

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

THE HATE U GIVE

BY ANGIE THOMAS



Angie Thomas's searing debut about an ordinary girl in extraordinary circumstances addresses issues of racism and police violence with intelligence, heart, and unflinching honesty.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: her predominantly white, suburban private school and her poorer, mostly black neighborhood. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Everyone wants to know what really went down that night, and the only person who can speak up is Starr. But what she says—or does not say—could destroy her community and even endanger her life.

ANGIE THOMAS was born, raised, and still resides in Jackson, Mississippi, as indicated by her accent. She is a former teen rapper whose greatest accomplishment was an article about her in *Right-On!* Magazine with a picture included. She holds a BFA in creative writing from Belhaven University and is an inaugural winner of the Walter Dean Myers Grant 2015, awarded by We Need Diverse Books. *The Hate U Give* is her debut novel.

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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 neighborhood. 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. 17)
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. 20). 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. 102–103).
5. Once news of Khalil’s shooting spreads across the neighborhood, 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 neighborhood is a war zone” (Chapter 9, pp. 136–139). 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. 298–302). 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 neighborhood 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. 444. 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 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. 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 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.

In a way, he was a tale of yesteryear. 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.

I grew up in a neighborhood that's notorious for all the wrong reasons. While everything they showed on the news was true, there was so much more that 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. We'd all heard stories, and they were realer than Emmett.

I remember the first time I saw the video of Oscar Grant. I was in college, which was in a nicer part of town than where I lived, but only ten minutes away from it, and it was very, very white. I did everything I could so no one would label me as the "black girl from the hood." I could leave home, blasting Tupac loudly, 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, 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.

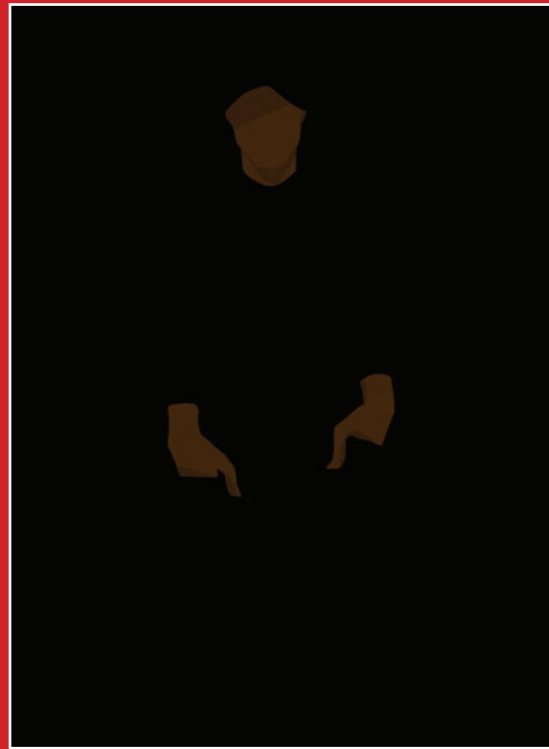
The video was undeniable evidence that had never been provided for the stories I'd heard. Yet my classmates, who had never heard such tales, had their own opinions about it:

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

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

"They were just doing their job."

And 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 . . . or if I became an Oscar.

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, 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.

And there was more anger, frustration, and hurt for me, my peers, and the kids in my neighborhood who saw themselves in those gentlemen. So I expressed those feelings the best way I knew how, through story, in hopes that I would give a voice to every kid who feels the same way I do and is not sure how to express it.

But my ultimate hope is that everyone who reads this book, no matter their experiences, walks away from it understanding those feelings and sharing them in some way.

And maybe then, Emmett Louis Till can truly become history."

SPOTLIGHT: COVER ARTIST DEBRA CARTWRIGHT

"It was a dream project to illustrate the cover of *The Hate U Give*. The multidimensional character Starr fell right in line with my purpose: painting to combat negative media tropes of black women."

—Debra Cartwright

DEBRA CARTWRIGHT is a New York–based illustrator focused on depicting the beauty and spirit of the African American woman—something quite lacking in the mainstream of fashion illustration. She studied art history, studio art, and graphic design at the University of Virginia and Parsons School of Design. Harlem based, she is influenced by social issues, beauty standards, and the media’s influence on the perception of beauty.

Follow her on Instagram: @debracartwright



Photo by Chi-chi Agbim

PRAISE FOR *THE HATE U GIVE*:

"As we continue to fight the battle against police brutality and systemic racism in America, *The Hate You Give* serves as a much-needed literary ramrod. **Absolutely riveting!**"

—Jason Reynolds, National Book Award finalist and coauthor of *All American Boys*

"Angie Thomas has written a **stunning, brilliant, gut-wrenching novel** that will be remembered as a classic of our time."

—John Green, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Fault in Our Stars*

"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*

"Fearlessly honest and heartbreakingly human. **Everyone should read this book.**"

—Becky Albertalli, William C. Morris Award–winning author of *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*

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