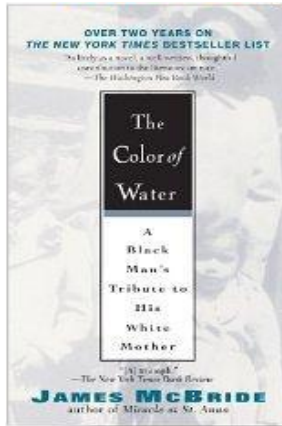


# Riviera Schools

## 2021 REQUIRED SUMMER READING FOR 10th Grade Students



### *The Color of Water* by James McBride

James McBride shares the story of his mother's life and complicated racial identity which he only learned after becoming an adult. He tells of her infancy in Poland as the daughter of an Orthodox Jewish rabbi, her childhood in small-town Virginia, her move to Harlem at the age of eighteen, her marriage to an African-American man, her achievements as a wife and mother to twelve children, and her refusal to ever admit she is white. 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.

Excerpted from: <http://www.amazon.com>

You must have a **hard copy** as annotations are required.



**Before Reading:** The novel has the two distinct voices of James and his mother telling the story of a family. Every family has its unique characteristics.

Watch the following YouTube video of James McBride:

<https://youtu.be/2yzM7HRM3Vw>



**During Reading:** Answer the following questions in complete sentences as you read, annotate, and **highlight** your book.

1. The book begins with a historical portrait of Ruth McBride Jordan. The author reveals that Ruth has had some name changes. Explain each name change and its significance.
2. In the opening portrait, Ruth describes her father, Fishel Shilsky. She states, "He was a fox, especially when it came to money." Explain what she implies with this metaphor.
3. Why did James rebel in high school, and how did his rebellion manifest itself? How did James's brothers and sisters feel about his rebellion?

4. James compares acquiring baseball cards with garnering information about his mother: “We traded information on Mommy the way people trade baseball cards at trade shows, offering bits and pieces fraught with gossip, nonsense, wisdom and sometimes just foolishness.” Why is the comparison appropriate? Explain why Ruth’s children feel the need to trade information about their mother? Who has been the most reliable source of information about your family history? When did you first realize that this family member was a good source of information and what were the circumstances?
5. James states, “There was a part of me that feared black power very deeply.” Is James’s fear justified? Explain your answer. How does James learn to cope with his fear and better understand his mother’s seeming fearlessness?
6. In what way did James’s mother represent the “best and worst of the immigrant mentality?” What was his parents’ strategy for overcoming poverty?
7. Ruth tells James in chapter 6 that “In the *New Testament*, God is the color of water.” What does she mean by this? How does this statement reflect how Ruth sees the world and what she tries to instill in her children?
8. Chapter 8, “Brothers and Sisters,” reveals conflict that can exist between brothers and sisters. What is Helen’s conflict? What might prompt a fifteen year old child in her situation to leave home so abruptly? What is Ruth’s brother Sam’s ultimate fate? Describe Dennis’s and James’s attitudes toward each other.
9. Compare and contrast James’s public school experience with his mother’s public school experience. Identify at least two similarities and two differences in their experiences.
10. How was Ruth’s visit to New York in the summer of 1936 different from her other visits to New York?
11. In chapter 15, Ruth begins to make decisions concerning her future. What concerns does she have at this point in her life? What does she decide and to what extent will her decisions impact her family members? How will her decisions affect Mameh, Tateh, and Dee Dee?
12. To whom do you think the chapter “Lost in Delaware” refers? Explain your answer by supporting your conclusion with specific examples from the text.
13. In chapter 21, Ruth recounts her memories of her mother’s death and her relationship with her mother. Explain Ruth’s statement: “I was her eyes and ears in America . . . her reasons for living just slipped away.” Explain Ruth’s statement: “The Jew in me was dying . . . but it truly died when my mother died.”
14. Ruth comments, “My world expanded because of Dennis.” Explain two (2) specific examples of how Ruth became more enlightened by her relationship with Dennis.

15. What were James's expectations when he first decided to write this book? How did his mother feel about his decision? In what ways was it helpful for both James and his mother?



**After Reading: James McBride** created a commentary on the complicated relationships in families and the challenges of our society. Respond to one of the following prompts. Your response should be less than 200 words yet clearly demonstrate your understanding of the novel. Be sure to include specific references to the text in support of your thesis.

- What general aspects of society did James McBride indirectly criticize or challenge?
- What aspects of James McBride's familial relationships parallel or contrast with your familial relationships?

**Remember:**

- Always read over your finished work!
- Type your responses.
- Double space.
- Use Times New Roman or Arial – Font –Size 12.
- Send your work through spell and grammar check.
- Put the heading on the top left of your paper. →
- Do not “share” any work with your peers.

John Doe

Teacher Name (leave blank for now)

English

23 August 2021