



Let Me Hear a Rhyme

BY TIFFANY D. JACKSON

ABOUT THE BOOK

Brooklyn, 1998. Biggie Smalls was right: Things done changed. But that doesn't mean that Quadir and Jarrell are cool letting their best friend Steph's music lie forgotten under his bed after he's murdered—not when his rhymes could turn any Bed Stuy corner into a party.

With the help of Steph's younger sister, Jasmine, they come up with a plan to promote Steph's music under a new rap name: the Architect. Soon, everyone wants a piece of him. When his demo catches the attention of a hotheaded music label rep, the trio must prove Steph's talent from beyond the grave.

As the pressure of keeping their secret grows, Quadir, Jarrell, and Jasmine are forced to confront the truth about what happened to Steph. Only, each has something to hide. And with everything riding on Steph's fame, they need to decide what they stand for or lose all that they've worked so hard to hold on to—including each other.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- How does reading a story told from multiple points of view inform your understanding of the book? Why do you think the author chose to write from the perspectives of each of these particular characters?
- Jasmine says "Police ain't never been here for black folks. We have to do for ourselves always" (pg. 91). How does the treatment of the black community by the police relate to the idea of snitching? If someone treated you poorly would you trust them? What makes you trust someone?
- How do the losses of both his father and his hero Biggie shape who Steph is and what he tries to do with his life? How have losses in your life shaped who you are and who you want to become?
- How does Steph describe the neighborhood he and his friends are from? What is some of the language used in the "headlines" peppered throughout the book when describing the Brooklyn community? How does your personal experience inform your opinions of a place, people, and community? Why is it important to tell our own stories?
- What keeps Kaven from telling Jarrell, Quadir, and Jasmine what he knows? Have you ever kept silent when you wanted to speak? What kept you from speaking up?
- The only time that Jarrell and Steph almost get into a fight is over whether they would ever snitch. What are the codes or rules that Steph and Jarrell live by? Where do they come from? Who are they meant to serve? Does the way that the people around you live impact the way you want to live?
- How do the police treat people in the Brevoort community? What do race, gender, and/or socioeconomic status have to do with the way police treat different characters?
- How does Jasmine reshape Quadir's understanding of what Brooklyn is, has been, and could be? Using the metaphor of

Brooklyn, how does Knowledge inform Jarrell's understanding of his blackness and African heritage? Do you think understanding your history helps you to shape your future?

- How does Jasmine describe how it feels when she sings? What can Jasmine release through singing? How do you deal with your biggest emotions?
- How does hip-hop music bring Jasmine & Quadir together? Have you ever heard a song that made you feel something? What makes hip-hop more than just music? What are the five foundational elements of hip-hop?
- What did Biggie mean to Brooklyn? How does the entire Brooklyn borough mourn Biggie on the day of his funeral? How do Jarrell, Quadir, and Jasmine mourn Steph collectively? What is the difference between grieving on your own and grieving in community with others?
- On page 317, Jasmine is surprised by Ronnie and her crew: "I never expected they'd have such feminist views. Maybe I am too . . . judgmental." How does Ronnie's perspective about Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown make Jasmine think twice about her own opinions? What are some different ways to be a feminist? How do Ronnie and Jasmine talk differently about the empowerment of black women? Which one of them do you agree with more? Why?

- Jarrell says, "Losing Steph . . . changed us forever. Death got a way of moving you. Whether you ready or not" (pg. 370). How does Steph's death change Jasmine, Quadir, and Jarrell? How did Steph's death and music change Brooklyn? Have you ever experienced a loss? How has it changed your relationships?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

TIFFANY D. JACKSON is the critically acclaimed author of YA novels including the NAACP Image Award-nominated *Allegedly*; *Monday's Not Coming*, a Walter Dean Myers Honor Book and John Steptoe New Talent Award winner; and *Let Me Hear a Rhyme*. A TV professional by day, novelist by night, she received her bachelor of arts in film from Howard University and her master of arts in media studies from the New School. A Brooklyn native, she is a lover of naps, cookie dough, and beaches, currently residing in the borough she loves, most likely multitasking. You can visit her online at www.writeinbk.com.

