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Lorna Muller

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Mémoire

Présenté pour l'obtention du Grade de

MASTER

« **Métiers de l'Enseignement, de l'Education et de la Formation** »

Mention 2nd degré, Anglais

Exploring *The Hate U Give* and its environment.

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Université de Franche-Comté – 2022/2023

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Table des matières

Introduction.....	4
I. Context of the book	5
1. The Black Lives Matter Movement.....	5
2. Young Adult Literature	8
3. What inspired Angie Thomas to write <i>The Hate U Give</i>	14
3.1. A Young Adult book	15
3.2. Her young life	17
3.3. Racism and the Black Lives Matter Movement	21
3.4. Tupac.....	23
II. Analyzing <i>The Hate U Give</i> , Angie Thomas, 2017.....	25
1. A banned book	25
2. How to analyze.....	26
3. Extract number 1	28
4. Extract number 2.....	31
5. Extract number 3.....	33
6. Extract number 4.....	34
7. Extract number 5.....	36
III. Book reviews.....	39
1. What is a review? What is its purpose?.....	39
2. Where to find a book review?	41
3. Statistics about <i>The Hate U Give</i> on Goodreads	45
4. Comparing reviews on <i>The Hate U Give</i>	46
Conclusion.....	55
Partie Didactique.....	58
I. Présentation générale de la séquence	58
1. Intégration de l'œuvre <i>The Hate U Give</i> dans la séquence	58
2. Tâche finale.....	60
3. Objectifs	60
II. Déroulé de la séquence	61
1. Etape 1.....	61
2. Etape 2.....	62
3. Etape 3.....	63
4. Etape 4.....	64
5. Etape 5.....	65
6. Etape 6.....	66
Bibliographie.....	67

Introduction

A novel can have a real impact on its reader. This emotional impact can be from the story itself, the meaning of a theme to the reader, the identification with a character or even the main theme being important in our society. And this is what happened when I read Angie Thomas's novel *The Hate U Give*. In her novel, we follow Starr, an African American teenager who witnessed the murder from a police officer of her best friend Khalil, him also being African American. Then happens grief, denial, but also her desire to obtain justice for her friend. Along with Starr, we follow her through different stages of her life, when, for example, she understands that racism can come from her own friend. This young adult novel was made to raise awareness about racism and police brutality that African American are facing in the United States.

This book really echoes a lot the reality African American's lived reality. Indeed, many face racial abuse every day and frequently find themselves under pressure from police brutality. After a huge number of African American murders committed by police officer, a movement started, now called the Black Lives Matter Movement. The idea behind it is to make people realize that African American are killed, sometimes for no reason, and that police brutality must end. Numerous demonstrations have taken place in the United States, the most famous one being when Georges Floyd was killed by a police officer. These murders were, in part, what inspired Angie Thomas for her novel.

Thomas's novel, published in 2017, had a huge impact on people's lives. Indeed, it was on the *New York Times* Bestseller list for more than 249 weeks and was then adapted in a movie for the cinema in 2018.¹ This success was followed by a wave of reviews about her

¹ HarperCollins Children's Books, 'ANGIE THOMAS, #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE HATE U GIVE, MAKES HER MIDDLE GRADE DEBUT WITH THE FIRST IN A CONTEMPORARY FANTASY TRILOGY', August 30, 2022, accessed 20 April 2023,

novel on the internet. In fact, some specialized platforms such as Goodreads have been a place where people shared their opinion about the novel. These opinions were made because readers had read the book and analyze its content, which is important to understand the real meaning of it. These elements make us wonder what journey *The Hate U Give* has gone through. To answer this question, it is important first to understand the context of the book, including the Black Lives Matter movement, Thomas's inspirations but also the fact that it is a Young Adult book. Then, some excerpts from the novel will be analyzed, to better comprehend her intentions towards readers. Finally, the impact the novel made on social media through reviews will be discussed in order to end our journey on the "after" the book.

I. Context of the book

1. The Black Lives Matter Movement

It all started in 2013 when an online movement emerged with the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter on social media. Three women were behind this: Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi. They created this movement after the killing of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black teenager, by George Zimmerman, a police officer in Sanford, Florida, in February 2012. The killing itself was not the trigger. Actually, it was the fact that George Zimmerman had been acquitted of all charges against him because, according to him, he had shot the young boy in self-defense because he had been assaulted. Alicia Garza wrote a post on Facebook in response to the jury's decision "Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter."² She used the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. Thanks to the hashtag on social media, the

<https://www.prnewswire.com/newsreleases/angie-thomas-1-new-york-times-bestselling-author-of-the-hate-u-give-makes-her-middle-grade-debut-with-the-first-in-a-contemporary-fantasy-trilogy-301614780.html>.

² Alem Tedeneke, "The Black Lives Matter Movement Explained," World Economic Forum, (August 11, 2016), accessed January 6, 2023, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/08/black-lives-matter-movement-explained/>.

killing became a national event, and a lot of demonstrations took place demanding a retrial. In April 2012, Zimmerman was finally arrested and charged with a second-degree murder against the teenager. As we know, each state in the United States has its own laws, and at his trial, Zimmerman claimed self-defense and used the “stand your ground” law, famous in Florida. This Florida law is based on a principle called the “castle doctrine” which stands “that individuals have the right to use reasonable force, including deadly force, to protect themselves against an intruder in their home.”³ In 2005, Florida put the “stand your ground” law in place which implies that “a person who is not engaged in an unlawful activity and who is attacked in any other place where he or she has a right to be has no duty to retreat and has the right to stand his or her ground and meet force with force, including deadly force, if he or she reasonably believes it is necessary to do so to prevent death or great bodily harm to himself or herself or another or to prevent the commission of a forcible felony.”⁴ That is why, in July 2013, Zimmerman was acquitted, a second time, for the murder of Trayvon Martin. This decision led to another wave of demonstrations across the country.

In 2014, another killing took the Black Lives Matter Movement onto the national stage, that of Eric Garner and Michael Brown, two unarmed black men who were both killed by a police officer. The first one happened in Staten Island, New York, where Eric Garner was held to the ground and prevented from breathing. The murder of Michael Brown occurred in Ferguson, Missouri, where he was shot by a white police officer. Like Zimmerman, neither police officers was charged with these murders, leading the Black Lives Matter movement to become an even bigger movement all around the world, calling for justice for these Black men killed by police officers. This movement became the symbol of protests against police brutality and racism.

³ “Self Defense and ‘Stand Your Ground’ - National Conference of State”, accessed January 6, 2023, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/self-defense-and-stand-your-ground.aspx>.

⁴ “Self Defense and ‘Stand Your Ground’ - National Conference of State”

Yet another tragic event happened in May 2020. Derek Chauvin, a police officer from Minneapolis, held his knee on George Floyd's neck, who was on the floor. George Floyd was an unarmed Black American who died at the hands of a police officer. What is more, Derek Chauvin knew he was harming George Floyd because he kept repeating "I can't breathe," and there is a video to prove it. This video went viral all around the world igniting demonstrations in a number of cities across the globe. Thanks to these demonstrations, it was the first time that the police officer was pronounced guilty of murder, in 2021.

As Ed Benzel says: "Why do we need to verbalize the fact that Black Lives Matter?"⁵ It should be obvious that "Black Lives Matter," at the same level that White lives matter and everyone's lives matter. But the movement created in 2013 knew from the beginning that racism against the black community was present in the United States and that they had to fight for their rights much more than white people have to. As Alicia Garza wrote on a post on social media "Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise," "It is an affirmation of Black folks' contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression."⁶

It is in that context of racism and police brutality that Angie Thomas decided to write her book, based on true events that happened before and continue to happen after the publication of her book. She decided to depict the reality of young black people in the United States, a reality she also experienced first hand herself.

⁵ Ed Benzel, "Black Lives Matter", *World Neurosurgery* 145 (January 2021): xviii.

⁶ Wesley Lowery "Black Lives Matter: Birth of a Movement", *The Guardian* (January 17, 2017), accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/17/black-lives-matter-birth-of-a-movement>.

2. Young Adult Literature

Literature can be subdivided into a number of categories, each one characterized by its own specificities. What defines Young Adult Literature?

Young Adult Literature is a genre of literature, which as its name suggests, is for young adults. But how can we define what a young adult is? Is it simply a question of their age? Do people not included in that age bracket also read Young Adult Literature? And if so, why?

The term first emerged in the late 1960s and referred to realistic fiction set in the real world and which addressed problems and issues of interest to people from 12 to 18 years old.

According to Tom and Nathan Lévêque

Teen literature is most often defined by its age range which, from researcher to researcher, from bookseller to librarian, is never the same. 12-17 years old? 13-16 years old? 14-20 years old? In recent years, and since the appearance of the Young Adult segment in bookstores, this definition has been widely tested: what to do with these adult readers?⁷

It is true that it is difficult for us to define who a young adult is, and when this period ends. But, another distinction is difficult to make: where is the limit between children's literature and young adult literature? Some time ago, there was no clear distinction between children's and young adult fiction. Indeed, literature was categorized as "adult" or "children's" which placed the literature intended for teenagers in the category of children's books. Later on, it was recognized that there was a problem in naming every non-adult book a "children's book" and so they decided to categorize them into different parts: juvenile, middle grade, adolescent, young adult, but most of these terms are synonymous which only complicated their

⁷ Tom Lévêque et al., « En Quête D'un Grand Peut-Être, Guide De Littérature », (Grand Peut-être, February 21, 2022), accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.leslibraires.fr/livre/17519013-en-quete-d-un-grand-peut-etre-guide-de-littera--tom-leveque-nathan-leveque-grand-peut-etre>.

« On définit le plus souvent la littérature ado par sa tranche d'âge qui, de chercheur en chercheuse, de libraire en bibliothécaire, n'est jamais la même. 12-17 ans ? 13-16 ans ? 14-20 ans ? Ces dernières années, et depuis l'apparition du segment Young Adult dans les librairies, cette définition a été largement éprouvée : que faire de ces adultes qui en lisent? »

categorization. We can conclude that defining Young Adult Literature by age bracket is clearly not the solution.

