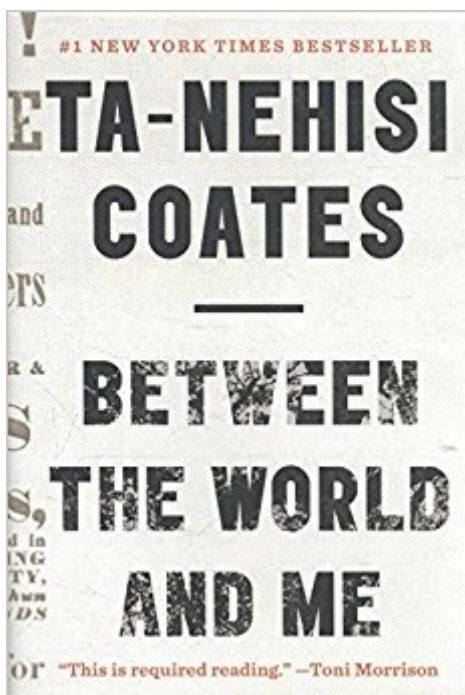


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Between The World And Me



Synopsis

Hailed by Toni Morrison as “required reading,” a bold and personal literary exploration of America’s racial history by “the single best writer on the subject of race in the United States” (The New York Observer) #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER | NATIONAL BOOK AWARD WINNER | NAACP IMAGE AWARD WINNER | PULITZER PRIZE FINALIST | NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE AWARD FINALIST | NAMED ONE OF THE TEN BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY The New York Times Book Review O: The Oprah Magazine The Washington Post People Entertainment Weekly Vogue Los Angeles Times San Francisco Chronicle Chicago Tribune New York Newsday Library Journal Publishers Weekly

In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation’s history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of “race,” a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation, and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden? *Between the World and Me* is Ta-Nehisi Coates’s attempt to answer these questions in a letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares with his son—and readers—the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of revelatory experiences, from Howard University to Civil War battlefields, from the South Side of Chicago to Paris, from his childhood home to the living rooms of mothers whose children’s lives were taken as American plunder. Beautifully woven from personal narrative, reimagined history, and fresh, emotionally charged reportage, *Between the World and Me* clearly illuminates the past, bracingly confronts our present, and offers a transcendent vision for a way forward.

Praise for *Between the World and Me*

“Powerful . . . a searing meditation on what it means to be black in America today.” —Michiko Kakutani, The New York Times

“Eloquent . . . in the tradition of James Baldwin with echoes of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* . . . an autobiography of the black body in America.” —The Boston Globe

“Brilliant . . . [Coates] is firing on all cylinders.” —The Washington Post

“Urgent, lyrical, and devastating . . . a new classic of our time.” —Vogue

“A crucial book during this moment of generational awakening.” —The New Yorker

“Titanic and timely . . . essential

reading. **—** **•** Entertainment Weekly

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An Best Book of July 2015: Readers of his work in The Atlantic and elsewhere know Ta-Nehisi Coates for his thoughtful and influential writing on race in America. Written as a series of letters to his teenaged son, his new memoir, *Between the World and Me*, walks us through the course of his life, from the tough neighborhoods of Baltimore in his youth, to Howard University—which Coates dubs “The Mecca” for its revelatory community of black students and teachers—to the broader Meccas of New York and Paris. Coates describes his observations and the evolution of his thinking on race, from Malcolm X to his conclusion that race itself is a fabrication, elemental to the concept of American (white) exceptionalism. Ferguson, Trayvon Martin, and South Carolina are not bumps on the road of progress and harmony, but the results of a systemized, ubiquitous threat to “black bodies” in the form of slavery, police brutality, and mass incarceration. Coates is direct and, as usual, uncommonly insightful and original. There are no wasted words. This is a powerful and exceptional book.--Jon Foro

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. Pair with Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely's *All American Boys* (S. & S., 2015) for a lively discussion on racism in America. VERDICT This stunning, National Book Award-winning memoir should be required reading for high school students and adults alike. – Shelley Diaz, School Library Journal

