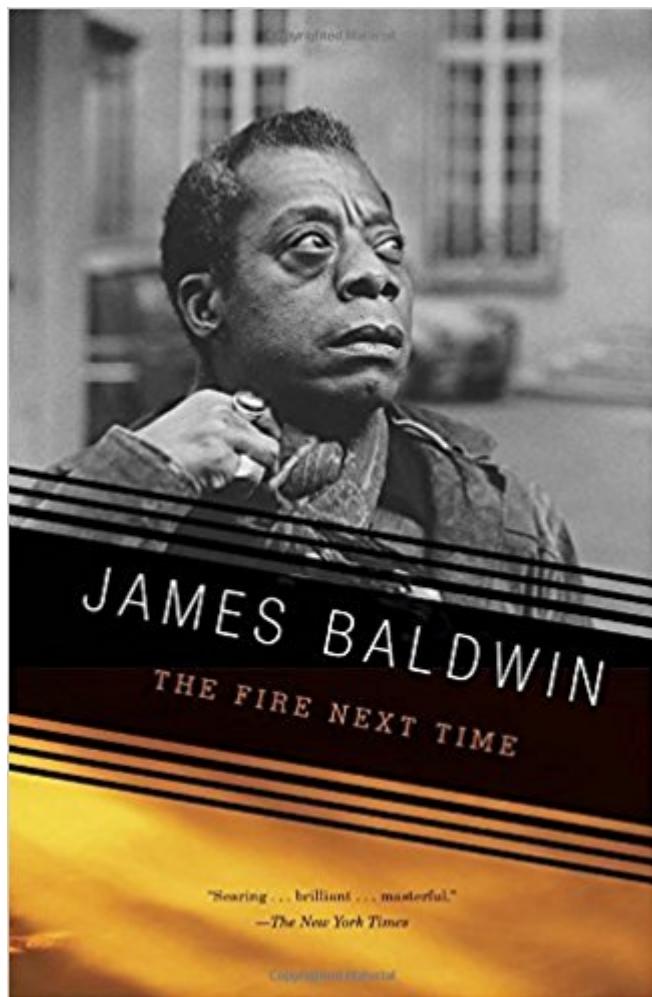


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# The Fire Next Time



## **Synopsis**

A national bestseller when it first appeared in 1963, *The Fire Next Time* galvanized the nation and gave passionate voice to the emerging civil rights movement. At once a powerful evocation of James Baldwin's early life in Harlem and a disturbing examination of the consequences of racial injustice, the book is an intensely personal and provocative document. It consists of two "letters," written on the occasion of the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, that exhort Americans, both black and white, to attack the terrible legacy of racism. Described by *The New York Times* Book Review as "sermon, ultimatum, confession, deposition, testament, and chronicle...all presented in searing, brilliant prose," *The Fire Next Time* stands as a classic of our literature.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

It's shocking how little has changed between the races in this country since 1963, when James Baldwin published this coolly impassioned plea to "end the racial nightmare." *The Fire Next Time*--even the title is beautiful, resonant, and incendiary. "Do I really want to be integrated into a burning house?" Baldwin demands, flicking aside the central race issue of his day and calling instead for full and shared acceptance of the fact that America is and always has been a multiracial society. Without this acceptance, he argues, the nation dooms itself to "sterility and decay" and to eventual destruction at the hands of the oppressed: "The Negroes of this country may never be able to rise to power, but they are very well placed indeed to precipitate chaos and ring down the curtain on the American dream." Baldwin's seething insights and directives, so disturbing to the white

liberals and black moderates of his day, have become the starting point for discussions of American race relations: that debasement and oppression of one people by another is "a recipe for murder

