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The Rock And The River (Coretta Scott King - John Steptoe Award For New Talent)



Synopsis

In 1968 Chicago, it's not easy for thirteen-year-old Sam to be the son of known civil rights activist Roland Childs. Especially when his older brother, Stick, starts keeping to himself. Then, one day, Sam finds something under Stick's bed that changes everything: literature about the Black Panthers. Suddenly, nothing feels certain anymore. And when Dr. King is shot and killed, Sam's father's words are no longer enough to make him believe in change. This moving, coming-of-age story gracefully encompasses the scope of the struggle between the civil rights and black power movements through an intimate and relatable lens.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 7 Up • Sam Childs, 13, is growing up in Chicago in 1968. His father is a civil rights activist, and the boy has been involved in peaceful demonstrations with his family. When he and his girlfriend, Maxie, witness the brutal beating of a friend at the hands of the police, his world begins to change dramatically. His 17-year-old brother brings a gun home and hides it in their shared room. Next thing Sam knows, Stick has run away from home and is involved with the Black Panther Party, whose philosophy his dad does not share. The brutality of the beating has wrought a change in Sam as well, and the good works he sees the Panthers doing in his neighborhood make him question his dad's opinion. The characters are well drawn and the complexities of the relationships between Roland Childs and his two sons are moving. The episodes of violence are graphic, but necessary to

move the plot forward, and Magoon portrays well the tension between the Panthers and the Civil Rights Movement. An author's note provides further historical context. While the image of the Black Panther Party is somewhat idealized, this is an important book about a historical reality that has not been dealt with in juvenile fiction.

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review In Chicago in 1968, Sam, 14, obeys his father, an eloquent civil-rights leader who is close with Dr. King and is passionately committed to nonviolent protest. But after King is assassinated and Sam witnesses police brutality toward a friend, Sam follows his rebellious older brother, Stephen (nicknamed "Stick"), and joins the Black Panthers, whose revolutionary platform is the opposite of the nonviolent philosophy that Sam has been taught at home. Then Sam's father is stabbed. Will the brothers retaliate with violence? True to the young teen's viewpoint, this taut, eloquent first novel will make readers feel what it was like to be young, black, and militant 40 years ago, including the seething fury and desperation over the daily discrimination that drove the oppressed to fight back. Sam's middle-class family is loving and loyal, even when their quarrels are intense; and Magoon draws the characters without sentimentality. Along with the family drama, the politics will grab readers, especially the Panthers' political education classes and their call for "land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace." A long author's note fills in background in this important title for YA American history classes. Grades 6-10. --Hazel Rochman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A good read that gives insight to what an upper class black family experienced during the days of MLK. It is fiction, but with an authentic feel. I think it would be a good "required read" for upper grades.

The Rock and the River is realistic fiction set in the height of the civil rights movement. The very real and emotional conflict centers on a young teen torn between his parents belief in, and work for, Dr. King's non-violent methods and his older brother's belief in, and work for, the Black Panthers. All of the characters are committed to change and willing to suffer the consequences of their actions, but protective of their families and friends. Sam, and his brother Sticks, are fully developed characters, whose struggles to make a difference and figure out the right thing to do will engage the reader.

Author Kekla Magoon brilliantly shows the complexity and depth of both the Black Panthers and non-violent protest points of view in the fight for civil rights. And she does it without taking sides on which group did more or which group was better. She also did not neatly wrap up the moral conflicts of Sam and Sticks with a simple resolution. *The Rock and The River* is a great read for teens and adults.

Excellent for young teen reading

I purchased this book on a friend's recommendation and I was not disappointed. It offers a fresh perspective on a topic that is often rendered in black and white. I found experiencing the rise of the Black Panther movement in Chicago through the conflicted eyes of a teenage boy to be an interesting take and one that really made you feel the emotions involved. It was helpful in understanding the nuanced nature of the racial conflicts of the time period as well as being a good story that pulls you in to the characters lives. I thought it was well written and very much enjoyed reading the book - looking forward to reading more by this author.

Fantastic book. Was required reading for one of my kids, but I ended picking it up and finishing it the same day. While it may take place in the 60s, the same issues confront our society today. So glad it was required reading for my 7th grader. Strongly recommend for all middle school students.

I teach 6th grade, and I bought this to read aloud to my class. It's a serious and sometimes upsetting story, but it's also important and thought-provoking. My students really like it, and so do I!

I decided to purchase *The Rock and the River* after reading positive editorial reviews, and was rewarded in doing so. To call it a stunning coming of age story is not merely enough, as it transcends the genre. It is beautifully written and the prose is deep without overshadowing the humanity of the characters. It is one of those novels that will make you think, cry, and remember. I was disappointed to learn that this is the author's first novel (while at the same time being pleasantly surprised by the fact). I look forward to reading her next book.

The Rock and the River provides a unique perspective on the civil rights movement of the 1960's. Young Sam narrates the novel. His father is a big player in the non-violent movement, often in contact with Dr. King himself, even going as far as hosting him for dinner. However, conflict starts

when one of Sam's brother, Stick's, friend gets thrown in jail after he is assaulted by the police. Stick, many of his friends, and Sam's girlfriend all join the controversial Black Panthers. I found this text particularly interesting because it resists the stereotypical presentation of the civil rights movement and shows the conflict within the black community itself. Magoon does not portray African American as docile victims nobly pursuing peace. The Black Panthers are violent and have deep anger and hatred towards white people. Magoon also portrays both sides of violence, itself. Within the text guns, and the violence they lead to, are shown from negative and positive sides. We see the guns protect the characters, but also lead to dire consequences. This text is a great cross-subject piece that could be looked at in English and History classes. You could have your students take sides: Dr. King or Malcolm X, guns or non-violence, and have them debate or write papers defending their positions. This text does a great job of telling a well known historical story in a fresh and fair way. This text also portrays the theme of forging your own path. Stick, fed up with waiting for his father's peaceful movement to make change, turns his loyalty to The Panthers, despite his father's adamant disapproval. Whether or not the reader agrees with Stick's decision, one has to admire his bravery in following his own beliefs instead of blindly accepting his father's. This is an important lesson that adolescents must learn.

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