

Between The World And Me Summary

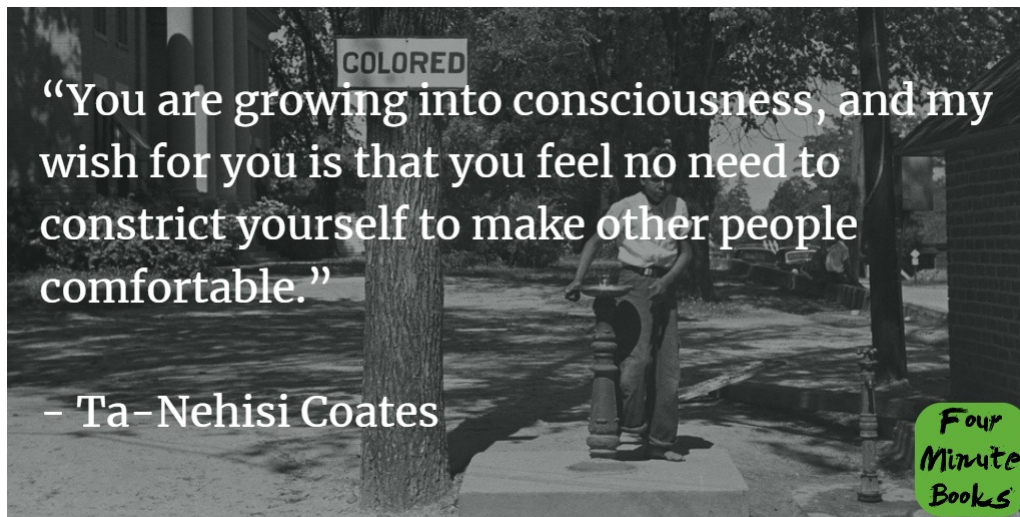


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1-Sentence-Summary: *Between The World And Me* helps us all fight prejudice and prepares young black men in the US for growing up by revealing Ta-Nehisi Coates's reality of life as a black man dealing with racism in America.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Nobody can really know what it's like to live life as an African American in the US unless they've experienced it. Slavery and discrimination may be illegal. But you can still see racism in every aspect of public life in America.

In *Between the World and Me*, author and award-winning journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates pulls back the curtain and allows us to see the black condition in America today. We see how policies and culture have given them an unfair horizontal trajectory.

Coates wrote this book as a letter to his teenage son. He reveals a life of fear that is part of black people's everyday life because the system that should protect them falls woefully short. The message he has is simple, "In America, it is traditional to destroy the black body – it is heritage."

Here are the 3 biggest lessons I've learned from this book:

1. Early experiences in Coates's life made him realize the inescapable truths about being black.
2. The fundamental experience in America is different based on your skin color.
3. The American dream is only for whites and was built upon the backs of blacks.

Let's dive right in and discover more about racism so we can know better how to stop it!

Lesson 1: Coates came to realize early on that being black came with inherent dangers.

Growing up in Maryland, Coates saw the grim realities of racism at a young age. As he puts it, "to be black in the Baltimore of my youth was to be naked before the elements of the world."

He recalls how as a young boy, another kid he didn't know called him over after school. He walked across the street and the boy brandished a gun, saying nothing, and then put it back.

This scary moment solidified what he had already come to notice. **Just because he was black he was subject to having random and spontaneous violence directed at him.**

Another significant experience came in college, where a police officer gunned down his acquaintance Prince Jones on his fiancée's front lawn in Virginia. He followed Jones across state lines and accused him of trying to run him over. The police officer was a known liar. After killing Jones the cop got off without punishment and went back to work.

Prince Jones had a bright future. He was doing well in college and getting ready to be a husband and father, but all that was taken away in an instant. This experience sealed in Coates's mind the fact that even if you lay low and work hard to succeed in life, it's not enough to guarantee your safety as a black man.

Lesson 2: Based on your race, you live in an entirely different version of America.

Whites can never truly understand what it is to be black because they can never live it. So, whites live mostly blind to the differences in treatment.

Blacks can't even walk into a down the street without fear of either the public or the police profiling them.

One of the most obvious differences in treatment is through police brutality. With the killing of the unarmed Michael Brown, among many others, finally, some attention is being brought to this tragic problem. But it's still an ongoing issue.

Another difference in experience is in quality of life and rates of incarceration, which are tied together closely.

Because of a lack of resources and public programs in black communities, they also have higher rates of poverty and drugs, which drive crime. This is why we see an immensely disproportionate number of black men incarcerated compared to whites.

Lesson 3: The American Dream was built on the backs of blacks and is a white dream.

The American Dream is the belief that in America everybody has the chance to succeed. This might look like a positive thing, but if you look to the past you find that it depends on the subjugation of blacks.

This happened first through slavery, where wealthy Southerners depended on slaves to make their fortune. Later it came through an exclusionary and racist society. Even after the Civil Rights Movement, institutional racism continued.

The American dream can only exist by being blind to racial injustice. And the things meant to sustain it, such as the school system and those responsible for law and order, are also blind to racial issues.

Blacks are profiled and associated with crime and violence, and they struggle with a lack of funding for safe and vibrant communities. Because of this, it's a dream that will never be as available to blacks as to whites. After all, if American institutions see you as a criminal how can you rely on them to achieve the dream?

You don't have to be white to achieve the dream, but Coates points out the problem is that it is a white dream to begin with. Because whites have defined what success means, once a black person achieves the dream they must play the role of "successful black." Since success is different to everyone, Coates says we must abandon the myth of the American Dream to become a more inclusive and free society.

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Between The World And Me Review

I feel like as a white person, I can hardly comment on the racism and marginalization of black people. But I can say that *Between The World And Me* was an important eye-opener for me that I think everybody should read. Everybody deserves kindness and equal opportunities, and I think this book can help the world make steps in the right direction.

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Who would I recommend the *Between The World And Me* summary to?

The 62-year-old white couple who wonders about racism, the 32-year-old with an interest in politics that wants to learn more about social issues today, and anyone with a curiosity about US history.