

the color of water james mcbride

The Color of Water James McBride: A Deep Dive into Identity, Race, and Family

the color of water james mcbride is more than just the title of a memoir—it's a profound exploration of identity, race, and the intricate bonds of family. This powerful narrative has touched the hearts of readers worldwide, offering a unique perspective on the complexities of growing up biracial in America. If you've ever wondered about the significance behind the title or the themes that James McBride weaves throughout his story, you're in the right place.

Understanding The Color of Water James McBride

At its core, *The Color of Water* is James McBride's tribute to his mother, Ruth McBride Jordan, and their intertwined journeys through race, religion, and self-discovery. The memoir chronicles James's upbringing as a mixed-race child in a predominantly African American community while navigating the legacy of his white Jewish mother's past.

Why “The Color of Water”?

The title itself is metaphorical. Ruth often told James that “the color of water” is colorless, highlighting the idea that water transcends race and color, symbolizing purity and universality. This metaphor reflects the central theme of racial identity in the book—suggesting that beneath the surface, human beings share much more than they differ.

James McBride's Narrative Style

One of the reasons this memoir resonates so deeply is McBride's honest and conversational storytelling. He alternates between his mother's voice and his own, giving readers a dual perspective that enriches the narrative. This back-and-forth approach allows a vivid portrayal of two very different yet connected worlds: Ruth's strict religious upbringing and James's experience growing up Black in America.

Themes Explored in The Color of Water James McBride

James McBride's memoir covers a wide range of themes that remain relevant today. Let's explore some of the most compelling ideas presented throughout the book.

Race and Identity

Navigating race is at the heart of *The Color of Water*. James, being biracial, often finds himself caught between two worlds. His mother, a white Jewish woman who converted to Christianity, defies the rigid racial and religious boundaries of her time. Through their stories, McBride challenges the conventional notions of race, emphasizing how identity is fluid and multifaceted.

Religion and Spirituality

Religion plays a significant role in shaping both Ruth's and James's lives. Ruth's strict Christian faith provides her with strength and resilience, while James grapples with religious questions as he grows older. The memoir delves into how religion can serve as both a source of comfort and conflict, influencing one's worldview and personal growth.

Family and Resilience

At its heart, *The Color of Water* is a tribute to family resilience. Ruth's unwavering determination to provide a better life for her children, despite facing prejudice and hardship, is a central theme. James's respect and love for his mother shine through the pages, illustrating how family bonds can withstand even the toughest challenges.

Why The Color of Water James McBride Remains Relevant

More than two decades after its publication, *The Color of Water* continues to be a staple in discussions about race and identity. So what makes this memoir endure?

Honest Portrayal of Biracial Identity

In today's increasingly diverse society, stories about mixed-race experiences are crucial. McBride's memoir offers an authentic look at the struggles and triumphs of biracial individuals, making it an essential read for anyone interested in understanding the complexities of racial identity.

Educational Impact

The Color of Water is frequently included in school curricula because it opens up conversations about race, religion, and family history. Teachers and students alike appreciate its accessible narrative and the way it encourages empathy and understanding across cultural divides.

Inspiration for Personal Growth

Readers often find inspiration in Ruth's story of perseverance and James's journey toward self-acceptance. Their experiences encourage reflection on personal identity, the importance of embracing one's background, and the power of resilience.

Tips for Readers Engaging with *The Color of Water* James McBride

If you're planning to read or teach this memoir, here are some tips to deepen your engagement:

- **Reflect on the metaphors:** Pay close attention to the symbolism of water and color, and think about how these images relate to the characters' experiences.
- **Consider historical context:** Understanding the racial and religious climate of the mid-20th century can provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by Ruth and James.
- **Discuss dual narratives:** Explore how the alternating voices of mother and son enhance the storytelling and reveal different perspectives.
- **Connect to contemporary issues:** Relate themes from the memoir to current conversations about race, identity, and family dynamics.

Exploring James McBride's Broader Work

While *The Color of Water* remains his most famous work, James McBride has contributed significantly to literature and music. His other writings often explore themes of identity and cultural heritage, making him a multifaceted artist worth following.