The idea now is to have an idea of what a young adult is. Chris Crowe considers “a ‘young adult’ to be a person old enough to be in junior high or high school, usually grades seven through twelve.”⁸ In its definition, he does not give an age bracket, but simply an idea of what he thinks a young adult is. According to Adrienne Boutang, another important point related to that is the fact that

Authors interested in childhood culture (often synonymous with youth culture in academic works) in literature or audiovisual media tend to erase the category of adolescence in its singularity, to make it a sub-category of childhood.⁹

This means that, authors of children’s books see teenagers as children, which means that they are not a “category” per se, but rather a part of something bigger. But we clearly know that a child of 5 years old does not have the same emotions and background as a teenager of 16 years old. So, it is very difficult to put the young adult category inside the children’s literature category, knowing that there is a huge age gap between both.

If we cannot put into age bracket the target audience of Young Adult Literature, what means can we use to target Young Adults as we have defined them?

Tom and Nathan Lévêque decided to follow the lead of some scholars of Young Adult Literature by using the term “intensity” to define this genre: “this approach to the limits of teen

⁸ “Young Adult Literature: What Is Young Adult Literature?” *The English Journal*, Volume 88, No. 1, September 1998, accessed January 6, 2022

⁹ Adrienne Boutang, « L’adolescence est-elle soluble dans l’enfance ? Définitions et délimitations du public en littérature et culture de la jeunesse », (*Transatlantica* August 01, 2020), accessed April 29, 2021, <http://journals.openedition.org/transatlantica/14527>

« on constate que les auteurs qui s’intéressent à la culture de l’enfance (souvent synonyme de la culture jeunesse dans les ouvrages académiques) dans la littérature ou les médias audiovisuels ont tendance à gommer la catégorie de l’adolescence dans sa singularité, pour en faire une sous-catégorie de l’enfance »

literature will seek its essence in that of adolescence: isn't it the age of great firsts (but also of the last) and of emotions pushed to their limits?"¹⁰

As they explain, rather than qualifying Young Adult Literature by age bracket, it is more relevant to qualify it with its meaning. Indeed, in Young Adult Literature books, the protagonist is around the age of the target audience, 16 or 17 years old. In doing so, the author wants the reader to identify with the character. It means that it is a way for teenagers in development to learn new things on subjects they may or may not be familiar with. Another interesting point in Young Adult Literature is that stories are written about subjects that interest teenagers and subjects and that can help them grow into adults: "It is therefore for the most part meaningful to people who are going through times when psychologically and in their experiences, there are major changes and novelties."¹¹

As Tom and Nathan Lévêque wrote, Young Adult Literature is a means for young adults to discover life and to learn ways to face their lives. Indeed, teenage is a time when all our perspectives change, when people discover their personality and their self-identity, including their sexual identity. Sexuality is a recurrent theme in Young Adult Literature because it is important for teenagers to be able to identify their sexual selves and know that they are not alone in the discovery of their body. "Often described as 'developmental', these needs recognize that young adults are beings in evolution, in search of self and identity; beings who are constantly growing and changing, morphing from the condition of childhood to that of adulthood,"¹² as Michael Cart puts it. Another important point about Young Adult Literature is

¹⁰ Tom Lévêque et al.

« cette approche des limites de la littérature ado va chercher son essence dans celle de l'adolescence : n'est-ce pas l'âge des grandes premières fois (mais aussi des dernières) et des émotions poussées à leur paroxysme? »

¹¹ Tom Lévêque et al.,

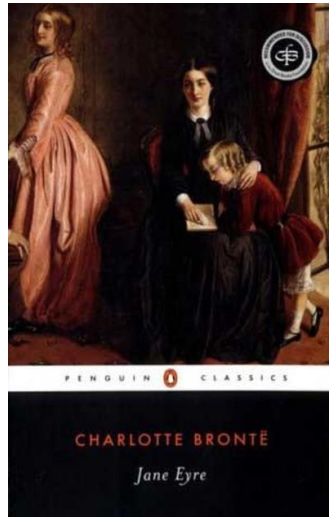
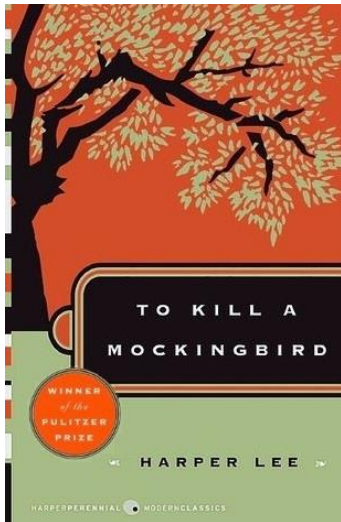
« Elle est donc dans sa grande majorité empreinte de sens pour des gens qui traversent des époques où psychologiquement et dans leurs expériences, il y a des changements et des nouveautés majeures »

¹² "The Value of Young Adult Literature", Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), November 15, 2011, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines/whitepapers/yalit>.

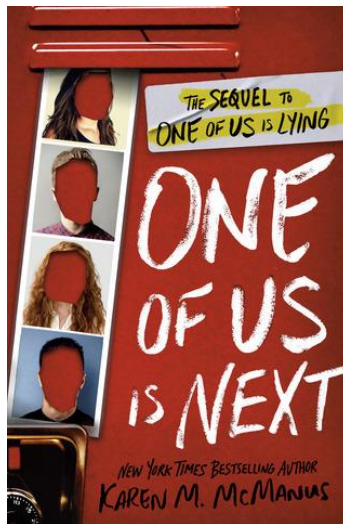
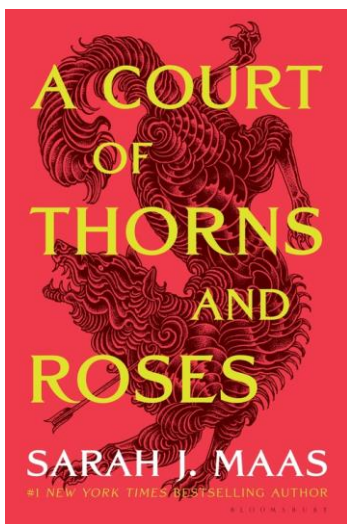
that it conveys empathy and understanding: even if the subject of the book is very dark and touchy, the author always brings empathy in his story to allow the reader to grow up as an adult with empathy for others. But, even if there is empathy in books, it does not mean that it is not the truth. Indeed, one of the most important characteristics of the Young Adult Literature is that the author always tells the truth, not matter how hard it may be. This truth tells the reader that life can be complicated when you become an adult, but you have to be civilized, not matter how hard life can hurt you.¹³

Young Adult Literature is a means to help teenagers discover life and to educate them in so many areas. However, most people do not consider Young Adult Literature as “real” literature, partly because these books are not classics and also, because a lot of them are perceived to be badly written. It is true that many books that fall in the Young Adult Literature category could be described as “bad” but it is also the case in children’s books or even in books for adults. Moreover, many books are literally “judged by their cover”, and because Young Adult book covers are not as sober as those of adult books, adults can think that they are not for them. Take the book covers of literary classics, such as *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë or *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Even if today publishing houses make new book covers to appeal to new potential customers, they always stay fairly understated and conventional.

¹³ “The Value of Young Adult Literature”



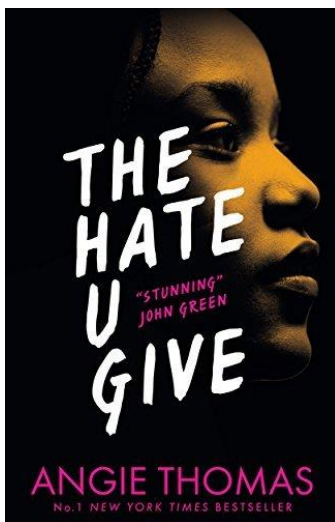
In contrast, Young Adult book covers are always visually appealing and full of colors and drawings. For example, *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Maas and *One of Us is Next* by Karen M. McManus. Both book covers contain red, a strong, bright color and have their titles written in big letters. They also contain a lot of other eye-catching information



However, a lot of adults read Young Adult Literature books because they can relive the experiences they had when they were younger and remember the good times they had “It is therefore also much read by adults because at any age readers will recognize themselves in

those moments of intensity so passionate specific to adolescence that they do not find in 'old age' literature".¹⁴

Take the example of *The Hate U Give*'s cover. Even though it seems simple and dark, it reveals a strong message. Indeed, the contrast between the dark background and the white of the title emphasizes the duality this novel is dealing with. Also, these two colors perfectly represent the characters in the novel, fighting each other. It is not as appealing as a young adult book can be with a lot of colors and stylism, but it conveys a simple message that young adults and adults can understand and be attracted to.



One last point important about young adult literature is that it contains every other style of literature. In fact, young adult literature is the one that targets teenagers and young adults, but it is not strictly speaking a genre in itself. In young adult literature, people can satisfy their desire for fantasy, romance, historical or science fiction. However, one genre that is really popular with and important for the growth of every teenager is coming-of-age literature. In coming-of-age novels, readers follow the protagonist's growth from childhood to adulthood.

¹⁴ Tom L v que et al

« Elle est donc aussi ‘beaucoup lue par les adultes parce qu’  tout  ge les lecteurs et lectrices vont se reconnaître dans ces moments d’intensit  si passionn s propres   l’adolescence qu’ils et elles ne trouvent pas en litt rature ‘vieillesse’ »

“Coming-of-age stories tend to emphasize dialogue or internal monologue over action and are often set in the past or have adults looking back into the past.”¹⁵ In coming-of-age novels, the reader follows a teenager facing a lot of questions about becoming an adult and all the problems that go with it “Novels of this genre characteristically dramatise the vicissitudes of growing up and the trials and tribulations of young adulthood, often presented through depictions of immediate family relationships and other social structures.”¹⁶ When adults are looking back into the past, it lets them have a more mature point of view on events and situations. It can be a way to help a teenager to grow in their way of thinking and to better understand some situations they have been thrown into.

