

Autobiography of My Dead Brother

Walter Dean Myers , Christopher Myers (Illustrations)

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Printz Award winner Walter Dean Myers has written a realistic urban novel that probes a fatal crisis in the life of two boys. Jesse, the book's narrator, and Rise are best friends, but as time passes, Rise grows increasingly alienated and unpredictable. Living in a neighborhood where gang fights and drive-by shootings are almost commonplace, Jesse wonders whether he and his estranged blood brother are already doomed. A powerful novel from the author of *Shooter* and *Monster*.

Autobiography of My Dead Brother Details


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Author : Walter Dean Myers , Christopher Myers (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review *Autobiography of My Dead Brother* for online ebook

Carrie Lawler says

Ah, another fabulous book! Set in Harlem, it centers around a group of teen boys that have to make important life choices. The protagonist, Jesse, narrates using first-person pov. Rise is Jesse's "blood brother" who begins to take interest in the gang lifestyle that he and Jesse always said they would avoid. Along the way, Jesse begins creating an autobiography of Rise through sketches. Sketches are thrown throughout the book, along with some comics, that compliment the plot and the characters of the story.

I want to use this book in my classroom, as soon as I can get a class set! It provides an engaging way to explore characterization, specifically characters' motives. For example, what made Rise choose the gang route and not Jesse? Also, why is it hard to let friends go even when they turn into someone else? These are important questions for middle school students to critically think about in their lives. I love it and I think my students would as well.

Shruthi says

"Autobiography of My Dead Brother" by Walter Dean Myers is a descriptive and colorful narrative that explores the the topics of gang life, shootings, and persevering through friendships. The novel is about a boy named Jesse who goes through the hardship of his friend Rise distancing himself and potentially falling to the dark side, but as well as trying to be safe in the dark world they live in. Myers takes two different stories and puts them together, as the book is basically Jesse writing Rise's autobiography (through the various drawings in the novel), but with the writing portion being about Jesse's feelings and his story. We see Jesse's struggle, as he doesn't know what do about his blood brother's estrangement and potential violent activities that Rise may be doing. Jesse has to undergo many different hardships all under the idea of survival, as he has to make sure to stay alive with the various shootings and gang violence that goes on, but also to fight the conflict of trying to prevent his blood brother from falling into a life of crime. Myers uniquely takes the main concept of the book (being the fact that Jesse is writing Rise's autobiography) and incorporates it into Jesse's narrative.

My favorite part of the book would have to be when Jesse drew Rise, but as he drew him he changed every aspect of the picture -- adding flames and bright colors to resemble that Jesse didn't see him the way he once did (Myers 132). It made me realize that we never perceive someone the same, and even as we think about them our opinions change constantly whether we notice or not. I would most definitely recommend this book to those who want to learn more about real life crises, that aren't about "first world" problems. This amazing novel explores through real life issues along the lines of racial isolation, leaving you to wonder what and how big of an impact you will make on someone.

Christie says

While this wasn't a book I particularly enjoyed, I absolutely see its merits. *Autobiography of My Dead Brother* is the story of 15-year-old Jesse who grows up in a violent New York neighbourhood. He's smart,

talented and although he's got all the typical teenage issues - he's not going to make decisions which adversely impact his life.

His best friend is Rise. Rise is seventeen and he and Jesse have been friends since they were little.

"His mother likes to tell me that when Rise first saw me, he was scared of me. She said they had a puppy and a turtle and he liked to play with them both, but when he saw me he started crying.

...

I didn't remember any of that, but me and Rise grew up to be really close. He was more than my best friend - he was really like a brother."

Myers' novel opens, Jesse and his friend C.J. are at the funeral of their friend, Bobby, who has been killed in a drive-by shooting. While Jesse and Bobby are horrified by the event because, after all, Bobby wasn't doing anything, just sitting on his stoop, Rise thinks Bobby "went out like a man." It's an early indication that Jesse and Rise might be heading in two different directions.

Rise wants Jesse, an artist, to draw his autobiography and so the reader starts to see Rise through Jesse's very focused lens. We see his "funny way of walking, with one shoulder higher than the other"; we see Rise's home life (he lives with his mom and aging maternal grandparents); we see Jesse start to feel the troubling disconnect between him and Rise.

Myers also captures the adults in this book very well. None of these kids come from uncaring families. While some come from single parent households, all the parents work and care and even the police are painted as fair and reasonable human beings. But there still manages to be trouble for Jesse and his friends.

