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THE HATE U GIVE

READING GUIDE

“ANGIE THOMAS HAS WRITTEN A STUNNING, BRILLIANT, GUT-WRENCHING NOVEL THAT WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A CLASSIC OF OUR TIME.”

John Green, author of
The Fault in Our Stars

“THE HATE U GIVE IS GOING TO BE ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT BOOKS OF 2017. NO HYPERBOLE, JUST FACTS.”

Nikesh Shukla,
editor of *The Good Immigrant*

ABOUT THE BOOK

Sixteen-year-old Starr lives in two worlds: the poor neighbourhood where she was born and raised and her posh high school in the suburbs. The uneasy balance between them is shattered when Starr is the only witness to the fatal shooting of her unarmed best friend, Khalil, by a police officer. Now what Starr says could destroy her community. It could also get her killed. Inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, this is a powerful and gripping YA novel about one girl's struggle for justice.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ANGIE THOMAS is an exciting and powerful new voice in YA fiction. She was born, raised, and still lives in Jackson, Mississippi. She studied Creative Writing at Belhaven University, where she was one of the only black students – a theme which she visits in *The Hate U Give*. A former teen rapper, she won the inaugural Walter Dean Myers Grant awarded by the We Need Diverse Books campaign.

The Hate U Give is her first novel. You can find her on Twitter @acthomasbooks.

Photo by Anissa Hidouk

BOOK TALK

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter is thrust into the national spotlight after her childhood friend is killed by a white police officer after a routine traffic stop. As she works through her grief and her relationships with family and friends, she must navigate the vastly different worlds of her suburban private school and her poor, urban neighbourhood. This gripping debut novel by Angie Thomas echoes conversations about police brutality dominant in the news and moves readers beyond Twitter hashtags. Readers will feel energized to promote and advance social justice against police brutality and racism.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As Starr and Khalil listen to Tupac, Khalil explains what Tupac said “Thug Life” meant. Discuss the meaning of the term “Thug Life” as an acronym and why the author might have chosen part of this as the title of the book. In what ways do you see this in society today? (Chapter 1, p. 21)
2. Chapter 2 begins with Starr flashing back to two talks her parents had with her when she was young. One was about sex (“the usual birds and bees”). The second was about what precautions to take when encountering a police officer (Chapter 2, p. 24). Have you had a similar conversation about what to do when stopped by the police? Reflect upon or imagine this conversation.
3. Thomas frequently uses motifs of silence and voice throughout the book. Find instances in the book where silence or voice and speech are noted, and talk about the author’s possible intentions for emphasizing these motifs.
4. At the police station after Starr details the events leading up to the shooting, the detective shifts her focus to Khalil’s past. Why do you think the detective did this? Discuss Starr’s reaction to this “bait” (Chapter 6, pp. 103–104).
5. Once news of Khalil’s shooting spreads across the neighbourhood, unrest arises: “Sirens wail outside. The news shows three patrol cars that have been set ablaze at the police precinct . . . A gas station near the freeway gets looted . . . My neighbourhood is a war zone” (Chapter 9, p. 138). Respond to this development and describe some parallels to current events.
6. How do you think Starr would define family? What about Seven? How do you define it?
7. Chris and Starr have a breakthrough in their relationship – Starr admits to him that she was in the car with Khalil and shares the memories of Natasha’s murder (Chapter 17, pp. 296–301). Discuss why Starr’s admission and releasing of this burden to Chris is significant. Explore the practice of “code switching” and discuss how you might code switch in different circumstances in your own life.
8. How and why does the neighbourhood react to the grand jury’s decision (Chapter 23)? How does Starr use her voice as a weapon, and why does she feel that it is vital that she does? Refer back to “Thug Life” and discuss how the acronym resonates in this chapter.
9. Starr pledges to “never be quiet” (Chapter 26, p. 438). After reading this book, how can you use your voice to promote and advance social justice? Reflect on how you and your community discuss and address inequality.

AUTHOR ANGIE THOMAS'S INSPIRATION FOR THE BOOK

I remember the first time I saw Emmett Louis Till.

I couldn't have been more than eight years old. I came across his photo in a *Jet* magazine that marked the anniversary of his death. At the time I was convinced he wasn't real, or at least that he wasn't a person. What was supposed to be his face was mutilated beyond recognition. He looked more like a prop from a movie to me; a monster from some over-the-top horror flick.

But he was a person, a boy, and his story was a cautionary tale, even for a black girl in Mississippi who was born more than three decades after he died. "Know your worth," my mom would say, "but also know that not everyone values you as much as I do."

Still, Emmett wasn't real to me. There was no way I'd ever have to worry about anything like that happening to me or to someone I knew. Things had changed, even in Mississippi, which is unfortunately more known for its racism than anything else. Nobody ever told me to sit on the back of the bus or made me drink from a "Colored" fountain. I never saw a KKK member. I had never been called nigger. Emmett and the stories of his time were history. The present had its own problems.