As argued above, Young Adult Literature is difficult to define because no one agrees on its precise definition. Indeed, it is challenging to define what a young adult is but we can try to identify what characterizes the literature written for them.

3. What inspired Angie Thomas to write *The Hate U Give*

The Hate U Give, written by Angie Thomas and published in 2017 is a book about police brutality against black people and how a young woman called Starr deals with the horror of seeing her best friend being murdered in front of her by a police officer. This book and its theme do not come from nowhere. Indeed, in 2017, the movement Black Lives Matter had already been in action for 4 years, and it may have inspired the author. However, one question remains: why did Angie Thomas choose to write a Young Adult book and not an adult book, considering its potentially controversial theme?

¹⁵“Coming of Age Books”, Goodreads, accessed January 6, 2023, <https://www.goodreads.com/genres/coming-of-age>.

¹⁶ Kenneth Millard, “Coming of Age in Contemporary American Fiction” (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), accessed April 13, 2023, <https://academic.oup.com/edinburgh-scholarship-online/book/20610>.

3.1. A Young Adult book

In relation to what was said above about Young Adult Literature, we can wonder why Angie Thomas decided to write a book for teenagers to talk about police brutality and racism. First, as I said previously, in Young Adult Literature books, authors want to deal with subjects relevant to the target audience. Indeed, racism and police brutality in the United States touches teenagers as well as adults. Racism towards African Americans in the United States does not only affect the adult population.

However, as she has explained in interviews, Angie Thomas hesitated to write a book for young adults, and especially for African American teenagers because, according to her, “The word was books about black kids or with black people on the cover didn’t sell. That black kids don’t read. But my book is showing that if we give them books they see themselves in, they will.”¹⁷ What she explains is that for black teenagers to read, the protagonist has to face the same reality as they do, in other words racism and police brutality. At first, Angie Thomas was afraid that this touchy subject was an inappropriate subject for a Young Adult book. However, Brooks Sherman, who is now Angie Thomas’s agent, convinced her otherwise, telling her that “no subject was inappropriate for a YA novel.”¹⁸

Angie Thomas has also been asked about writing for young adults because a lot of people are curious to find out why she decided to write from the perspective of a young 16-year-old girl. Her answer was clear: first it was because a lot of black people killed by police officers were young. Her young black neighbors were affected by this reality, knowing that it could have been them who were shot: “when young people see that, they’re affected by it. I

¹⁷ “Spring 2017 Flying Starts: Angie Thomas”, PublishersWeekly, June 30, 2017, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-authors/article/74162-spring-2017-flying-starts-angie-thomas.html>.

¹⁸ “Spring 2017 Flying Starts: Angie Thomas”

know young boys in my neighborhood who said that they could have been Trayvon.”¹⁹ She adds that, as I explained previously, young adult literature is not read only by teenagers, but also by adults. So, writing a young adult book is a means to reach teenagers but also adults, particularly white adults, to make them aware of how young black people may feel about police brutality and racism: “I also knew that YA fiction goes beyond young adults.”²⁰

By writing a book for young adults about racism and police brutality, Angie Thomas wanted to let them know that they are not alone in their fight but also that she knows what they endure because she was once a young black girl herself. Also, she wanted to write for white adults so that they might be able to better understand what black people constantly face in the United States regarding police brutality from a young age.

It was on the strength of all this that Kerri Smith, chair of the Young Adult Reading Program in the South Dakota State Library, decided, together with her group to include, the book on the list of Teen Choice Book Award candidates in 2018. She also explains that “most young adult books focus on white characters.”²¹ It is true that, most of the time, the protagonists in young adult books are white teenagers living in a city or rich neighborhood. However here, Starr, a young black teenager, lives in a poor neighborhood where violence and drug dealers are present. The question of the representation of minorities in Young adult books can be raised because it is important to represent everyone in books, especially books that target young adult people trying to grow into responsible and accepting adults. As Zeniya Cooley explains in her essay, in “rom books like *The Hate U Give*, I learned about the importance of representation in young adult literature. I learned about the beauty that occurs when kids of color and their

¹⁹ Dayna Evans, “This Author Wrote a Best-Selling Novel Inspired by Black Lives Matter”, *The Cut*, March 20, 2017, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.thecut.com/2017/03/angie-thomas-the-hate-u-give-interview-ya-novel.html>.

²⁰ Dayna Evans

²¹ “The Hate u Give’ Breaks Stereotypes, Encourages Conversations”, SDPB (October 5, 2018), accessed January 6, 2022, <https://listen.sdpb.org/education/2018-10-05/the-hate-u-give-breaks-stereotypes-encourages-conversations>.

experiences are rendered into rainbows.”²² This feeling of being understood and simply represented in a book can enlighten someone’s life, especially a teenagers’ life. Today, a lot of young adult books have a white boy or girl protagonist, but there are some notable exceptions. For example, the novel *The Gilded Ones* by Namina Forna, which depicts the story of a 16-year-old black girl. Another interesting book is *A Song Below Water* written by Bethany C. Morrow, which tells the story of Black sirens fighting today’s racism and sexism.

Angie Thomas wrote a book targeting young adults because it was important to represent black teenagers in a story with which they can identify, even if the topic is difficult to handle. Her life and what she had been through as a teenager inspired her to write her now-famous novel-

3.2.Her young life

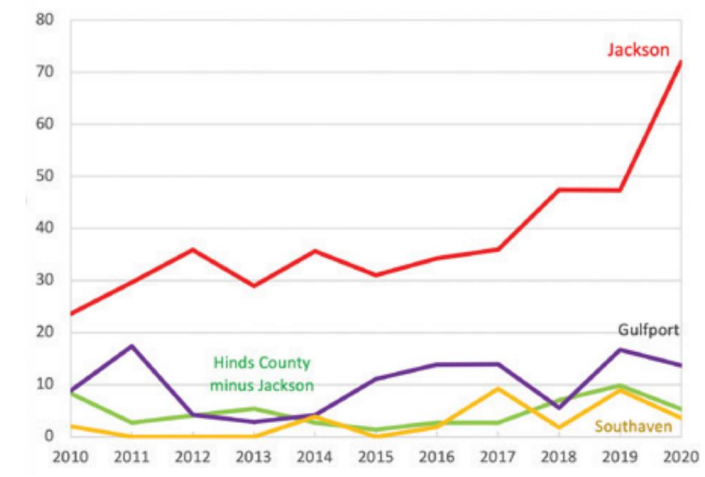
Angie Thomas was born in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1988. The city of Jackson has a rich history of black activism. For instance it is well known as an important city in the development of civil rights in the United-States. In March 1961, students from Jackson planned a sit-in at the whites-only Jackson Public Library. These students were then arrested, and people gathered outside the courthouse to denounce their arrestment. This event represents “the change tide in Mississippi” according to some. Following that day, a lot of other sit-ins were organized in Jackson, to denounce segregation.²³ As long as she can remember, Thomas has witnessed gun violence in her neighborhood. When the book was released in 2017, she was still living in Mississippi where she had been raised. She explained that being a Black woman in Mississippi

²² Zeniya Cooley et al., “Essay: What Black Representation in YA Literature Meant to Me”, The GW Hatchet, August 30, 2021, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.gwhatchet.com/2021/08/30/essay-what-black-representation-in-young-adult-literature-meant-to-me/>.

²³ Carter Dalton Lyon, “Jackson Civil Rights Movement”, Mississippi Encyclopedia, June 12, 2018, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/jackson-civil-rights-movement/>.

is a struggle because it is a Southern State and the history of slavery in the South is still very present today. She says that “As much as I love Mississippi, I don’t feel like it loves me back as a black woman.”²⁴ It is true that being a black woman in a state where racism is still a major problem is not reassuring and not welcoming. Moreover, she was raised in a poor neighborhood where violence was omnipresent. As a young black girl living there, it is difficult to feel safe every time and it is obvious that danger is on the mind of everyone in these neighborhoods. It is true that Jackson is known to be a violent city, and some statistics proves it. For example, from 2010 to 2020, the homicide crime rate tripled in Jackson, going from around 20 homicides per 100,000 people to around 70 homicides per 100,000 “The homicide rate in Jackson is the highest in the state by far – almost 5x higher than Gulfport and over 18 x higher than Southaven – and one of the highest in the nation.”²⁵

Figure 6: Local Homicide Rate per 100,000 population



This tendency to be a violent city is continuing today. Indeed, “Jackson ended 2022 with 133 homicides, a 13 percent drop from the year before, when 153 people lost their lives to

²⁴ Dayna Evans,-

²⁵ “EMS Crime Report”, Empower Mississippi, accessed April 13, 2023, <https://empowerms.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/22-904-EMS-Crime-Report-FINAL-1.pdf>

violence.”²⁶ This violence places Jackson on top of the most violent cities in the United States. A report made with the latest data has classified cities of more than 130,000 inhabitants from the one with the most homicides to the last one. And Jackson appears to be number one.²⁷

Ranking	City	Homicides for Year	Rate Per Capita
1	Jackson	133	88.8
2	New Orleans	280	74.3
3	Birmingham	144	72.9
4	St. Louis	200	68.2
5	Baltimore	334	57.9
6	Baton Rouge	115	51.8
7	Detroit	307	48.5
8	Cleveland, OH	171	46.5
9	Memphis	289 (as of 12/22/22)	46
10	Milwaukee	214	37.59