Beyond the Memoir

McBride's novels, such as "Miracle at St. Anna" and "Song Yet Sung," continue to tackle complex historical and social issues. Reading these alongside *The Color of Water* can enrich your understanding of his perspectives on race and history.

Musical Influence

Aside from writing, McBride is an accomplished musician. His musical background informs his storytelling style, often blending rhythm and emotion in his prose. This unique combination adds

depth to his narratives, making them vivid and engaging.

Why The Color of Water James McBride is a Must-Read

Ultimately, *The Color of Water* is a compelling blend of memoir, history, and social commentary. Whether you're interested in personal stories of resilience, the complexities of racial identity, or powerful family narratives, this book offers something meaningful.

It reminds us that identity can't be confined to simple categories and that understanding our roots is key to embracing who we are. Through James McBride's heartfelt storytelling, readers gain not only knowledge but a deeper empathy for the diverse experiences that shape our society.

If you haven't yet explored *The Color of Water* by James McBride, it's a journey well worth taking—one that enriches your perspective on identity, love, and the human spirit.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'The Color of Water' by James McBride?

The main theme of *'The Color of Water'* is identity and race, exploring the complexities of growing up biracial in America and the search for self-understanding.

Who is the narrator in 'The Color of Water'?

The narrator of *'The Color of Water'* is James McBride himself, who tells the story of his life and his mother Ruth's life in alternating chapters.

How does Ruth McBride's background influence the story in 'The Color of Water'?

Ruth McBride's background as a Jewish immigrant who later married an African American man deeply influences the story by highlighting themes of racial identity, religious faith, and resilience.

What role does faith play in 'The Color of Water'?

Faith plays a significant role in the book, particularly Ruth's Christian beliefs and how they shape her values and the upbringing of her children, while also reflecting on the Jewish heritage she leaves behind.

Why is the book titled 'The Color of Water'?

The title *'The Color of Water'* symbolizes the fluidity and ambiguity of racial identity, emphasizing that water has no color, just as the book suggests that race should not define a person's identity.

How does James McBride portray his relationship with his mother in the book?

James McBride portrays a complex but loving relationship with his mother, showing her strength, sacrifices, and the challenges they faced together as a mixed-race family.

What historical context is important to understand 'The Color of Water'?

Understanding the Civil Rights Movement, racial segregation, and post-World War II America is important to grasp the challenges faced by the McBride family and the societal backdrop of the story.

How does 'The Color of Water' address issues of racism?

The book addresses racism by showing both overt and subtle forms of discrimination experienced by James and his family, and by exploring the impact of these experiences on their identity and relationships.

Is 'The Color of Water' a memoir or a novel?

'The Color of Water' is a memoir, as it is a true story based on James McBride's life and his mother's life.

What lessons can readers learn from 'The Color of Water'?

Readers can learn about resilience, the importance of understanding one's heritage, the complexities of racial identity, and the power of love and family.

Additional Resources

The Color of Water James McBride: An In-Depth Literary Exploration

the color of water james mcbride is a phrase that resonates deeply within contemporary American literature, reflecting themes of identity, race, family, and resilience. James McBride's memoir, **The Color of Water**, stands out as a profound narrative that delves into the complexities of a biracial upbringing in mid-20th century America. As both a personal story and a broader social commentary, the memoir invites readers to grapple with questions surrounding race, culture, and self-acceptance.

Understanding The Color of Water James McBride

At its core, **The Color of Water** is an autobiographical account that chronicles McBride's experiences growing up as the son of a white Jewish mother and a black Christian father. The title itself symbolizes the fluidity and ambiguity of racial identity—water being colorless, it metaphorically suggests the transcendence of racial boundaries and societal labels. This nuanced treatment makes the memoir a

staple in discussions about race relations and identity politics in America.

James McBride's narrative is structured around two parallel stories: his mother's tumultuous life as a Jewish immigrant and his own journey of self-discovery as a black man raised in a predominantly African American environment. This duality enriches the memoir, providing a multidimensional view of American identity that challenges simplistic racial categorizations.

