In a series of essays, written as a letter to his son, Coates confronts the notion of race in America and how it has shaped American history, many times at the cost of black bodies and lives. Thoughtfully exploring personal and historical events, from his time at Howard University to the Civil War, the author poignantly asks and attempts to answer difficult questions that plague modern society. In this short memoir, the "Atlantic" writer explains that the tragic examples of Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, and those killed in South Carolina are the results of a systematically constructed and maintained assault to black people--a structure that includes slavery, mass incarceration, and police brutality as part of its foundation. From his passionate and deliberate breakdown of the concept of race itself to the importance of the Black Lives Matter movement, Coates powerfully sums up the terrible history of the subjugation of black people in the United States. A timely work, this title will resonate with all teens--those who have experienced racism as well as those who have followed the recent news coverage on violence against people of color.

Suggested Reads:

Berman, Ari

Give Us the Ballot: The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America

Chang, Jeff

Who We Be: The Colonization of America

Rankine, Claudia

Citizen: An American Lyric

Stevenson, Bryan

Just Mercy

Ward, Jesmyn

Men We Reaped

1. Why did Coates use manhood as an overlying theme? Would it have been less, equally, or more effective for him to incorporate the black female struggle as well into this text?
2. Coates writes that "...race is the child of racism, not the father" (7). What does the author mean by this? How does this assertion compel us to think about the history of race and racism in the United States? How does this apparent reversal of common sense compel us to rethink the history of race and racism in the United States?
3. Can this book also be seen as a plea for education reform? When Coates says that "the schools were not concerned with curiosity," but rather with "compliance," what does that tell us about how the educational institution in America perpetuates racial injustice?
4. Rather than categorizing people as either good or bad in two distinct categories, it is clear that Coates speaks of humans as having pure and dark intentions and actions simultaneously. It is not the bad white people vs the good black people. That being said, how does Coates speak of humanity and its complexities? Give examples.
5. Coates refers to the word "people" as a political term and frequently references white people as those who "believe themselves white." What can this kind of dissociation from race do as the United States progresses? Moving forward, how can reminding people that race is purely a social construct aid in this fight?
6. Throughout the reading, there is a very clear theme of disembodiment as he discusses the "system that makes your body breakable" (pg 18). He also, however, says that "our bodies are ourselves, that (his) soul is the voltage conducted through neurons and nerves, and that (his) spirit is (his) flesh" (pg 79). What does this mean for the black community as a whole? When he references bodies being broken, is he really referencing the souls and spirits of the black community being crushed by the American social structure?
7. What are the different aspects of the American Dream, or "the Dream," as Coates calls it, that are discussed in this literature? How are they problematic?
8. On pg. 78, Coates speaks of the recent talk about "diversity, sensitivity training, and body cameras." He says that "these are all fine and applicable, but that (they) understate the task and allow the citizens of this country to pretend that there is real distance between their own attitudes and those of the ones appointed to protect them." If speaking about diversity, sensitivity training, and body cameras allows the American people to dissociate racism from themselves, what is it that we should be discussing? How can we make the American people face the racial injustices and prejudices that still exist?
9. Coates says that he not only cannot tell his son it is going to be okay, he cannot even tell him that it might be okay. "The struggle is really all I have for you," he tells his son, "because it is the only portion of this world under your control." That being said, in general, is this text hopeful? Or is it pessimistic?
10. What does Coates want us to learn from this text? What should be our primary take-away?
11. Is it insightful/realistic that he does not offer answers to the problems discussed, or is it just bleak and unhelpful?
12. Again, is his lack of religiosity dangerous/bleak, or is it refreshing for a generation that is increasingly less theological? Does this text mark a transition from the "cultural milieu of organized black church" to "a black politics without churchiness" (Cottom, 2015)?