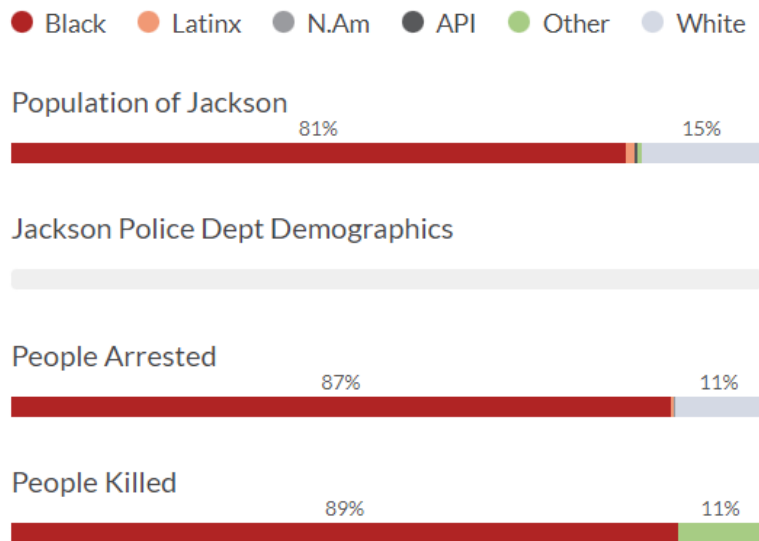
However, violence can also be perpetrated by police officers, as Thomas’ novel explores. According to the Jackson Police Department, from 2013 to 2021, 9 killings were carried out by the police, which represents 1 in every 10,000 arrests. Added to this there are some statistics about police violence and race. It is known that Jackson’s inhabitants are mostly black people, as they represent 81% of the population, whereas white people represent 15%. But when looking at the statistics about people arrested and people killed by police officers, we understand that black people are the ones targeted. Indeed, they represent 87% of the people arrested, compared to the 11% who are white people. Concerning the number of people killed, black people represent 89%, whereas the 11% left are not white people, but from other ethnicities.²⁸

²⁶ C. J. LeMaster, “Analysis: For Second Straight Year, Jackson’s Homicide Rate Ranks Highest in U.S. among Major Cities”, 7 January 2023, accessed April 13, 2023, <https://www.wlbt.com/2023/01/07/analysis-second-straight-year-jacksons-homicide-rate-ranks-highest-us-among-major-cities/>.

²⁷ C. J. LeMaster,

²⁸ CampaignZero, “Police Scorecard: Jackson, MS”, Police Scorecard: Jackson, MS, accessed 17 April 2023, <https://policescorecard.org>.

POLICE VIOLENCE BY RACE



Source: Uniform Crime Report, Mapping Police Violence, LEMAS

These statistics about violence in Jackson, Mississippi, where Angie Thomas grew up, clearly confirms the reasons why she did not feel safe growing up there.

In an interview, she explains that, as a young girl, she felt confined, as if she had been put into a box because of her skin color “I remember, as a teenager, feeling like I was trapped a lot.”²⁹

During her teenage years, Angie Thomas attended colleges principally frequented by white students. During the time she was in college, Oscar Grant, a young unarmed black man was killed in Oakland, California. His death became a national topic in the news and in her college. But what she heard from her peers in class was not what she heard at home. Indeed, in college, most people said that the young man might have deserved it, because he had a police record. She also heard that it was his fault, “he was in the wrong.”³⁰ At home, on the other hand,

²⁹ “The Hate U Give’ Author Angie Thomas on Ya Fiction, Being Black in America and More”, WBUR, February 28, 2018, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.wbur.org/hereandnow/2018/02/26/the-hate-u-give-angie-thomas>.

³⁰ “The Hate U Give’ Explores Racism and Police Violence”, NPR, February 26, 2017, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2017/02/26/517305270/the-hate-u-give-explores-racism-and-police-violence>.

as Oscar was a young black man, he was one of them, he did not deserve to die “But at home, he was one of our own.”³¹ When a young black girl hears that a young black man may deserve to die because he has a record, finding true friends can be difficult.

In one interview, Angie Thomas talks about friendship. Indeed, when she was young, she and her family experienced something terrible. Her mother lost her job, so they were in an awful situation. But, because Thomas was afraid of her friends’ reactions, she did not tell them about it. She was afraid that they would feel pity for her, because she was this poor girl from a poor neighborhood. The term of “friendship” is very important for her because, as she explains, if you cannot tell everything to your friend—even the most terrible situation you are in—because you are afraid of their reaction, maybe they are not really your friend after all: “And I think young people have to get to the point where you realize, if there's a friend in your life and you have to question whether you can trust them with the hardest things a part of you, maybe that's not your friend.”³²

3.3.Racism and the Black Lives Matter Movement

As a black woman living in the United States, racism and police brutality are two concepts that are very familiar to Angie Thomas. As explained above, she was in college when Oscar Grant, a young black man, was killed. This experience would have had a particular resonance for the novelist because they were both from the same community. That is why she wanted to write about something African-Americans are confronted with: the constant hate against them by practically everyone else, and the abuse of many police officers. Reading the novel, many white people might think that she had anti-police bias, but she only wanted to talk

³¹ “The Hate U Give’ Explores Racism and Police Violence”

³² “The Hate U Give’ Author Angie Thomas on Ya Fiction, Being Black in America and More”

about what is really happening in the United States against black people, which is police brutality, as she explained “I specifically did not want to write an anti-cop book. I wanted to write an anti-police brutality book. A book to help people understand my world.”³³. Plus, Starr’s Uncle is a black police officer, a fact that emphasizes her idea of writing an anti-police brutality book and not an anti-cop book.

The concept of Black Lives Matter means different things to different people. Indeed, not everyone has the same idea of what this movement is about. While some may think that it is to promote black people’s liberty, equality and rights, others are convinced that the movement wants black people to dominate white people “The subject is touchy, I know. If you say ‘black lives matter’ to 30 different people, you’re going to get 30 different reactions.”³⁴ In fact, this movement was only created to call for justice for black people who were killed by white police officers without any reason. Angie Thomas wanted to discuss the movement in her book without clearly mentioning it at the beginning, even if Black Lives was a chief inspiration for the novel. However at the end of the book, she mentions names of black people who died because of police officers’ abuse of power.

The killing of Oscar Grant led Angie Thomas to write a short story which went on to become *The Hate U Give*. Because she was in a mostly white college at the time she heard some terrible things about his killing “He was a ‘Mexi-con.’ Why are people so upset? He should have just done what they say.”³⁵ She was very upset about these comments because nobody should have to hear this about someone else, especially when this person died for nothing. As she explained: “I was angry. I was frustrated. I was hurt. So it was actually the frustration and anger and the pain that led me to write the short story that later became *The Hate U Give*.”³⁶ It

³³ “Spring 2017 Flying Starts: Angie Thomas”

³⁴ “Spring 2017 Flying Starts: Angie Thomas”

³⁵ “The Hate U Give’ Author Angie Thomas on Ya Fiction, Being Black in America and More”

³⁶ “The Hate U Give’ Author Angie Thomas on Ya Fiction, Being Black in America and More”

is true that he was an ex-con but, as people in her neighborhood said, he had changed and was in a good place in his life “Oscar was an ex-con, but he was turning his life around.”³⁷ Hearing these two different interpretations, Angie Thomas decided it was time for her to write what she felt was the truth, what black people feel when they hear that a young black man has been killed by a white police officer without good reason.

Racism and the Black Lives Matter Movement are two important points in Angie Thomas’ life, which she decided to explore in her novel because she felt it was important to talk about what is happening to black people in her country.

3.4.Tupac

Tupac Amaru Shakur was an American rapper who was shot in 1996. Thanks to his songs, he became one of the most respected and famous rappers in the world. Indeed, his album *All Eyez On Me* conveys his activism. Since his young age, her mother, Afeni Shakur, instilled activism in him because she was a member of the Black Panthers movement. In 2017, Tupac became the first solo rapper to have a star to his name in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

When she was a teenager, Angie Thomas performed hip-hop music. She was inspired by many artists but mostly Tupac. His famous quote “THUG LIFE” even inspired her for the title of her book. But, as she explained in an interview, she was searching for a title, and she came across a YouTube video where Tupac explained the meaning of THUG LIFE. His explanations gave instantly the idea to Angie Thomas to entitle her book *The Hate U Give*. “When we were trying to figure out a title for the book, I came across a YouTube clip of him

³⁷ “The Hate U Give’ Author Angie Thomas on Ya Fiction, Being Black in America and More”

discussing THUG LIFE. [...] When I when I saw him explain what it means, it hit me that that's not just in my book, but that's what we see in society."³⁸

But what does THUG LIFE mean? According to Tupac, the full terms are: The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everybody. In other words, "what society feeds into youth has a way of coming back and affecting us all."³⁹

In what ways did Tupac inspire Angie Thomas in *The Hate U Give*? First of all, she loves listening to his album and she wanted to make the reader feel what she feels when she listens to him. She wanted us to feel different emotions from one page to another.

Then there is his tattoo. Indeed, the expression THUG LIFE was tattooed on his stomach. She felt that what he wanted to pass down is what she wrote in her book. She realized that black stories mattered, and she wanted to pay tribute to every black person who had died because of injustice. The form of activism is visible in the book through the riots but also the anger of Starr when she discovers that the police officer was not charged for the murder of her best friend Khalil.

We can also find aspects of Tupac in her characters. For example, Big Mav, Starr's father. His physical description recalls that of Tupac. In Starr, it is her name. Indeed, Tupac never had the chance to have a child, but he said that if he had a daughter, he would name her Starr. According to Angie Thomas, Starr and Tupac are both "community-orientated,"⁴⁰ which means that they would do everything for their community, for people like them. Moreover, on the book

³⁸ "Here's How Tupac and Thug Life Inspired the Hate U Give", Epic Reads, February 17, 2022, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.epicreads.com/blog/tupac-thug-life-hate-u-give/>.

³⁹ "The Hate U Give' Explores Racism and Police Violence"

⁴⁰ "Angie Thomas, Author of the Hate U Give: 'Books Play a Huge Part in Resistance'", The Guardian, January 27, 2019, accessed January 6, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jan/27/angie-thomas-the-hate-u-give-interview-famous-fans-readers>.

cover, the young adult who represents Starr is wearing a bandana, which was Tupac's favorite accessory. It is a way to pay tribute to him, for having inspired her.