Thematic Depth and Symbolism

One of the central themes explored in **The Color of Water** is the concept of identity formation against the backdrop of racial and cultural divides. McBride examines how his mother Ruth's refusal to be confined by racial stereotypes influences his understanding of self. Her insistence on seeing beyond race is captured poignantly throughout the memoir, illuminating the societal pressures that shape personal and collective identities.

The symbolism of water recurs throughout the text, representing purity, adaptability, and the erasure of racial distinctions. This motif encourages readers to reconsider preconceived notions about race, suggesting that identity can be fluid rather than fixed. Such symbolism has contributed to the book's enduring relevance in academic circles and among readers seeking insight into racial dynamics.

Literary Style and Narrative Technique

James McBride employs a candid and engaging narrative style that balances emotional depth with journalistic clarity. His prose is accessible yet layered, making **The Color of Water** suitable for both general audiences and scholarly analysis. The memoir's alternating perspectives—between McBride and his mother—offer a dialogic structure that enriches the storytelling and provides a comprehensive view of their intersecting lives.

The use of first-person narration lends authenticity to the memoir, allowing readers to connect intimately with McBride's reflections and revelations. This personal approach is complemented by historical context and cultural references, situating the individual story within larger societal frameworks.

Impact and Reception

Since its publication, **The Color of Water** has garnered critical acclaim for its honest portrayal of race and family. It has been widely adopted in academic curricula, often serving as a foundational text in courses on African American literature, multicultural studies, and memoir writing. Critics praise McBride's ability to navigate sensitive topics with nuance, avoiding didacticism while fostering empathy and understanding.

The memoir's impact extends beyond literature; it has sparked conversations about racial identity in communities and among readers grappling with similar issues. McBride's story resonates particularly with those who experience cultural hybridity, making the book a touchstone for discussions about biracial and multicultural experiences.

Comparative Analysis: The Color of Water and Contemporary Memoirs

When juxtaposed with other memoirs addressing race and identity, *The Color of Water* holds a unique position due to its dual narrative focus and symbolic richness. Unlike some memoirs that focus solely on racial oppression or personal triumph, McBride's work intertwines both perspectives through the lens of family history and cultural intersectionality.

For instance, compared to works like Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, which emphasizes the African American experience, McBride's memoir expands the scope by incorporating Jewish immigrant narratives. This broadens the conversation around identity, making it more inclusive and multidimensional.

Pros and Cons of *The Color of Water* James McBride

- **Pros:**

- Provides a multifaceted exploration of race and identity.
- Engaging and accessible narrative style.
- Rich symbolism that enhances thematic depth.
- Offers historical and cultural insights.
- Widely acclaimed and influential in academic settings.

- **Cons:**

- Some readers may find the alternating narrative structure challenging.
- Occasional pacing issues due to detailed family history.
- The memoir's focus on identity might feel overwhelming for readers unfamiliar with racial discourse.

Why *The Color of Water* Remains Relevant

The ongoing discourse around race relations in the United States underscores the continued

relevance of *The Color of Water*. James McBride's memoir offers not only a personal testament but also a framework for understanding complex racial identities in a multicultural society. Its exploration of themes such as acceptance, resilience, and the fluidity of identity speaks to contemporary audiences navigating similar challenges.

Moreover, the memoir's educational value cannot be overstated. It serves as a critical resource for fostering empathy and promoting nuanced conversations about race, culture, and history. This enduring significance ensures that *The Color of Water* remains a vital work in both literary and social contexts.

Through his compelling storytelling and insightful reflections, James McBride invites readers to reconsider what defines identity beyond superficial markers. The memoir's legacy lies in its power to transcend boundaries and encourage a more inclusive understanding of humanity—much like water, whose color is, ultimately, none at all.