I grew up in a neighborhood that's notorious for all the wrong reasons: drug dealers, shootings, crime, insert other "ghetto" stereotypes here. I wasn't worried about the KKK wandering onto my street; I was more worried about the gunshots I heard at night. Yet, while those things were daily threats, they were slightly outweighed by the good – the things you wouldn't see unless you lived there. My neighbors were family. The neighborhood drug dealer was a superhero who gave kids money for snacks and beat up pedophiles who tried to snatch little girls off the street. The cops could be superheroes too, but I was taught at a young age to be "mindful" around them. So were my friends. We'd all heard stories, and though they didn't come with mutilated photos, they were realer than Emmett.

But just like Emmett, I remember the first time I saw the video of Oscar Grant.

I was a transfer student in my first year at the fine arts college I'd later graduate from. It was in a nicer part of town than where I lived, but only ten minutes away from it, and it was very, very white. A majority of the time I was the only black student in my creative writing classes. I did everything I could so no one would label me as the "black girl from the hood." I would leave home, blasting Tupac, but by the time I arrived to pick up a friend, I was listening to the Jonas Brothers. I kept quiet whenever race came up in discussions, despite the glances I'd get because as the "token black girl," I was expected to speak.

But Oscar did something to me. Suddenly, Emmett wasn't history. Emmett was still reality.

The video was shocking for multiple reasons, one being that someone actually caught it on tape. This was undeniable evidence that had never been provided for the stories I'd heard. Yet my classmates, who had never heard such tales, had their own opinions about it.

"He should've just done what they said."

"He was resisting."

"I heard he was an ex-con and a drug dealer."

"He had it coming. Why are people so mad?"

"They were just doing their job."

I hate to admit it, but I still remained silent.

I was hurt, no doubt. And angry. Frustrated. Straight-up pissed. I knew plenty of Oscars. I grew up with them and I was friends with them. This was like being told that they deserved to die.

As the unrest took place in Oakland, I wondered how my community would react if that happened to one of our Oscars. I also wondered if my classmates would make the same comments if I became an Oscar. I wasn't an ex-con or a drug dealer, but I was from a neighborhood they were afraid to visit. They once jokingly said it was full of criminals, not knowing that's where I lived until months later.

From all of those questions and emotions, *The Hate U Give* was born.

I've always told stories. When I can't find a way to say the words out loud, I create characters who do it for me. *The Hate U Give* started as a short story my senior year. It was cathartic at the time, and I thought I was done telling Starr and Khalil's story because I foolishly hoped Oscar wouldn't happen again.

But then there was Trayvon. Michael. Eric. Tamir. There were more conversations just like the ones I heard at school but on a wider scale. Politicians and officials echoed my classmates, which led to more anger and disappointment for me, my peers, and the kids in my neighborhood who saw themselves in those gentlemen. In the midst of it, three words suddenly created a variety of reactions whenever uttered: Black Lives Matter.

I did the only thing I knew how to do: I expressed my feelings through story, in hopes that I would give a voice to every kid who feels the same way I do. As we witness injustice, prejudice, and racism rear their ugly heads again in this political climate both in the US and abroad, I think it's even more important to let young people know that they aren't alone in their frustration, fear, anger, and sadness. We must also provide glimmers of light in the midst of the darkness. I hope that I've done that.

But my ultimate hope is that every single person who reads *The Hate U Give* walks away from it understanding those feelings and sharing them in some way. And then, maybe then, Emmett Louis Till can truly become history.



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**"FEARLESSLY HONEST AND HEARTBREAKINGLY HUMAN.
EVERYONE SHOULD READ THIS BOOK."**

Becky Albertalli, author of *Simon Vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda*

**"THE HATE U GIVE IS TRAGICALLY TIMELY, HARD-HITTING, AND
AN ULTIMATE PRAYER FOR CHANGE. DON'T LOOK AWAY FROM
THIS SEARING BATTLE FOR JUSTICE. RALLY WITH STARR."**

Adam Silvera, New York Times bestselling author
of *More Happy Than Not*

"TEENAGERS NEED TO READ THIS."

Louise O'Neill, author of *Only Ever Yours*

**"A PAGE TURNER BRIMMING WITH POP CULTURE
REFERENCES AND HUMOUR."**

New York Times

**"EVERY SO OFTEN THE RIGHT BOOK COMES ALONG AT THE RIGHT
TIME AND QUITE DESERVEDLY CATCHES FIRE ...**

THE HATE U GIVE IS THAT BOOK."

Salon

"WITTY, GENEROUS, AND REAL."

Entertainment Weekly's Must List

"HONEST, POWERFUL, GENTLE AND VERY TIMELY."

Juno Dawson

**"DOES THE THING THAT ALL GREAT BOOKS DO BEST:
THEY MAKE YOU FEEL ALIVE."**

Nicola Yoon