For Angie Thomas, Tupac was a real inspiration to write her book. Several references to him are made in the book to pay tribute to this great man who fought for black community.

II. Analyzing *The Hate U Give*, Angie Thomas, 2017.

1. A banned book

In the United States, some books are banned for children, which means that they are not available in libraries. And this phenomenon happened to *The Hate U Give* but also to nearly 1,600 novels in 2022⁴¹. Indeed, the book was banned for a long time but the main reason for banning it is because of swear words. The "F-word" appears 89 times, according to Thomas. But she believes that it is not the real reason why it was banned. As she explains, she believes that it was banned because it tackles racism and police brutality towards black people.

"But last year alone, over 800 people lost their lives at the hands of police brutality. That number is far scarier. So when you're telling me it's the language, no, that's not what it is. You don't want to talk about the topic."⁴²

Some data given by PEN America reveals that 40% of banned books have Black, indigenous and people of color characters. Considering that almost every character in *The Hate U Give* is Black, it makes sense that it was banned. Also, 21% of banned books deals with racism, which is the main theme of Thomas' novel.⁴³

⁴¹ Gretchen Sterba, "The Real Reason The Hate U Give Became A Banned Book", The List, November 27, 2022, accessed April 18, 2023, <https://www.thelist.com/1117204/the-real-reason-the-hate-u-give-became-a-banned-book/>.

⁴² "The Real Reason The Hate U Give Became A Banned Book"

⁴³ "The Real Reason The Hate U Give Became A Banned Book"

Even if *The Hate U Give* was a banned book, it is a very popular book around the world. Analyzing it and its main themes will help us understand why some States decided to ban it.

2. How to analyze

By definition a literary text can be interpreted in many ways. Each person analyzing a text will have a different perception of it, not least because of our different experiences with reading and also of life. Experiences in life lead to us interpret words in our own individual way. In this section, I will be analyzing a series of different extracts from *The Hate U Give* to shine a light on how the author conceived her novel with a view to targeting young adults and conveying them a message.

One particularly interesting point to explore when analyzing a Young Adult text like *The Hate U Give* is how empathy is conveyed. As I argued in my previous part, empathy is a key element in YA fiction, one of whose functions is to give the reader the ability to develop empathy for others as they grow older.⁴⁴

But what is empathy exactly? According to the French scholar Florent Da Silva, it is important to differentiate between “sympathy” and “empathy”⁴⁵:

To sympathize is to feel *for* someone, in an outward movement toward the other. Empathy, however, is bidirectional. To empathize is to feel *with* someone (Keen 2006), to somehow make the other’s emotion yours: while empathizing, one projects one’s sympathy outward *and* receives cognitively the other’s emotion inward, creating empathy⁴⁶

As Da Silva goes on to explain, when you have empathy for someone, you feel as if you were in their shoes, you identify with them. In a lot of fiction, writers try to create empathy

⁴⁴ “The Value of Young Adult Literature”, Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), November 15, 2011, accessed January 6, 2023, <https://www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines/whitepapers/yalit>.

“Another value of young adult literature is its capacity for fostering understanding, empathy, and compassion by offering vividly realized portraits of the lives – exterior and interior – of individuals who are unlike the reader.”

⁴⁵ Florent Da Silva, “Teenage-girl characters in best-selling American Young Adult literature: a representation of women’s resilience?”, unpublished manuscript, accessed January 6, 2023

⁴⁶ Florent Da Silva.

between the protagonist and the reader: that is when a book touches us the most, because we can feel everything the protagonist feels.

As a writer, the goal is of course to create, a minima, sympathy and, at best, empathy for one's protagonists in order to maximize the reader's emotional investment in the story.⁴⁷

It can be difficult for writers to reach the goal to obtain empathy from the readers for their characters. Empathy is a lot more complicated to feel than sympathy. Everyone can be sympathetic with someone, sometimes just because of the respect they have for each other. But feeling empathetic towards someone requires another level in the relationship between people. Being empathetic is more powerful than just being sympathetic, it conveys a deeper emotion.

But how can we analyze empathy in a young adult text? What stylistic devices or ways of writing does the novelist deploy to encourage reader identification and empathy?

With this in mind, I have decided to discuss a series of extracts from *The Hate U Give*. I will identify instances where reader empathy is invoked and try to figure out how the novelist encourages us to empathize with her characters.

Each extract is connected to either the first part of my paper, which focused on the Black Lives Matter movement and what inspired Angie Thomas inspirations to write her novel or the last part, which examines the issue of reader reception with regard to *The Hate U Give*.

The extracts I have chosen to analyze are dealing with different themes. First, police brutality against black people in the United States. Then, Starr's feelings about being a black teenager living in a black neighborhood. Also, the theme of racism is dealt with in these extracts. But this theme is balanced with the following extract based on support from Starr's white boyfriend during a demonstration. The last extract is based on being heard as a minority.

⁴⁷ Florent Da Silva.

3. Extract number 1

When I was twelve, my parents had two talks with me. One was the usual birds and bees. [...] The other talk was about what to do if a cop stopped me. Momma fussed and told Daddy I was too young for that. He argued that I wasn't too young to get arrested or shot. 'Starr-Starr, you do whatever they tell you to do,' he said. 'Keep your hands visible. Don't make any sudden moves. Only speak when they speak to you.'⁴⁸

This extract is taken from the chapter 2 of the novel. The subject of this extract is related to police violence, a subject tackled in my first part. In those lines, Starr explains that, as a black girl, her father told her how to behave if ever she was arrested. This is a key theme underpinning the novel and one that also alludes to one of the text's main sources of inspiration—all the black people who were killed by police officers when the author was at university, as discussed in my first part. Also, it is an important moment in the text which conveys one of its central messages: the fact that being a young black person necessarily requires knowing what to do if you are arrested by the police.

Looking more closely at the passage, the first interesting point to be noted is that the text is written using the first-person narrative form. The first person always fosters the feeling of being close to the character. Also, a part of the extract is a reported speech of what the narrator's father previously told her. This type of speech is a way for the reader to be in the situation, to experience it as the character experienced it. As a reader, we feel like her father is talking to us. We feel as if we were Starr in front of him. Also, the use of informal expressions of affection such as "Momma", "Daddy", "Starr-Starr" which is the protagonist's nickname or slang ("a cop"), gives us the impression that we are close to her family, as if we were part of it.

Another point is that Angie Thomas uses strong and "true-to-life" expressions to talk about what might happen if Starr is stopped by the police. In fact, because it is a book for young

⁴⁸ Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give*, (London: Walker Books, 2018), 24.

adults, we might have expected her to tend to use toned-down words, but she decided to use words that represent reality such as “arrested” and “shot”. These terms are striking and, because they are strong, we can feel the danger that Starr is facing. This danger she is facing is amplified with the short sentences her father uses to talk to her about what she must do if a police officer arrests her. The fact that these sentences are short creates a dynamic rhythm. This dynamism is also created by the nature of these sentences. They are orders. Her father is giving her orders on how to behave. He is not explaining to her how to behave, but it is much more important. We can feel like it is a life-or-death question. The repetition of the sound “s” is also present in her father’s sentences. Indeed, this sound normally represents something smooth but, even if these sentences are short, the content of them is sharp so there is a contrast. This idea of a strong content in Starr’s Dad’s discourse is the fact that she is given it when she was still young and innocent. It emphasizes how wrong it is to discuss such things at a young age, the possibility of being shot by law enforcement officers compared to the “birds and bees”, which are usual talks.

These various elements lead the reader to have empathy for Starr. She is in a situation that no one should endure, and Angie Thomas’ writing is made for us to understand what she is going through.

The advice Starr’s father gave her also has a proleptic function, anticipating what will happen later in the narrative. It turns out to be very useful when Khalil and she are arrested. Indeed, Starr knows that she has to stay calm and do what the police officer tells her. This is what saves her. The extract below shows how prepared she was, remembering what her father told her.

‘Hands on the dashboard!’ the officer barks at me. ‘Don’t move!’ I do what he tells me, but my hands are shaking too much to be still.”⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Thomas 26.

“‘And you.’ He looks in the window at me. ‘Don’t move.’

I can’t even nod.

The officer walks back to his patrol car.

My parents haven’t raised me to fear the police, just to be smart around them. They told me it’s not smart to move while a cop has his back to you.

Khalil does. He comes to his door.

It’s not smart to make a sudden move.

Khalil does. He opens the driver’s door.

‘You okay, Starr—’

*Pow!*⁵⁰

The repetition of the word “smart” emphasizes the impact her father’s advice had on her. She knew that she had to stay still because she could be killed if she made a move. That is what happened to Khalil, because he was checking to see if Starr was okay inside the car. Also, as reader has read the previous extract, they can expect the worst because they have been prepared to what might happen when black people are arrested by police officers. In the first sentence, the use of the word “barks”, which is normally used for dogs, de-humanizes the police officer, meaning that we feel automatically closer to Starr and Khalil. The horror of the situation is also depicted through the use of the onomatopoeia “Pow!” which often tends to create a comic effect but here, the situation is real which emphasizes the horror they are into.

In this extract, it is as if Starr, frozen by fear, were not in possession of her own body, as if she were a witness to what it is happening, just like the reader. This is created by the short, robotic, sentences describing the action:

Khalil does. He comes to his door.

It’s not smart to make a sudden move.

⁵⁰ Thomas 26-27.

Khalil does. He opens the driver's door.

The empathy we feel for Starr is also present here, because of the terrible situation she is in. The empathy is emphasized by the use of the present tense which creates a sense of immediacy with her. It allows us to feel closer to her, as if we were experiencing this terrible event at the same time she does.

But the narrative does not just analyze violence on the part of the police. It also explores the way racist attitudes have been internalized by Starr as a person of color.