The Color Of Water James McBride

the color of water james mcbride: The Color of Water James McBride, 2006-02-07 From the bestselling author of Deacon King Kong and the National Book Award-winning *The Good Lord Bird*: The modern classic that spent more than two years on The New York Times bestseller list and that Oprah.com calls one of the best memoirs of a generation. Who is Ruth McBride Jordan? A self-declared light-skinned woman evasive about her ethnicity, yet steadfast in her love for her twelve black children. James McBride, journalist, musician, and son, explores his mother's past, as well as his own upbringing and heritage, in a poignant and powerful debut, *The Color Of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*. The son of a black minister and a woman who would not admit she was white, James McBride grew up in orchestrated chaos with his eleven siblings in the poor, all-black projects of Red Hook, Brooklyn. Mommy, a fiercely protective woman with dark eyes full of pep and fire, herded her brood to Manhattan's free cultural events, sent them off on buses to the best (and mainly Jewish) schools, demanded good grades, and commanded respect. As a young man, McBride saw his mother as a source of embarrassment, worry, and confusion—and reached thirty before he began to discover the truth about her early life and long-buried pain. In *The Color of Water*, McBride retraces his mother's footsteps and, through her searing and spirited voice, recreates her remarkable story. The daughter of a failed itinerant Orthodox rabbi, she was born Rachel Shilsky (actually Ruchel Dwara Zylska) in Poland on April 1, 1921. Fleeing pogroms, her family emigrated to America and ultimately settled in Suffolk, Virginia, a small town where anti-Semitism and racial tensions ran high. With candor and immediacy, Ruth describes her parents' loveless marriage; her fragile, handicapped mother; her cruel, sexually-abusive father; and the rest of the family and life she abandoned. At seventeen, after fleeing Virginia and settling in New York City, Ruth married a black minister and founded the all-black New Brown Memorial Baptist Church in her Red Hook living room. God is the color of water, Ruth McBride taught her children, firmly convinced that life's blessings and life's values transcend race. Twice widowed, and continually confronting overwhelming adversity and racism, Ruth's determination, drive and discipline saw her dozen children through college—and most through graduate school. At age 65, she herself received a degree in social work from Temple University. Interspersed throughout his mother's compelling narrative, McBride shares candid recollections of his own experiences as a mixed-race child of poverty, his flirtations with drugs and violence, and his eventual self-realization and professional success. *The Color of Water* touches readers of all colors as a vivid portrait of growing up, a haunting meditation on race and identity, and a lyrical valentine to a mother from her son.

the color of water james mcbride: *The Color of Water* James McBride, 2006-02-07 From the bestselling author of *Deacon King Kong* and the National Book Award-winning *The Good Lord Bird*: The modern classic that spent more than two years on The New York Times bestseller list and that Oprah.com calls one of the best memoirs of a generation. Who is Ruth McBride Jordan? A self-declared light-skinned woman evasive about her ethnicity, yet steadfast in her love for her twelve black children. James McBride, journalist, musician, and son, explores his mother's past, as well as his own upbringing and heritage, in a poignant and powerful debut, *The Color Of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*. The son of a black minister and a woman who would not admit she was white, James McBride grew up in orchestrated chaos with his eleven siblings in the poor, all-black projects of Red Hook, Brooklyn. Mommy, a fiercely protective woman with dark eyes full of pep and fire, herded her brood to Manhattan's free cultural events, sent them off on buses to the best (and mainly Jewish) schools, demanded good grades, and commanded respect. As a young man, McBride saw his mother as a source of embarrassment, worry, and confusion—and reached thirty before he began to discover the truth about her early life and long-buried pain. In *The Color of Water*, McBride retraces his mother's footsteps and, through her searing and spirited voice, recreates her remarkable story. The daughter of a failed itinerant Orthodox rabbi, she was born Rachel Shilsky (actually Ruchel Dwara Zylska) in Poland on April 1, 1921. Fleeing pogroms, her family emigrated to America and ultimately settled in Suffolk, Virginia, a small town where anti-Semitism and racial tensions ran high. With candor and immediacy, Ruth describes her parents' loveless marriage; her fragile, handicapped mother; her cruel, sexually-abusive father; and the rest of the family and life she abandoned. At seventeen, after fleeing Virginia and settling in New York City, Ruth married a black minister and founded the all- black New Brown Memorial Baptist Church in her Red Hook living room. God is the color of water, Ruth McBride taught her children, firmly convinced that life's blessings and life's values transcend race. Twice widowed, and continually confronting overwhelming adversity and racism, Ruth's determination, drive and discipline saw her dozen children through college—and most through graduate school. At age 65, she herself received a degree in social work from Temple University. Interspersed throughout his mother's compelling narrative, McBride shares candid recollections of his own experiences as a mixed-race child of poverty, his flirtations with drugs and violence, and his eventual self- realization and professional success. *The Color of Water* touches readers of all colors as a vivid portrait of growing up, a haunting meditation on race and identity, and a lyrical valentine to a mother from her son.