The book is interesting; the drawings are great (done by Christopher Myers, the author's brother) and Myers certainly writes authentically about the experience of - in this case - African American kids who just happen to live in a neighbourhood where crappy things happen. Ultimately though, this is a story about the friendship between two kids which unravels over time.

I know a lot of boys would really enjoy it.

Caroline says

I've been semi-avoiding any Walter Dean Myers books the past few years because they hit way to close to home, if by home I mean school. Working with the kids that I do and living the sadness, anger, and frustrations of Black youth on a daily basis, I don't generally jump at the chance to read about it for fun. However, this title was one I'd chosen for my classroom library because I thought it sounded interesting and I found it to be an intelligent and insightful portrayal of life in the inner-city. It didn't stereotype characters or play the minstrel, rather Myers' writing paints a sensitive and informed story of two "brothers" trying to define themselves in the midst of socially conflicting values systems. Great read for any adult looking for insight into today's more urban Black youth and great read for any kid wrestling with identity and growing up.

Shae N. says

i thought this was thee best book that i have read so far becuase i can really really really relate to it. in the book these kids are in a gang, that part doesnt relate to me but i know people who are in a gang. one of the kids are trying their hardest to keep out of the gang banging thing and he is also trying to keep his best friend/ brother out of it too. one of the main character decides that he will wirte an autobiography about Rise, his brother. the one reason why i really relate to this book is because two of my friends have pasted away. LaNajah Dupree was going to be a freshman cheerleader for Reed High, but she was at a party and some guy who was a gang banger that wasnt allowed in the party decided that he was gunna start shooting. The bullet hit her in her upper body & she died in the doorway it was the sadest day of 2010.... this book showed me even more how you should always keep your loved ones close and let them know that your love them every chance that you get because you never know when your gonna lose them or if they will ever lose you.

christopher says

Book review

Christopher Jordan 12/3/08

The book that I have finished is a novel called Autobiography of my dead Brother. This story is by award winning Walter Dean Myers. This story is fiction and the main theme of this story is even your own best friend can change on you by the surroundings as drugs, gun, gangs and the only thing you would have to fall back on is your family.

Autobiography of my Dead Brother is based on a fifteenth year old black male name Jesse. This story takes place in Harlem, New York. Jesse has a best friend named "Rise" they're more like blood brothers because they have known each other since they were three years of age. Jesse lives with his mother and father, Jesse and his father don't bond that well but get along with each other. Jesse and Rise have to worry about all of the trouble in the streets with all the shootings, gangs, guns, and drug dealing. Jesse Begins to realize that their club the counts is starting to transform into a gang he tries to seek a way out of it. Rise is beginning to change up on Jesse getting involved with gangs, drugs and criminal activities.

I think this novel is extremely good and the reason why I say that is because it's to become really sad and I like that about books. I think the way this book can relate to bigger issues going on now in the present there are more and more teenagers getting with gangs, drugs and criminal activity which cause more deaths on the east coast.

I would recommend this novel to anybody especially teens, both boys and girls. I think this story would be best independent.

I really enjoyed this book and world love to read to read it again an also Walter Dean Myers other books I give this book 5/5.

Kim says

Utterly relatable characters, real dialog, and the tension between two blood-brother friends who are making

decisions about how involved they want to be in the gang lifestyle of their neighborhood make this a stand-out in urban fiction. I listened to the audio version, and narrator J. D. Jackson does an outstanding job of bringing Jesse and his friends and family to life. Walter Dean Myers had such a feel for urban teens, and it shines through in this story.

Ethan Skye says

I really enjoyed reading Autobiography of my dead brother! At first this book was hard to keep up with but once I got a clear understanding of the novel it was so so good! It's really sad to think about how Rose would die that way. Gangs are so rough and just a really scary thing to think about. I feel so bad for C.J. and his family. I'm glad that at the end of the book he was saying how it's not horrible that he's dead because now he won't get involved in gang violence. Overall I'd rate this book 4 solid stars.