4. Extract number 2

I go quiet. If I face the truth, as ugly as it is, she's right. I was ashamed of Garden Heights and everything in it. It seems stupid now though. I can't change where I come from or what I've been through, so why should I be ashamed of what makes me, me? That's like being ashamed of myself. Nah. Fuck that⁵¹

This extract is taken from the last part of the final chapter of the book. Here, we have access to Starr's thoughts after a conversation she had with an African-American person who is close to her. She accused Starr of being ashamed of her because Starr never invited her to parties with Starr's white friends.

This extract illustrates some of the key functions of Young Adult Literature. Indeed, it is understandable that, after her conversation with her friend, Starr realized that she was ashamed of who she was and ashamed of where she lived. But she realizes that she should not be ashamed because she can't change her life or her origins. It is a strong message for every reader, to not be ashamed of who we are. Moreover, it is an extremely important message for an author of Young Adult literature, because the target audience of these books are at a stage in their lives

⁵¹ Thomas 435

when they are building themselves, their personality and their identity. So, they must understand that no matter where they come from or who they are, they must not be ashamed because this is what makes them, them—even if society tells them something different. This point is also extremely important in creating empathy between the reader and Starr because everyone can feel different or inferior at at least one moment in their lives, so it is comforting to read that someone else can feel the same way.

In this extract, even if it is within the narration, we feel like Starr is talking to us. Indeed, she uses oral English as if she was in front of us, addressing us directly: “I was ashamed of Garden Heights and everything in it. It seems stupid now though.” This orality creates a feeling of closeness with her, as if we were her friends, helping her in her reflection. This orality is linked to the dynamism Angie Thomas created using short sentences. This feeling that the protagonist is talking to us is emphasized by the use of informal language and expressions such as “now though”, and even swear words: “Nah. Fuck that”.

Also, the three occurrences of “ashamed” create empathy for Starr. Indeed, the expression “ashamed” has a negative connotation, and since she is talking about herself and her life, the reader can feel empathy for her, because she seems sad but also angry. Angry at herself for being ashamed of what she is and where she is from. The expression “as ugly as it is”, talking about the truth—the fact that in the past Starr has felt embarrassed about her neighborhood and everything it includes—, reveals that she regrets being ashamed of her family and this part of her life. The adjective “ugly”, which has negative connotations, is used to emphasize that being ashamed of something that is part of us is not the solution and that we should be proud of who we are.

In my opinion, this extract is relevant for everyone who reads the book, because it has a deeper level than just Starr’s personal reflection. It encourages every reader to take a step back as they come to the end of Starr’s story and think of their own life and be proud of who they

are, whatever their origins. The fact that the extract allows the reader to question their life encourages reader empathy for Starr and involves them in her personal development.

The next extract uses empathy to highlight the danger of unconscious racism and indifference. Starr being unfollowed by Hayley makes the reader understand that wanting to shield oneself from the uncomfortable reality of racial injustice is not an innocent stance.

5. Extract number 3

'She's lying,' Maya says. 'That's not why she unfollowed you. She said she didn't wanna see that shit on her dashboard.'

I figured. 'That Emmett Till picture, right?'

'No. All the 'black stuff,' she called it. The petitions. The Black Panther pictures. That post on those four little girls who were killed in that church. The stuff about that Marcus Garvey guy. The one about those Black Panthers who were shot by the government.'

'Fred Hampton and Bobby Hutton,' I say.

'Yeah. Them.'⁵²

This extract is taken from the end of chapter 14. It is an extract from a conversation between Starr and Maya, a school friend of hers. Maya is Asian American, more specifically from China. They are talking about social media and the reason why Hayley, a friend of both of theirs, unfollowed Starr on Tumblr, a form of social media. Maya, Starr, and Hayley go to a school which is predominantly white.

This extract shows an example of the racism and discrimination that Starr is facing because of her skin color. Indeed, her friend Hayley unfollowed her because she did not want to see "the 'black stuff'". Indeed, Starr has been reposting pictures of black activists and black

⁵² Thomas 247.

people who were victims of racism on her social media. This is what Hayley dismissed as “black stuff”. Even if it may not seem important that Hayley unfollowed Starr, for reader it shows that there is something amiss between them. Starr did not know the reason why Hayley unfollowed her at first, she just thought it was because of one picture which might be considered a bit too violent for sensitive people to look at, but thanks to Maya, she learns that it was actually because the documents Starr has posted expressing her support for her own community. The brutality of Hayley’s discrimination is emphasized by the use of the word “stuff” to talk about people. It is a way to denigrate them. Another expression that Hayley used to talk about black people, their activism and their discrimination is “that shit.” It is a vulgar term, which emphasized the negative aspect and the negative view she has about black people. The fact that she uses word with a negative connotation to talk people from the same community as Starr is a way for the reader to feel empathy for her, because they understand how difficult it is for her to hear Maya’s revelations. Angie Thomas succeeds in writing a narrative that creates empathy between the reader and Starr.

As we go along the read, we understand that not all white characters in this novel are like Hayley.

6. Extract number 4

“I’m staying.” Chris nods, as if he’s settling with himself. “Yeah, I’m staying.”

“You sure you up for this?” DeVante asks. “It’s gon’ get wild out here.”

“I’m sure.” He eyes me. “I want everyone to know that decision is bullshit.”

He puts his hand on the seat with his palm facing up. I put my hand on his.⁵³

⁵³ Thomas 385

In this extract, we follow Seven, DeVante, Chris and Starr just before they attended the demonstration where for the first time, Starr opened up about being the witness. Compared to Hailey, Starr's friend, who did not understand how problematic Khalil's murder was, here Chris, a white boy and Starr's boyfriend, clearly understands the problem and wants to make a stand against it. This is explained with the use of "bullshit" when talking about the trial's decision to not charge the police officer.

Representing a white boy walking alongside black people at a protest is a very positive message. Chris is brave and ready to stand up for what he believes to be right. He is a heroic figure that white readers, particularly boys, are likely to identify with, whereas they might find it harder to identify with Starr, the female protagonist. Chris is a strong boy who wants to fight for black people, he's an inspirational character who in turn can motivate others, in particular the book's white readership, to actively engage with issues of racial injustice.

We might think that for Chris, the fact of accompanying three black teenagers to a demonstration would be an overwhelming experience, mostly because people could view him as an outsider. Indeed, the fact that he has to "settle" his decision to participate with himself is indicative of a certain apprehension on his part, an apprehension that renders his character all the more relatable and therefore empathetic. We also understand his feelings for Starr outweigh his fear: he is doing it for Starr, as he "eyes" her when he says he is sure to stay with them. Also, the fact that he gives her his hand and she gives him hers in return is a symbol of solidarity between black and white, saying that we should all stand together, that there is hope for a better future.

7. Extract number 5

That's the problem. We let people say stuff, and they say it so much that it becomes okay to them and normal for us. What's the point of having a voice if you're gonna be silent in those moments you shouldn't be?⁵⁴

This extract is taken from the chapter 14 of the book. In this extract, Starr is addressing to the reader, and it takes place in a moment when, with a friend of hers named Maya, they remember some disrespectful comments that one of their white friend Hayley has made.

These lines are often cited on reviews about the novel, because it is one of the moments when Starr realizes that she must do something about the situation she is in. She knows that she must take action and talk about the discrimination she endures every day. It can also be read as an implicit allusion to the Black Lives Matter movement, and the need more generally, to speak out against racial injustice.

First, the use of the pronoun “us”, referring to minority people, is a way to include the reader in her way of thinking. In the use of “us”, she includes us, as if we were part of a minority, which was the target audience of Angie Thomas when she wrote her book. Also, the use of “them” is a way to differentiate minority people from white people and show that even if they want to stand together, there will always be a gap between ethnicities.

What is more, she uses an informal register, her sentences are in spoken English, which is characterized using slang words such as “stuff”, “gonna”. The fact that Angie Thomas decided to write using informal language is a way to make us feel as if we were her friends, as if she was talking to her friends. This emphasizes the effect of closeness to Starr and our desire to empathize with her. The sensation of closeness to Starr is emphasized by the oral language she uses to express her feelings. Indeed, it is like she is talking to us, addressing us directly.

⁵⁴ Thomas 248

As in the first extract, the repetition of the “s” sound is present, which is normally smooth but here we understand that Starr is angry about the situation. The “s” sound creates a dynamism in her voice which attracts us to her and makes us really listen to what she has to say.

Also, this extract has a real impact on the construction of her identity. Indeed, she decides to talk about what she has had to face. The sentence “What’s the point of having a voice if you’re gonna be silent in those moments you shouldn’t be?” is a question. It can be interpreted as a question for us, reader, to reflect on this point. This question has an importance for everyone’s life. But it can also be interpreted as a rhetorical question she is asking herself, but thinking out loud, as if she wanted us to hear her. It is like a desperate question, she wants us to know that she is suffering from the discrimination she is facing, but that she is going to change that because she has understood that she has to speak about what happened. This question creates a strong connection between Starr and the reader because we feel the pain she is going through.

Empathy is present between the reader and Starr, the protagonist, in this extract, because of the strong words she uses to express her feelings.

In this extract, Starr realizes that she has to talk about what happened, for Khalil, for herself, and for every other person who might suffer from discrimination. That is why, at the end of chapter 19, she decides to talk to the grand jury about the night Khalil was killed. It is the first step towards having a voice. She is scared to talk because she does not know what will happen afterwards, but she does it for Khalil:

The un-brave part of me, which feels like most of me, shouts no. It wants to crawl up in a corner and act as if none of this ever happened. But all those people outside are praying for me. My parents are watching me. Khalil needs me.

I straighten up and allow the tiny brave part of me to speak. ‘Yes, ma’am.’⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Thomas 329-330

Talking to the grand jury was the first step for Starr. But she was still afraid to tell everyone that she was the witness to Khalil's murder. People knew that the witness was a girl, but only a few people knew that it was Starr. In chapter 24, she decides to go further for Khalil, she decides to tell everyone that she was the witness during a protest.