the color of water james mcbride: *The Color of Water by James McBride* Therese Burgess, 1999

the color of water james mcbride: *The Color of Water, James McBride* Laura Moon Kim, Jordan Reid Berkow, 2007 A study guide to *The color of water*, a memoir by James McBride. Provides an author biography, in-depth chapter-by-chapter summary and analysis, a short summary, a character list and related descriptions, list of themes, glossary, historical context, essays, and quizzes.

the color of water james mcbride: *Summary of James McBride's The Color of Water* Milkyway Media, 2022-04-27 Please note: This is a companion version & not the original book. Book Preview: #1 I was 14 when my stepfather died. I dropped out of high school after that, and spent the year going to movies with my friends. I was into the movies, and I snacked on purses and shoplifted. #2 My mother, who was divorced from my father, was very odd. She would ride her bicycle around our neighborhood, ignoring the stares of passersby. She was completely nonchalant about the danger she was in from both blacks and whites who disliked her for being a white person in a black world. #3 My mother was a strange woman. She never cared to socialize with our neighbors. She drank tea out of a glass. She could speak Yiddish. She had an absolute distrust of authority and an insistence on complete privacy which seemed to make her and her family even odder. #4 I was terrified to go to school, but my mother would walk me to the bus stop every afternoon and pick me up after I got off the bus. She would stand on the corner of New Mexico and 114th Road, watching with the other parents as the yellow school bus came around the corner.

the color of water james mcbride: Summary of James McBride's The Color of Water Everest Media,, 2022-03-20T22:59:00Z Please note: This is a companion version & not the original book. Sample Book Insights: #1 I was 14 when my stepfather died. I dropped out of high school after that, and spent the year going to movies with my friends. I was into the movies, and I snacked on purses and shoplifted. #2 My mother, who was divorced from my father, was very odd. She would ride her bicycle around our neighborhood, ignoring the stares of passersby. She was completely nonchalant about the danger she was in from both blacks and whites who disliked her for being a white person in a black world. #3 My mother was a strange woman. She never cared to socialize with our neighbors. She drank tea out of a glass. She could speak Yiddish. She had an absolute distrust of authority and an insistence on complete privacy which seemed to make her and her family even odder. #4 I was terrified to go to school, but my mother would walk me to the bus stop every afternoon and pick me up after I got off the bus. She would stand on the corner of New Mexico and 114th Road, watching with the other parents as the yellow school bus came around the corner.

the color of water james mcbride: The Color of Water - AP Teaching Unit James McBride, 2012-01-01 Scoring a 5 on the AP Test Has Just Become Easier You no longer have to choose between teaching the work or teaching to the test. Prestwick House Advanced Placement Teaching Units allow you to do both. Because we wanted the Prestwick House AP Teaching Units to meet the rigorous demands of the Advanced Placement class, we wrote detailed study guides that focus on the types of literary knowledge your students will have to demonstrate on their AP exams.

the color of water james mcbride: The Color of Water (SparkNotes Literature Guide) SparkNotes, 2014-08-12 The Color of Water (SparkNotes Literature Guide) by James McBride Making the reading experience fun! Created by Harvard students for students everywhere, SparkNotes is a new breed of study guide: smarter, better, faster. Geared to what today's students need to know, SparkNotes provides: chapter-by-chapter analysis explanations of key themes, motifs, and symbols a review quiz and essay topics Lively and accessible, these guides are perfect for late-night studying and writing papers.