Cassandra says

This book is rather depressing. It is written in first person and is about a teenage African-American boy, named Jesse, growing up in Harlem. He is a pretty good kid and is part of a club called The Counts. His best friends name is Rise, and the book documents how Rise changes and brings a lot of turmoil to the neighborhood the boys live in. Jesse is an artist and he begins drawing pictures of Rise to try to figure out what is going on with him. Rise likes the pictures and asks Jesse to write his biography. Eventually, Rise informs Jesse that he is thinking about getting into drug dealing and working with a gang. Jesse still doesn't understand what is going on, and he knows he doesn't want to be involved in what Rise is getting into. But, Jesse doesn't stand up to Rise and try to stop him either. Eventually, The Counts are called a gang in the newspaper, which causes Jesse's family to really worry about him. Rise continues to get weirder and weirder to Jesse, but he keeps writing the biography and painting his pictures. At the end of the story, Rise is caught by the police because he is suspected of shooting some guys from a gang called the Diablos. Jesse and some other guys are even brought in with him, but it is evident that they were part of an alibi. After Rise is released from jail, he calls Jesse to tell him that he is moving to Florida. Some of The Counts gather to tell Rise goodbye, but when Rise comes over he is shot in the street and killed. The last chapter of the book covers Rise's funeral and Jesse's final thoughts on the entire summer.

This book has been challenged or banned in many areas, so it would be difficult to use it in the classroom. It deals with a lot of touchy topics including gangs and drugs. It is a realistic story though and could possibly be used to warn teenagers of the dangers of getting involved in this kind of crime. The only way I would recommend this book to a student would be to run it by the parents first to make sure they would be alright with their child reading it.

Jay Robinson says

Autobiography of my Dead brother is a great book. It relates to kids who are brought up in a negative environment and shows how that type of environment can influence a kid to make bad decisions. Rise was that kid in this book. He hung around the wrong people, and they had a negative influence on him. His bestfriend Jesse was the main character, and the kid that truthfully didn't want to have to deal with gangs and all that trouble, but because his "blood brother" was there, so was he.

Rise got too carried away and it was at the cost of his life. This saddened Jesse but brought him to realize that aspect of negativity was out of his life. I would recommend this book to anyone who feels pressured or like they have to do something because their friends are. This is because it shows a relatable character and shows that going along with others isn't always the best thing and can ruin your life. Themes in this book include peer pressure, gangs, and looking at the bigger picture.

SeanV CLC says

Pretty good book, had a lot of slang language I didn't understand... Reasonably violent, has lots of gang wars, violence, discrimination. It is also reasonably sad.

Imani ♥ ? says

One of the best picture books I've ever read. The pictures in this book really helped to even better depict this story. The story starts off in Harlem at a funeral of a local boy. The main character throughout the story talks about his best friend, Rise, a lot and his "gang" I guess u can call it. Rise starts to drug deal and in the end an enemy of his shoots him dead just as he makes the decision to leave dangerous Harlem. The story ends in the main character's drawing of him and his other friend walking from the funeral. I think that if you are not really a "reader" or "bookworm" that this book is the book for u because it has really great pictures. A great from Myers:)

Steven Jones says

This book is powerful, both in its text and its illustrations. The subject matter is very real (and very violent, if that sort of thing bothers you) but what I like most about it is the honesty. The book is written as more of a journal than an autobiography and Jesse deals with some serious stuff in the book. However, the book is not filled with extreme emotion, but instead Jesse's somewhat complacent attitude about death and violence (although he obviously disagrees with it) is what is so powerful. His emotions and real opinions seem expressed more in his cartoons than his words.

I think I could definitely teach this in a class. I think students would definitely read it because it's short, it has illustrations and it deals with subject matters that they can relate to, even if they don't live in a dangerous neighborhood. What I think would be really cool, though, is to teach this in a school where the students do deal with this kind of stuff. While so many young men (and women) want to act tough about stuff like this, Myers' book provides us with a character that is just very honest about his feelings, whether he expresses them in words or pictures. It's a really interesting book and I'd love to discuss it with students.

Shanae says

One of the best books I've ever read in my entire life.

Kamrin says

I picked this book up because it's an award winning book, and because I love Walter Dean Myers. This reminds me of Diary of a Wimpy Kid in that it has some graphics, but I wouldn't call it a graphic novel. It is a story about Jesse and Rise. Two blood brothers who are learning how to deal with the fact they're growing up and growing apart. They live in Harlem and are members of a "club" not a gang. When a series of drive-bys start happening around the neighborhood, it separates the two brothers who take different paths. I thought this was a very well written book. I also thought the story was believable and some of my students would totally be able to relate. I could see letting my students read this. Although there is some violence, there is hardly any cussing and no sexual content. This might be a great book to hand to my reluctant boy readers. I mean...it has pictures!