'My name is Starr. I'm the one who saw what happened to Khalil,' I say into the bullhorn.
'And it wasn't right.'

I get a bunch of 'yeahs' and 'amens' from the crowd.

'We weren't doing anything wrong. Not only did Officer Cruise assume we were up to no good, he assumed we were criminals. Well, Officer Cruise is the criminal.'

The crowd cheers and claps. Ms. Ofrah says, 'Speak!'⁵⁶

These three extracts show how Starr has evolved. She knew she had a voice and she had something to do, but she was scared to do it. However, with the right people by her side and some courage, she uses her voice to fight against all the discrimination her community is facing.

Being a person of color in the United States means dealing with police brutality, even from a young age. As Starr's father explained to her, the most important thing is to do exactly as they tell you to. Unfortunately, Khalil did not respect it and ended up dead. This event was shocking for Starr who witnessed it. But that event was the beginning of her awakening. She started to rebel against racial discrimination, such as her friend Hayley did, but she also demonstrated to make herself heard. But one thing to remember is also that not all white persons are racists and some of them, such as her boyfriend Chris, are supportive even in dangerous situations.

As some extracts showed us, social media is important in young adults' lives, they use them to protest and express how they feel. There is a parallel between the book and reality. In fact, Starr uses social media to give a message and protest against police brutality while writing reviews on the internet about the book is a way to be engaged in the cause and raise awareness

⁵⁶ Thomas. 406

among people. That is why the last part is dedicated to social media and how people reacted to Angie Thomas' book.

III. Book reviews

Angie Thomas wrote her novel to raise awareness among people, especially young adults, about police violence against black people. By reviewing the book, readers can give their opinion on it and continue the work Thomas started by raising awareness among other readers by encouraging them to read the book. To do so, it is important to know more about book reviews.

1. What is a review? What is its purpose?

Reading a book makes us feel emotions, be they positive or negative ones. Often, we want to share our thoughts and opinions about it to someone. But it can be difficult to have a real conversation about a book if the person in front of us has not read it. That is when the book review is interesting. But what is exactly a book review?

According to the Writing Center of University of North Carolina, "A review is a critical evaluation of a text, event, object, or phenomenon."⁵⁷ This critical evaluation is a way to give our opinion on a book. On their website, they give the following advice to university students who might have to write a book review as an assignment.

It allows you to enter into dialogue and discussion with the work's creator and with other audiences. You can offer agreement or disagreement and identify where you find the work exemplary or deficient in its knowledge, judgments, or organization⁵⁸

⁵⁷ "Book reviews", The Writing Center of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, accessed April 18, 2023, <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/book-reviews/>

⁵⁸ "Book reviews"

Over time, book reviews have evolved. They were first the reserve of professionals, people paid to write reviews, but then became more and more democratized and were accessible to everyone, thanks to websites, such as Goodreads. It has become something people do for pleasure, and not simply as a job:

In the past, book reviews were mostly written by authors and editors [...] With the development of Web 2.0, diversified book reviews generated by users have appeared across the internet, such as on Goodreads [...] and Amazon.⁵⁹

In a way, writing a book review has the same goal as a conversation with someone about a book. People have the opportunity to give their opinion, debate on different subjects of the book. But a book review is less direct than a real conversation. However, writing a review allows people to take the time they need to write it and say things clearly. In that way, misunderstandings can be avoided.

Another interesting point in writing a book review is to give advice to other people. Indeed, if someone liked a book, gives it a good review, it may encourage other people to read it. But instead, if someone did not like a book and wrote it in his review, it may-inform other people that this book is not worth it. As Luisa Plaja explains in her article, a book review can be a way to guide other people in choosing their next book to read.

Other readers will always be interested in your opinion of the books you've read. Whether you've loved the book or not, if you give your honest and detailed thoughts then people will find new books that are right for them.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Zhang, Chengzhi; Tong, Tiantian; Bu, Yi., "Examining Differences among Book Reviews from Various Online Platforms", 2019, Bradford edition, sec. Vol. 43, Iss. 7, accessed April 18, 2023.

⁶⁰ Luisa Plaja "How to write a book review", BookTrust getting children reading, accessed April 18, 2023, <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/tips-and-advice/writing-tips/writing-tips-for-teens/how-to-write-a-book-review/#!?q=&sortOption=MostRecent&pageNo=1>

This guide is directed to young adults, even children, to encourage them to write a review on a book. In doing so, she pushes young people to read more book and to develop their critical review on them.

2. Where to find a book review?

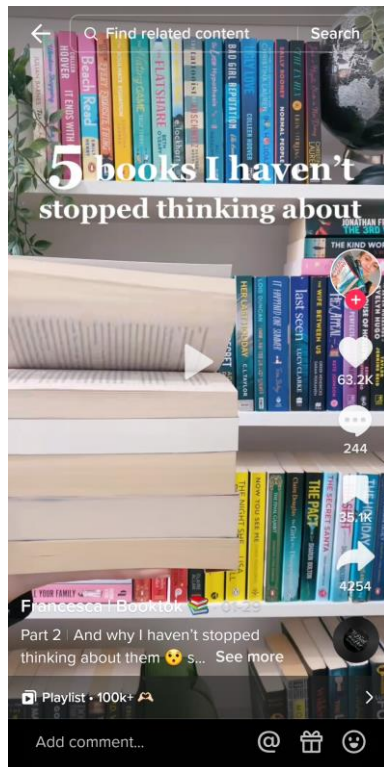
People might have different ways of writing their book review. Some of them would prefer to write it in a notebook and keep it personal. Others may want to write it on their phones or computer without sharing it with others. However, some readers may want to write their reviews on the internet and share their opinion with other readers.

Some people prefer to write them down on a paper. People who love to read often have a notebook where they can write their reviews. In them, they can paste pictures which remind them of the book, they can draw things related to the story, they can use colors representing the book. Using a notebook for book reviews is a way to express our feelings by another mean than just words.

However, a book review written on a notebook is difficult to share with others. That is why there are numerous ways to share a book review online, on the internet.

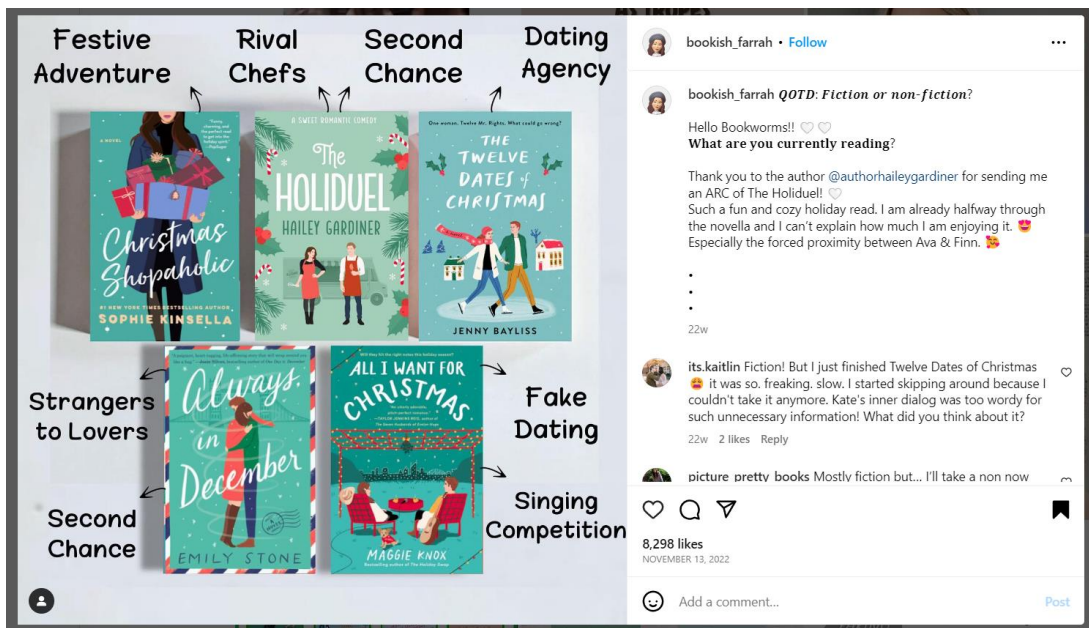
First, people who love reading and sharing their reviews can have a blog on which their share what they thought about a book. These blogs can be seen by anyone on the internet. Blogs are held by one person who shares what she wants on it. Most of the time, there is a place for comments under each post. In there, everyone can share their opinions about the book or discuss what the owner of the blog said.

Some social media can be used to share book reviews online. For example, Tiktok is used to make videos of book recommendations, or a book review can be made in the form of a video. These short videos are usually visioned by a lot of readers and filmed to make people want to read the books presented. It has become such popular that it is now known as BookTok.

