

Young Adult Book Discussion Kits

Young Adult Book Discussion Kits are available to library patrons for use by home and community discussion groups, as well as teachers in the classroom setting. Each kit contains a set of thirty identical soft-cover books accompanied by a book discussion guide. The guides feature information about the author, reviews of the book, discussion questions, suggested further readings, and other pertinent information. Each kit is packaged in a canvas tote bag and may be borrowed for six weeks.

Young Adult Book Discussion Kits may be reserved and sent to the library branch of your choice for pick up. If you would like to reserve a kit, please stop by your local library branch or call **574-1611**. The kits may also be reserved through our website www.lfpl.org. A list of all the kits may be found in the LFPL catalog by typing **Book Discussion Kit Young Adult** at the title prompt.



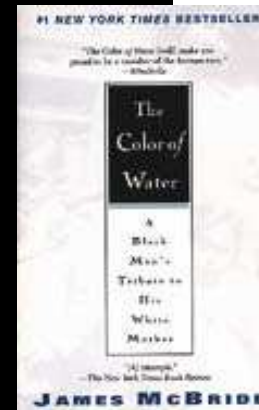
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Information for this flyer was partially gathered from the following resources:

"James McBride." in *Contemporary Authors Online*, Gale, 2003. Reproduced in *Biography Resource Center*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: The Gale Group. 2003. <http://www.galenet.com/servlet/BioRC> (7/24/03)

"James C. McBride." in *Contemporary Black Biography*, Volume 35. Edited by Ashyia Henderson. Gale Group. 2002. Reproduced in *Biography Resource Center*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: The Gale Group. 2003. <http://www.galenet.com/servlet/BioRC> (7/24/03)

MasterFILE Premier. Ipswich, MA.: Ebsco Databases. 2003. <http://epnet.com> (7/24/03)



A Reader's Guide to
Young Adult Book
Discussion Kit #087
The Color of Water
By James McBride

Xtreme Reads
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Xtreme Reads

**Young Adult Book
Discussion Kits**



A coming-of-age story about a young man whose father is black, and a Baptist minister, and his mother who is white and the daughter of an Orthodox Jewish rabbi. In alternating passages told from the point of view of mother and son, the story unfolds of how James McBride discovered that his mother was actually white and not a light-skinned black. This is also the story of his mother's own childhood as Rachel Shilsky. This memoir tackles issues of race, identity and the relationship between a mother and son.

About the Author

James McBride was born in 1957. He grew up in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn, New York. One of twelve children, McBride had a challenging childhood. He never knew his father who died before he was born. His mother was something of a mystery. It was only as an adult that McBride discovered that the mother he always thought of as a light-skinned black woman was, in fact, a white Jewish woman, the daughter of a Polish immigrant rabbi.

McBride admits to being something of a rebel as a teen growing up during the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. After going as far as committing petty crimes, James managed to turn his life around and follow his mother's advice:

"You're a human being. Educate yourself or you'll be a nobody." McBride attended the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and Columbia University, where he earned an M.A. in 1979.

McBride has worked as a journalist and as a musician. He has written for the *Boston Globe*, *People*, and the *Washington Post*. In 2002, McBride wrote his first novel, *Miracle at Santa Anna* which also centers around issues of race.

What the Critics Say...

"McBride...has viewed the yawning chasm of racial division from both sides and, despite carving out a successful life, has been scarred. ...he focuses on a single, singular parent, a rabbi's daughter... [McBride's] mother's own story, juxtaposed with McBride's, helps make this book a standout."

- Jim Burns, *Library Journal*, January 1, 1996

"By patiently prying the amazing story of her life out of his reluctant mother over many years, McBride has been able to write an inspiring, utterly fresh, moving, and unforgettable book."

- Gregory M. Lamb, *Christian Science Monitor*, May 14, 1996

Awards and Recognition

1996 Richard Rodgers Award, American Arts and Letters

1996 Richard Rodgers Horizon Award, ASCAP

1997 ALA Notable Book of the Year for *Color of Water*

1997 Ansfield-Wolf Award for Literary Excellence for *Color of Water*

Discussion Questions:

1. Where did James McBride get the title for his book?
2. Why do you think James' mother kept her white Jewish heritage a secret? Have your parents had kept a secret like that from you, would you be resentful? Was James?
3. Was Mrs. McBride successful in raising her children "color blind"?
4. What role did religion play in the upbringing of James and his 11 brothers and sisters? Do you think that the influence of the Baptist church or the Jewish faith was more influential?
5. In reading the alternating passages of Ruth and James, do you feel like you get to know one person better than the other? Who? In the end, is this a story about James or about his mother? Or, can you even separate the two?
6. Why did Ruth turn her back on everything she knew and begin such a radically different life? Would it be easier or more difficult to make a similar transition today?
7. Do you anyone who is of mixed heritage? How are they accepted by society? Do they face the same issues that McBride discusses?

Suggested Titles for Further Reading

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
by Maya Angelou (B ANGELOU , MAYA)

Whale Talk
by Chris Crutcher (YP)

America
by E.R. Frank (YP)

What Are You?: Voices of Mixed-Race Young People
by Pearl Fuyo Gaskins (973 WHA)

Young, Black, and Determined: A Biography of Lorraine Hansberry
by Patricia and Frederick McKissack (j B HANSERRY, LORRAINE)

Spite Fences
by Trudy Krisner (YP)

Divided to the Vein: A Journey into Race and Family
by Scott Minerbrook (B MINERBROOK, SCOTT)

Adaline Falling Star
by Mary Pope Osborne (J)

Black, White, and Jewish: An Autobiography of a Shifting Self
by Rebecca Walker (B WALKER, REBECCA)

Miracle's Boys
by Jacqueline Woodson (YP)