Speakers or headsets will have to be turned up to listen to Jesse L. Martin's low, slow reading of Baldwin's classic long essay on racism and African-American identity. Martin seeks to be respectful of Baldwin, but he ends up rendering the meaning and the force of his work relatively inert. Pausing in poorly selected places, placing emphasis where little should be placed, Martin does not convey the precision and anger of Baldwin's prose. Instead, Baldwin's book becomes Great Literature, to be intoned and honored, but not truly grasped. Readers with an interest in Baldwin's work will be far better served by reading his prose to themselves than having Martin read it to them. A Vintage paperback.(Apr.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Growing up as the daughter of white parents in the Deep South, while my parents did everything in their power to try and keep us from using racial slurs, there was so much racism imbedded in the area that it was nearly impossible to fight it. It ranged from the blatant to the subtle, and it stuck in ways that I will probably be discovering for the rest of my life. Baldwin touches upon the use of religion to control, and the belief that the white man is the marker to which the black man should aspire, and that is still very clear in the world... As black men and women are told that their natural hair should be tamed to make them more appropriate for the work place, that the vernacular of their homes and families is somehow uneducated, even as they are surrounded by people who code-switch from a redneck southern dialect or a tough talking New York slang at home, to proper grammar in the workplace. At the end of the day, no one should aspire to whiteness. Instead, all should aspire to be the best they can be of exactly who they are. This book, brilliantly written, greatly rocked my way of thinking. James Baldwin's grasp of humanity is one of the most realistic I've ever seen. He sees it and tells it just as it is.

This is a book to read with a pen! My copy, brand new, and fresh from the mailbox now has underlining everywhere and notes filling the margins. The language is beautiful in this book and there is a lot of wisdom to gather. This is my first James Baldwin and I crave more! The book consists of two letters, a short one written to a nephew and a longer one written to discuss his thoughts and feelings about race, religion, and life. This is the most beautiful description in the entire book. I cannot possibly think of a more exquisite way to word how James sees his brother and how

we often see those we have watched grow up."Other people cannot see what I see whenever I look into your father's face for behind your father's face as it is today are all those other faces which were his. Let him laugh and I see a cellar your father does not remember and a house he does not remember and I hear in his present laughter his laughter as a child."Baldwin starts his letter by informing his nephew on how black people can be destroyed if they believe what some white people think about them. He discusses a hidden message telling black people to settle for mediocrity rather than striving for excellence. Baldwin believes that black people need to know their history and where they came from so that there will be "no limit to where you can go." "We, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it."

This book has as much relevance today as it did when it was written. Baldwin offers balanced, yet vague, insight on how to approach race relations and change hearts on both sides of the coin. I was very moved by the language he chose to evoke the sentiment behind race in America, though it was sometimes hard to follow his lengthy phrasing. This book is as foundational as *Souls of Black Folks* in the curriculum for understanding race in America. I definitely recommend.

I don't know if this is required reading in school or not; I was home schooled from 10-12 so my experience is a bit different than most. However, if this isn't required reading in high school, it really should be. It's honest and informative. James Baldwin is well written and brilliant and delivers the truth kindly but firmly. Everyone should read his work. It's important.

Since I have lived through the time when Baldwin wrote this book up to this day , I must say he accurately described the past as well as what has come to be. We as a nation have not solved the problem but we do see the distraction of our moral fabric. In the sixties,we thought the race riots were the fire. Now we see the other end of the rainbow as destruction in our spirit. We black people have learned a lot about ourselves and about how power destroys. Our struggle is to keep our inner spirit.

First read when I was much younger, it remains a strong testament. To re-read Baldwin in the same few months of reading Ta-Nehisi Coates', *Between the World and Me*, my conscious white body is questioned in ways that are required in order for my challenges to be recognized and acted upon.

As usual Baldwin does not fail. An epic journey through the life and personal reflections of this prolific author. Could not put it down.

Searing work by brilliant author. As relevant now as at the time it was published. This book, along with Ta Nehisi Coates book, Between the World and Me should form a part of the curriculum at every high school in the U.S., as well as at every police academy and city hall. Everyone in all branches of our government should be required to read Mr. Baldwin's book. The Respect the Flag crowd and their many (surprisingly young) brethren should read this as a part of their rehabilitation program to enter, for the first time, the diverse United States of America and the humane race.

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