the color of water james mcbride: *Jewish Writers/Irish Writers* Maurice Wohlgernter, 2017-12-02 These essays on representative Jewish and Irish writers are true to the form's definition as an attempt or experiment rather than a credo. Wohlgernter defines the author's excited imagination by thoroughgoing analysis of the work's constituent parts. He gives particular emphasis to the author's own words and expressions, those verbal inventions that linger in the mind long after the act of reading or criticism. He finds a passionate love of words and language forging a powerful link between Jewish and Irish literature, rooted as they are in similar historical experience. Both literatures engage the human struggle with life and death, virtue and weakness, success and failure, dreams and nightmares, all under the constant surveillance of tradition. Wohlgernter divides his book into four general categories: the Holocaust, Jewish-American writers, Irish writers, and memoirs and autobiography. His chapters on Holocaust literature engage a range of literary perspectives that combine memoir, journalism, fiction, and philosophical reflection in the writings of Ladislav Fuks, Lucy Dawidowicz, Sabine Reichel, and Primo Levi. Chapters on postwar Jewish writers including Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and Philip Roth explore the ambivalences of assimilation with its encroachments of a provincial past and dissatisfactions with mainstream culture. Wohlgernter notes how all yoke street raciness and high cultural mandarin in a distinctive contribution to American prose style. A similar richness of language and preoccupation with the political and cultural claims of the past characterize the chapters on the great short story writer Frank O'Connor, the playwright Brendan Behan, and the Irish-American journalist and novelist Pete Hamill. The last decades of the twentieth century have seen a prolific outpouring of autobiographical writing, and in the concluding section of the book the author treats representative examples that amplify or reflect on the personal an

the color of water james mcbride: "Toubab La!" Literary Representations of Mixed-Race Characters in the African Diaspora Ginette Curry, 2009-05-05 The book is an examination of mixed-race characters from writers in the United States, The French and British Caribbean islands

(Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Lucia and Jamaica), Europe (France and England) and Africa (Burkina Faso, South Africa, Botswana and Senegal). The objective of this study is to capture a realistic view of the literature of the African diaspora as it pertains to biracial and multiracial people. For example, the expression "Toubab La!" as used in the title, is from the Wolof ethnic group in Senegal, West Africa. It means "This is a white person" or "This is a black person who looks or acts white." It is used as a metaphor to illustrate multiethnic people's plight in many areas of the African diaspora and how it has evolved. The analysis addresses the different ways multiracial characters look at the world and how the world looks at them. These characters experience historical, economic, sociological and emotional realities in various environments from either white or black people. Their lineage as both white and black determines a new self, making them constantly search for their identity. Each section of the manuscript provides an in-depth analysis of specific authors' novels that is a window into their true experiences. The first section is a study of mixed race characters in three acclaimed contemporary novels from the United States. James McBride's *The Color of Water* (1996), Danzy Senna's *Caucasia* (1998) and Rebecca Walker's *Black White and Jewish* (2001) reveal the conflicting dynamics of being biracial in today's American society. The second section is an examination of mixed-race characters in the following French Caribbean novels: Mayotte Capécia's *I Am a Martinican Woman* (1948), Michèle Lacrosil's *Cajou* (1961) and Ravines du Devant-Jour (1993) by Raphaël Confiant. Section three is about their literary representations in Derek Walcott's *What the Twilight Says* (1970), *Another life* (1973), *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1967) and Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* (1995) from the British Caribbean islands. Section four is an in-depth analysis of their plight in novels written by contemporary mulatto writers from Europe such as Marie N'Diaye's *Among Family* (1997), Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) and Bernardine Evaristo's *Lara* (1997). Finally, the last section of the book is a study of novels from West African and South African writers. The analysis of Monique Ilboudo's *Le Mal de Peau* (2001), Bessie Head's *A Woman Alone: Autobiographical Writings* (1990) and Abdoulaye Sadjí's *Nini, Mulâtresse du Sénégal* (1947) concludes this literary journey that takes the readers through several continents at different points in time. Overall, this comprehensive study of mixed-race characters in the literature of the African diaspora reveals not only the old but also the new ways they decline, contest and refuse racial clichés. Likewise, the book unveils how these characters resist, create, reappropriate and revise fixed forms of identity in the African diaspora of the 20th and 21st century. Most importantly, it is also an examination of how the authors themselves deal with the complex reality of a multiracial identity.

