

Contemporary Literature H & CP: Grade 12 Summer Reading 2022-2023

Ms. Richardson and Ms. Johnson

Assignment 1: Read and annotate in order to be prepared for a test or writing assignment when we return:

The Color of Water by James McBride

- Paperback : 295 pages
- ISBN-10 : 9781594481925
- ISBN-13 : 978-1594481925

This book is a *memoir*, a nonfiction account (often autobiographical) of personal knowledge of an experience or series of related events. It differs from biography and autobiography in that it generally focuses on a single aspect, problem, time period, etc. of a life or event rather than the entire thing. Its focus and interests are more particularized. In the case of this book, it recounts the author's childhood and young adulthood through the lens of gradually discovering his mother's history and the events that formed her.

Amazon.com offers a synopsis of this memoir:

“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...* 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...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.”

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As you read, annotate with the following in mind:

- As you read, make notes and mark lines which characterize the important individuals in the story and how their characters are revealed
- Make notes or mark lines which help convey theme, author's message(s) about his mother, himself, his values, etc.
- The book examines the factors that affect an individual's fate, both those within one's control and beyond one's control. What conclusions can you draw about these factors? Which factors are most important? Can you relate your own experiences to these factors?
- Can you make any generalizations about life from McBride's (and his mother's) stories?
- What do you notice about the structure of the book? How does it help the author make his points? Would you structure the stories differently? Why?
- What other literary devices does the author use? What do you notice about the author's voice and style that you like or dislike?

Assignment 2: Write a draft of your college essay (keep it to 650 words).

This can be turned in on Classroom over the summer or the first week of class. Use the Common App guidelines and prompts available at:

<https://www.commonapp.org/blog/2022-2023-common-app-essay-prompts>