

Between the World and Me

By Author: Ta-Nehisi Coates

Reviewed By: Ashton Anda, 15

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

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This book, written as a three-part letter, tells the story of Ta-Nehisi Coates's experience as a black man living in America. Written to Coates's son, Samori, this letter provides the reader with an in-depth perspective of the prejudice and injustice that Coates had witnessed and endured because of his skin color. Ta-Nehisi discusses various topics regarding African-American rights. He recognizes the separation between both races but is unable to comprehend why. After being prompted by a news show host, Coates recalls his experiences as a child growing up in the ghetto side of West Baltimore and why he feared for his life. He then goes on to explain how the foundation of White America was built through the oppression of black people. Coates made clear that he had developed Malcolm X-like beliefs, and how these beliefs changed when he attended Howard University. Because he majored in history, his views and beliefs on African-American history drastically changed. Coates takes a trip to France where he began to realize his place outside of America. Once he returned home, he met with the mother of one of his friends who died because of police brutality. They discussed their experiences as African-Americans, and Coates began to rethink his views on nonviolent protests beginning to understand why they were more ethical and effective. He wraps up the letter with a message to his son Samori urging him to fight for his rights as an American citizen.

I found Ta-Nehisi Coates's book to be an enjoyable read and excellent resource for understanding the struggles faced by the African-American community. In the time this story took me to read, I feel that I have learned so much about the struggles black people have in America. This book provides an insight that I believe is otherwise unobtainable, as a person of European descent. Although I may never be able to fully grasp the struggle that these communities face, I am able to learn and have an impact. I believe this is an especially important read in today's time because of all the events regarding race taking place in the world.

The appropriate target audience for this book is grades 9 and up. It contains somewhat graphic language and sensitive topics that should be discussed in a healthy and educational manner. I think that younger readers may not be able to understand or grasp the message being conveyed. I would suggest this book to those looking to understand what struggles African Americans truly face as well as people interested in changing the black experience in America for the better.

Recommended Titles:

Letter to My Daughter by Maya Angelou

So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo

Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam C.J. Walker by A'Lelia Perry Bundles

Drum Beats, Heart Beats (Dancing Soul Trilogy, #3) by Maria Nhambu