the color of water james mcbride: *The James McBride 2 Books Set* the Good Lord Bird the Color of Water: a Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother James McBride, 2014-08-05

the color of water james mcbride: Racechanges Susan Gubar, 2000-04-20 When the actor Ted Danson appeared in blackface at a 1993 Friars Club roast, he ignited a firestorm of protest that landed him on the front pages of the newspapers, rebuked by everyone from talk show host Montel Williams to New York City's then mayor, David Dinkins. Danson's use of blackface was shocking, but was the furious pitch of the response a triumphant indication of how far society has progressed since the days when blackface performers were the toast of vaudeville, or was it also an uncomfortable reminder of how deep the chasm still is separating black and white America? In *Racechanges: White Skin, Black Face in American Culture*, Susan Gubar, who fundamentally changed the way we think about women's literature as co-author of the acclaimed *The Madwoman in the Attic*, turns her attention to the incendiary issue of race. Through a far-reaching exploration of the long overlooked legacy of minstrelsy--cross-racial impersonations or racechanges--throughout modern American film, fiction, poetry, painting, photography, and journalism, she documents the indebtedness of mainstream artists to African-American culture, and explores the deeply conflicted psychology of white guilt. The fascinating racechanges Gubar discusses include whites posing as blacks and blacks passing for white; blackface on white actors in *The Jazz Singer*, *Birth of a Nation*, and other movies, as well as on the faces of black stage entertainers; African-American deployment of racechange imagery during the Harlem Renaissance, including the poetry of Anne Spencer, the black-and-white

prints of Richard Bruce Nugent, and the early work of Zora Neale Hurston; white poets and novelists from Vachel Lindsay and Gertrude Stein to John Berryman and William Faulkner writing as if they were black; white artists and writers fascinated by hypersexualized stereotypes of black men; and nightmares and visions of the racechanged baby. Gubar shows that unlike African-Americans, who often are forced to adopt white masks to gain their rights, white people have chosen racial masquerades, which range from mockery and mimicry to an evolving emphasis on inter-racial mutuality and mutability. Drawing on a stunning array of illustrations, including paintings, film stills, computer graphics, and even magazine morphings, *Racechanges* sheds new light on the persistent pervasiveness of racism and exciting aesthetic possibilities for lessening the distance between blacks and whites.

the color of water james mcbride: *The Color of Water - Downloadable AP Teaching Unit* James McBride, 2012-01-01 Scoring a 5 on the AP Test Has Just Become Easier You no longer have to choose between teaching the work or teaching to the test. Prestwick House Advanced Placement Teaching Units allow you to do both. Because we wanted the Prestwick House AP Teaching Units to meet the rigorous demands of the Advanced Placement class, we wrote detailed study guides that focus on the types of literary knowledge your students will have to demonstrate on their AP exams.

the color of water james mcbride: *African American Autobiographers* Emmanuel S. Nelson, 2002-03-30 There is growing popular and scholarly interest in autobiography, along with increasing regard for the achievements of African American writers. The first reference of its kind, this volume chronicles the autobiographical tradition in African American literature. Included are alphabetically arranged entries for 66 African American authors who present autobiographical material in their works. The volume profiles major figures, such as Frederick Douglass, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, and Malcolm X, along with many lesser known autobiographers who deserve greater attention. While some are known primarily for their literary accomplishments, others have gained acclaim for their diverse contributions to society. The entries are written by expert contributors and provide authoritative information about their subjects. Each begins with a concise biography, which summarizes the life and achievements of the autobiographer. This is followed by a discussion of major autobiographical works and themes, along with an overview of the autobiographer's critical reception. The entries close with primary and secondary bibliographies, and a selected, general bibliography concludes the volume. Together, the entries provide a detailed portrait of the African American autobiographical tradition from the 18th century to the present.

the color of water james mcbride: *Operation Homecoming* , 2004

the color of water james mcbride: *The Color of Water* James McBride, 1997-01 An African American man describes life as the son of a white mother and Black father, reflecting on his mother's contributions to his life and his confusion over his own identity

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