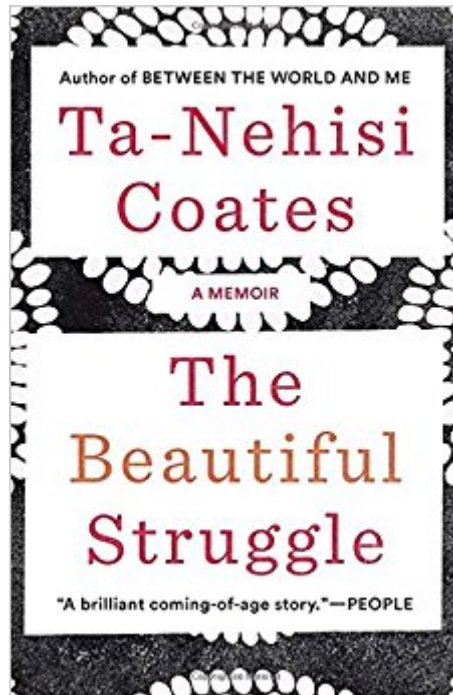




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The Beautiful Struggle: A Memoir



Synopsis

An exceptional father-son story— from the National Book Award—winning author of *Between the World and Me*—about the reality that tests us, the myths that sustain us, and the love that saves us. Paul Coates was an enigmatic god to his sons: a Vietnam vet who rolled with the Black Panthers, an old-school disciplinarian and new-age believer in free love, an autodidact who launched a publishing company in his basement dedicated to telling the true history of African civilization. Most of all, he was a wily tactician whose mission was to carry his sons across the shoals of inner-city adolescence—and through the collapsing civilization of Baltimore in the Age of Crack—and into the safe arms of Howard University, where he worked so his children could attend for free. Among his brood of seven, his main challenges were Ta-Nehisi, spacey and sensitive and almost comically miscalibrated for his environment, and Big Bill, charismatic and all-too-ready for the challenges of the streets. *The Beautiful Struggle* follows their divergent paths through this turbulent period, and their father's steadfast efforts—assisted by mothers, teachers, and a body of myths, histories, and rituals conjured from the past to meet the needs of a troubled present—to keep them whole in a world that seemed bent on their destruction. With a remarkable ability to reimagine both the lost world of his father's generation and the terrors and wonders of his own youth, Coates offers readers a small and beautiful epic about boys trying to become men in black America and beyond. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review Coates grew up in a tough Baltimore neighborhood, subject to the same temptations as other young black boys. But he had a father in the household, a man steeped in race consciousness and willing to go to any lengths—including beatings—to keep his sons on the right path. With sharp cultural observations and emotional depth, Coates recalls an adolescence of surreptitiously standing on corners eying girls, drinking fifths, and earning reps, mindful of his father's admonition about the Knowledge. Central to the Knowledge was the need to confront fears and bullies and beat them in order to live in peace. For a while, his own style was to "talk and duck"; later he found places to be himself in African drumming and writing. The Knowledge focused on alternative paths for race-conscious black men, respectful of the broader culture, but always a bit on the margins. His father had balanced his own life between square jobs and a black book publishing enterprise. As Coates grew up, he replaced his comic books with his father's collection of classic literature on the race struggle and found his own way. A beautifully written, loving portrait of a strong father bringing his sons to manhood.

--Vanessa Bush --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Ta-Nehisi Coates is the young James Joyce of the hip-hop generation." —Walter Mosley "Haunting and healing . . . a splendid memoir." —Essence "A brilliant coming-of-age story." —People "A remarkable, blunt portrait of an adolescence filled with danger, chaos, flaws, and tragedy . . . a love story, dispatched from the front lines of a family." —Time Out New York "A searing and soulful memoir." —Michael Eric Dyson, author of *April 4, 1968*

He is as honest as a black man can be in our culture. I'm sure he uses language as a means to push past the outer layers of our engrained racism. He does not allow us time to ponder on his truths, he intends, I believe, to create a story where we will want, even desire a second and third reading. This will be for those men who believe themselves white, and who have the courage to read it, an epiphany. Can they embrace these truths? And who of us has the strength to embrace the truth in book and use those truths to make a difference.

Brilliant, Necessary, Required and at the same time bewildering. That we have to caution, teach and live life tethered to a prayer that our mainly young men and boys are able to simply make it home

safely, is sobering. To live in this condition daily is heart wrenching, but also necessary in our Black American reality. To date I've bought numerous copies and gave them as gifts to all the young men and fathers in my barbershop.

I was impressed with "the Struggle" Coates tells us in crisp detail and beautiful language, how he managed to pull himself together and get on the right track. Of course, he would not have been able to make such accomplishments had it not been for his grappling with and finally accepting the ideologies given to him by his father. His earlier life was essentially leading him on a path that would have landed him in jail rather than Howard University, where the family members traditionally attended. He is a man of strong convictions and thrives on the knowledge and experiences he gets from what he refers to as Mecca, that being his worldly associations.

This is one of the best memoirs I've ever read (on par with or maybe even better than Obama's). If you know Ta-nehisi Coates's other writings, including "The Case for Reparations", you'll understand the larger space into which this fits. The point is the Conscience and the Knowledge that we are intimately interconnected both with our past and with the people around us. We can't escape the past, but just maybe we can bridge the gap between the past and the people in the present who matter most to us. Your life is defined not by what happens to you but by how you react to it. This book makes sure you never forget that.

The author Coates presents a 'no-holds barred' account of his youth in the inner city and his interactions with his multiple family members as well as his peers. This is a book for all to read especially those young kids who seem to be the outcast among your peers. See how the author scraped through on sheer will to survive all that was thrown at him at home and in the streets. Excellent reading!!

I read this seeking a different point of view. I found it on the recommended list and it intrigued me. At first the language and descriptions threw me, (his experience is in an era younger than mine, but a similar neighborhood to the one in which I grew up) but I decided to let his language tell the story, embracing it, instead of fighting it. I found the descriptions poetic and truthful. I have to admit, I loved it and am reading another book of his.

Unlike any contemporary memoir I have read. Few memoirs are so elegantly written. Few memoirs

really get into the gritty muck of American race and the inconvenient truths about racism in America and how it is lived by people of color. The writer is a clear-eyed observer to what goes on around him and renders events in a powerful narrative. It is masterful storytelling and a courageous tale of struggle, though it is not all beautiful. Still, it is necessary.

As its title presents, this book truly does portray the beautiful struggle of Coates' life. He eloquently and gently presents his story in a way that allows the reader to connect with him, and even more so, think of their own family's beauty. This book is absolutely worth the read.

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