

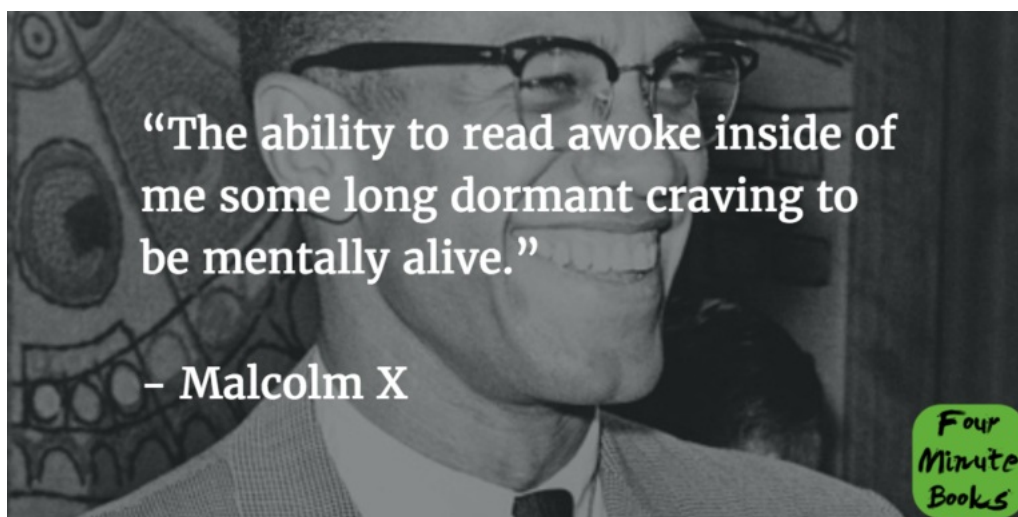
# The Autobiography Of Malcolm X Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *The Autobiography Of Malcolm X chronicles the life and work of one of the most influential members of the civil rights movement in the United States.*

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Not everyone who deserves an autobiography gets one. Some people die early, others don't think of it as important. Often, the people we most crave an autobiography from wait until the last minute to publish one, for example Sam Walton or Steve Jobs, who published theirs shortly before their deaths.

In the case of Malcolm X, it's all the more surprising that we have one, given his assassination in 1965, when he was just 39 years old. Lucky for historians, political activists and you and me, he'd been working on an autobiography for the two years prior to this tragic event, collaborating with journalist Alex Haley to get his story out into the world.

Considered a ghostwriter by Malcolm, Haley actually shaped *The Autobiography Of Malcolm X* and Malcolm's story in big ways, for example by getting him to keep sections about the Nation of Islam, from which X had distanced himself in 1964, and re-writing anti-semitic sections.

I looked at his life and tried to come up with 3 lessons from it, here they are:

1. What happens in your childhood will leave a mark on you for life.
2. Sometimes you have to get totally lost to find yourself.
3. Even the best of us can get it wrong.

Are you ready to learn from one of the most interesting figures in human history? All aboard the autobiography train!

## Lesson 1: The events of your childhood will shape you for the rest of your life.

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Malcolm Little would never have become the iconic figure with an X for his last name (which hinted at his true last name being taken by “some blue-eyed devil”) if it weren’t for all the things that happened in his childhood.

Due to his particularly light skin color, which resembled his mother’s (which in turn was a result of her mother being raped by a white man), he ended up being preferred by his father, but despised by his Mom. This made him enjoy his father’s company, who was very active in the black community and a civil rights movement leader himself.

Add to that the tragedy of his father’s alleged murder when he was six years old, his mother’s coercion into a mental hospital when he was 12, with him being sent to live with a white family and three of his uncle’s dying from violence and **you already have someone who’s going to be hell bent on justice and fair treatment of black people.**

School further increased this dedication, with teachers discouraging from his plans of being a lawyer (“Be more realistic, try being a carpenter, maybe!”) and him not being allowed to dance in front of white girls at basketball after parties.

His entire childhood channeled him into becoming someone, who hated the status quo and who saw only one way to escape it...

## Lesson 2: In order to find yourself, you might have to get completely lost first.

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This escape brought him right into the crime scene of Boston and later Harlem in the 1940s. Malcolm spent the majority of his teenage and early adult years hustling, dealing drugs, “steering” white people to secret prostitution locations, resulting in bigger and more dangerous crimes as he went on.

He was caught when trying to pawn (loan to a money lender) a stolen watch in 1946 and received a hefty ten year prison sentence.

For most people, going to prison would mean the end. For Malcolm X, it was the only way to become who he was meant to be. I’m not saying you should become a master thief, but **sometimes there’s no alternative to getting completely lost, confused and traveling along all the wrong paths to finally discover who you really are.**

Malcolm spent all of his time in prison reading, learning about the religion of Islam and becoming a great public speaker, even getting his opponents to admit to statements such as “Jesus was brown.” After his parole in 1952, he was a changed man, ready to spread the message of the Nation of Islam and become a minister, activist and speaker.

## Lesson 3: Even the best of us can get it wrong sometimes.

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In 1963, Malcolm found out that the leader of Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad, to whom he had devoted himself, had slept with several of his secretaries, who were now filing paternity suits. He felt betrayed, disappointed and misguided.

A year later, he broke with the organization altogether. On a following pilgrimage to Mecca he witnessed kindness and hospitality from Muslims of all races, eye-colors and heritages, which surprised him and forced him to second-guess his own beliefs.

There he was, one of the most iconic figures of the African-American movement, having to confess he'd been wrong. Instead of falling into a state of regret though, he embraced a new message and opened up his speaking to a much wider audience.

**No matter how good you are, it's never too late to admit when you're wrong and change for the better.**

## The Autobiography Of Malcolm X Review

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Writing summaries like this one always takes forever. Why? Because I always end up reading 17 Wikipedia articles on the person in question and his or her entire family. If I let myself daydream for a bit, I see the day unfold watching documentaries, reading, and then discuss Malcolm X with an expert. Sadly, that's not going to happen (yet).

Reading *The Autobiography Of Malcolm X* or its blinks shouldn't even be a question, it's mandatory reading for sure!

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## What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- What Malcolm's first job was and at what age he got it
- Why Malcolm's hair was the way it was (and what that symbolized)
- How much money Malcolm made hustling on the streets
- Who influenced Malcolm in prison
- Why he marched into a police station with 50 of his fellow NOI members
- How Malcolm X's comment about JFK's assassination caused an outrage
- What in his perspective shifted in his last year he was alive
- How he felt about being prosecuted

## **Who would I recommend The Autobiography Of Malcolm X summary to?**

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The 15 year old high schooler, who wants to make history class more interesting, the 33 year old, who feels lost for job hopping the past ten years, and anyone who's politically active.