Like many of the one- and two- star reviewers of this book, I bristled at certain passages in *Between the World and Me*. I felt attacked and blamed at times, because I, in Ta-Nehisi Coates' words, "believe that I am white." So I understand the scorn directed at this book by many who dismiss it as divisive and simplistic in its assessment of the black experience in America. But here's the thing: this book isn't about me. It's not trying to tell me what I should do to be a better person or make me feel guilty about things I don't even understand, much less control. It's not trying to fix anything. And if you're reading it that way, I think you're missing a profound experience. I've never been shown and made to understand the experience of a life so unlike my own as I have with this book. I felt the frustration and fear that Mr. Coates felt growing up black in America. I felt the anger he feels at people who believe that they are white dismissing that experience as so many sour grapes. I felt the hypocrisy of being told not to wear hoodies or play loud music for fear of someone breaking your body. That's why this book matters. It's not a solution to our race problems or an accurate assessment of the progress of America as a nation. It is not a book about white people and how we should change. It is simply a powerful testament of one man's experience, and an offering of understanding. I grew up rich, white and privileged in suburban Virginia. I never had to think about my safety, my future or my pride through the lens of my race. I couldn't even begin to conceive of that experience. Ta-Nehisi Coates is the first person to break through that reality of my upbringing and allow me to step into another experience for a little while. It was life-changing and important.

I'm white, male, and have very little understanding or appreciation for black culture. My parents and siblings all watched *Roots* when I was about 8 years old. I encountered some black sailors when I

was in the U.S. Navy - in fact, I had a roommate for six months or so that was a black male, but we maybe spoke a hundred words during that time. This book came recommended by a quasi-stranger, not for its content but for its structure: letters from a father to a son. I'd mentioned that I was interested in writing that sort of book, and this was a resulting recommendation. I read a few reviews before buying it. Not the sort of book I'd otherwise pick up. After ordering it, I heard the author on NPR - without knowing it was the author of the book, mind you - and I thought "wow, this guy is really interesting, provocative, well-spoken, intellectually sound, and speaks from a world that I can only see from afar." So when the show host said his name, I knew I had to pick up the book and read it soon. I had that opportunity within days, on a flight to Atlanta, my first visit there in maybe fifteen years. I got through about 110 pages on the flight and it was perfect timing. Atlanta is a sea of black compared to most everywhere I've lived. Instantly, I could try and appreciate my surroundings in way that I'd never been able to before. Did I feel "white guilt"? Sure. I do. I've seen racism my whole life, especially toward black. This book, however, did much more than rekindle strong feelings of being a winner of Powerball proportions in the life lottery. It challenged me so fundamentally and starkly in a way that I have never been challenged, reading a book, in my life. At times I felt compelled to put the book down, that it was just conjuring up too much weight of history that I wanted to put back out of sight. But I kept going. Finishing it, I felt, like apparently many others do, that this should be required reading for every American. Even those outside of the USA will benefit from it, as it will certainly illuminate the tension and schizophrenia and contradictions and rewritten history of our country. I hope Mr. Coates continues writing until he draws his final breath.

It's hard to know what to say about a book about which so much has already been said. If you're familiar with Coates' writing from The Atlantic Magazine or elsewhere you already know that, in terms of style, he is a gifted writer who is always a pleasure to read, regardless of the subject matter he writes about. The subject matter here, however, is what is most important about "Between the World and Me." Coates' uses the experience of young African Americans and his own experiences growing up to create a poetic and impassioned letter to his son and, indeed to the world, about what it means to be a person of color in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century. My personal belief is that the issue of race and institutionalized racism is the most important issue we as a country face right now. The events of the past two years have focused a bright light on issues that many of us were only dimly aware of. Or, more accurately, that we knew about but didn't want to face. For those who realize that they MUST be faced, no matter how painful we find them, Coates provides a remarkable first step with this compelling, poetic, and sometimes heartbreaking

expressionistic book. The inability to see what causes pain, even though it is right in front of us, is a very human defense mechanism. But it is a defense mechanism that does not serve any of us or our country well. Empathy and a desire to understand that which we haven't personally experienced but that we know are pernicious facts of modern American life are key to the changes we must make. As an upper-middle class white woman, I've lived through very few of the events and feelings Coates describes in "Between the World and Me." Which is all the more reason for me to read it and recommend it. This is undoubtedly one of the most important books of the last 50 years. If I could gift a copy to every single American, I would.

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