

Ghetto Cowboy

G.Neri

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Ghetto Cowboy by G.Neri follows a young boy named Cole who is introduced to a world he never knew existed. When Cole's mother decides she cannot handle his antics anymore, she drops him off at his dad's house in Philadelphia. Cole is incredibly upset about this; he feels like his mother has given up on him and does not want to stay with a man who abandoned his family. However, the unannounced drop off is only one of the surprises Cole receives. When he is brought to Philly, he learns about a new world—one of boots, saddles, and manes. Cole learns that there are black urban cowboys living in the city and following the Cowboy Way. At first, Cole is filled with anger at both his mother for leaving him, and his father for seemingly choosing this lifestyle over him. Throughout the novel, however, Cole and his dad build a relationship as he begins to understand why these cowboys choose this lifestyle. By the climax of the novel, our protagonist uses the lessons he has learned to fight for something of great value to him and his new community.

Ghetto Cowboy will pull at the heart strings of its readers. The opening scene in which we see Cole pleading for his mother not to leave him is enough to touch anyone's heart. Whether we show it or not, we all know our mother's love us. For Cole's mother to leave him with a man he barely knows is a phenomenal expression of the internal conflict she must be dealing with. It is times like this where the maturity of this novel comes to play. The whole point of writing is for an author to convey a message, or theme to their story. G.Neri does a phenomenal job with this, as he explores themes of racism, urbanization vs. ruralization, parental hardships, and more. This book does not shy away from tackling difficult issues that children need to be aware of.

There are so many aspects of this book that I enjoyed. Firstly, I love the pace of the novel. Although a novel of only approximately over 200 pages, no storyline feels rushed. There was never a time where I was confused on how the characters got from one place to another. The story follows a clear sequence of events, making it an easier read with a nice flow. Secondly, I applaud the author for choosing to write this novel in a first person perspective. Readers are truly able to see the development of the protagonist and how each event changes and impacts him. Thirdly, this book was honestly an educational lesson for me. Even as an African American, I never knew that black cowboys still existed in urban areas of the United States. After reading the novel, I decided to do more research on this topic and look into the organization this book was inspired by. Lastly, I would like to give a shoutout to Jesse Joshua Watson, who created some amazing illustrations in the novel. The visual aids were extremely helpful.

I would recommend this novel to readers of 10-13 years of age. I would say this is a book that could be picked up at the local library. *Chess Rumble* by G.Neri, *The Stars Beneath Our*

Feet by David Barclay Moore, and *Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty* by G.Neri are three books I would recommend after reading *Ghetto Cowboy*.