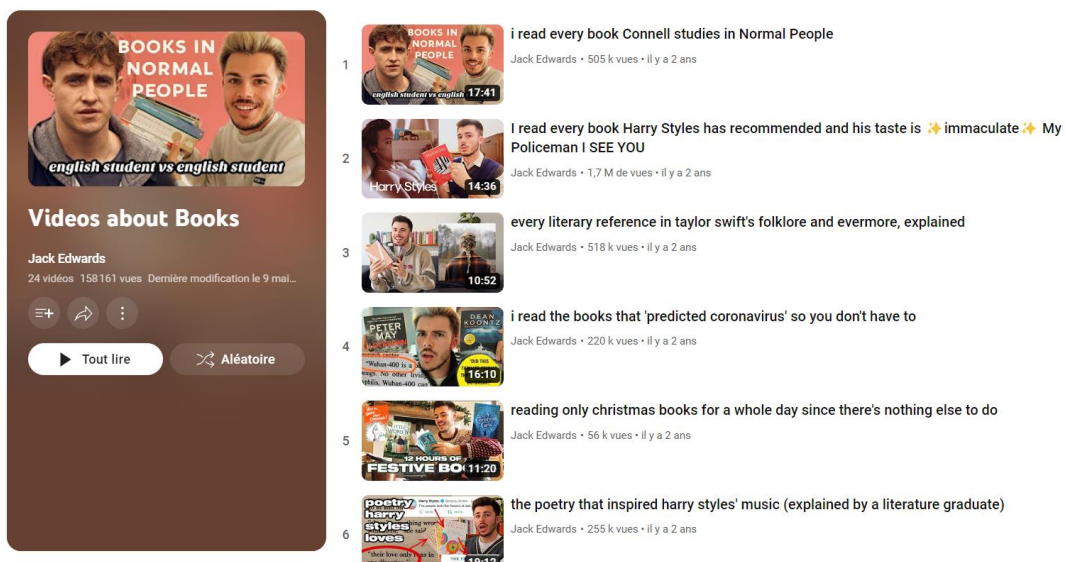


Also, Instagram is often used by people who read a lot to share their recommendations and their book reviews. Most of the time, they share a picture of the book and in the caption, they share their review. Then, in the comments, people can discuss about the book and give

their opinion. It can also be a way of presenting different books on different theme. On this example, the user is sharing some recommendations of Holidays reads with their main tropes.



On YouTube, a lot of readers make videos to talk about books. They share their opinions on their videos and in the comment spaces, people can react to them. These videos can be their recommendations of the month, their best reading of the year or sometimes their worse.



The use of social media to share opinions about a book is developing, because more and more people use social media for different reason. A huge community is growing around the

use of social media to talk about books. However, every social media has its own target, and the reviews and book recommendations can differ because of that. For example, TikTok targets teenagers whereas Instagram or even Goodreads target more young adult people. These differences are an aspect of the lack of reviews of *The Hate U Give* on TikTok but also YouTube.

However, one of the most popular and well-known ways to share a book review is on the website called Goodreads. This website is also available as an application on smartphones, which is easier to use. On Goodreads, people can have a virtual bookshelf and add every book they own, the ones they want to read, those they have read and create as many bookshelves as they want. When they have finished a book, they can leave a mark out of five stars and write a review. This review can be seen by everyone who goes in the review section of the book. People can even tick a case to alert others that their review contains spoilers on the book. After having posted their review, other people can like them and comment them. So, it is a way to discuss everyone's opinion. Goodreads has an economic stake. Indeed, the more people high rate a book, the more people may buy. And in fact, a lot of people are using Goodreads, which may increase the sales of a lot of books. According to Michelle, over 125 million people, both authors and readers, are using Goodreads.⁶¹ With a database of over 3.5 billion books, readers can find any book they want to read, add it to their shelf, rate it when finished and even write a review. A similar website, called Babelio, focusing on France is also available.

Book reviews can be written in different ways, on paper or on the internet. However, writing a review on the internet, especially on Goodreads, is a way to share one's opinion about the book just read.

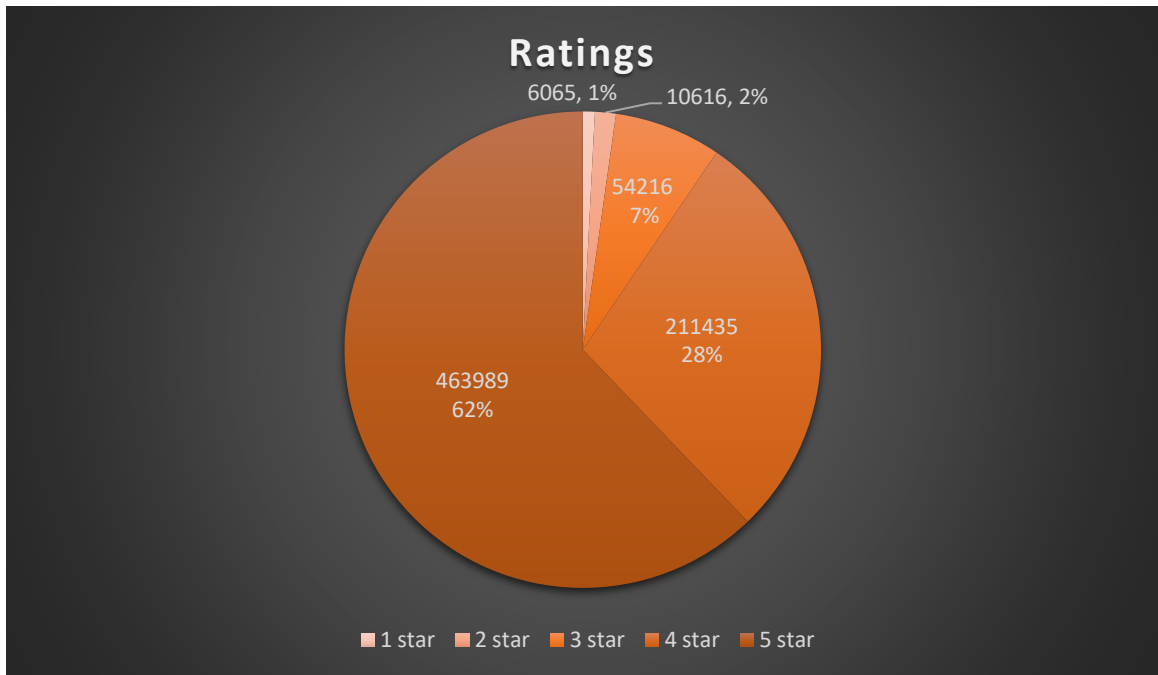
⁶¹ "Goodreads: A Platform for Readers and Authors", Digital Innovation and Transformation (blog), accessed April 17, 2023, <https://d3.harvard.edu/platform-digit/submission/goodreads-a-platform-for-readers-and-authors/>.

3. Statistics about *The Hate U Give* on Goodreads

As seen previously, Goodreads is a website useful for people to write reviews on books or for people who want to know if a book is mostly judged good or bad. On this part, I am going to analyze statistics on *The Hate U Give*, based on the date I am writing, August 24th, 2022.

First of all, when a reader has just finished reading a book, it is easy to give a mark out of 5, by clicking on the star from 1 to 5 to rate it. However, writing a review is taking more time and a lot of readers do not usually write one. The number of ratings for the novel *The Hate U Give* is 746,321. Out of this number, only 69,913 persons wrote a review. If we make the math, only 9.36% of people who read the book wrote a review. As we saw previously, writing a review can take time but also people get involved in it, they give their feelings. It may be a reason why there is not a lot more reviews on this book. Even if 69,913 is a huge number, compared to the number of people who read it, the proportion is low.

Another interesting point is that we can have the details of the rating. Indeed, we can see how many people gave a 5-star, 4-star, 3-star, 2-star, and 1-star. The chart under gives the numbers of ratings with the percentage it represents. Thanks to these ratings, we can conclude that more of the majority thought that *The Hate U Give* is a book that everyone should read. As a reader, seeing as many ratings as great is a good thing, because it shows that you have 95% of chance to find it exceptional.



Thanks to these statistics, we can conclude that the book was a must read for most of the people. Some readers might not have the same color skin and they still can appreciate and identify to this book. To explore this interesting point, I will analyze reviews written by people from different ethnicities.

4. Comparing reviews on *The Hate U Give*

It is unlikely if not impossible that every reader will have the same opinion about a book. Indeed, each person has a different sensitivity and perception of life. In fact, the same book can be loved by readers not having the same color skin, or socio-economic profile. In these reviews, it will be relevant to analyze if their writers followed strict guidelines or whether they gave their opinion in an unconstructed, conversational style. It will also be pertinent to analyze if they were able to identify to the protagonist.

First, I will analyze a 5-star review on Goodreads written by a person called Emma on November 26th, 2017.

This is a **MUST READ** for 2017 releases.

I absolutely adored this book. I truly don't feel like it has a single flaw. Every topic addressed was approach so wonderfully and did not hold back. If you're looking for a diverse read that stands out amongst most YA, *The Hate U Give* is the book for you.

I love Starr Carter so much. She's honestly such an inspiration to girls looking to find their voice. She is resilient, authentic, and everything we need in adolescents today. Although she is not completely fearless, she embraces the adversity in her way and stands against it. I don't know many people who could juggle the stresses in her life and come out weapons (in this case, words) blazing. Every moment in this book just filled me with pride for this girl and it was a pleasure being able to watch her grow.

I also love the family dynamic in this book. I think it honestly might be the most healthy, realistic, close-knit family I've ever read in a YA. The siblings may tease each other, but they protect each other fiercely. The parents may not always get along, but they are head over heels in love. They always attempt to do what is best for their children, even if it may not be their own personal preference. It was so nice to have just a scene of a family sitting down to watch sports together, throwing a pool party, always working together. It is something truly valued from this read.

The strongest aspect of this book is its social commentary and political criticism. This is the kind of book that should be in the hands of teens, making them aware of current issues, educating them on pressing matters, and encouraging them to get involved to create change. I absolutely left this read with an entirely new perspective I will carry with me in the future. It poses many important questions about racism, police brutality, discrimination, and prejudice while also answering them in a comprehensive and inviting way. It was fascinating to see the integration of such a powerful movement implemented into an accessible form of media for teens. I truly don't think you can leave this book without SOMETHING that will have made you say "I never thought about it this way", "When you put it this way, that actually makes a lot of sense.", and "I'm glad someone finally told me this."

Although this book is full of important moments related to the current state of marginalized populations, it is primarily about using your voice. I believe this book has the power to make readers realize just how much their words matter. Starr Carter is a perfect example of an individual who feels their voice does not matter but through courage, risk-taking, and ultimate strength, she realizes how crucial it is to speak up for what you are passionate about no matter how terrifying the consequences may seem. And I believe you will leave this book with that revelation as well.

I cannot recommend this book enough. It's absolutely one of my favorite books of the year. I am so happy *The Hate U Give* exists, and I'm even more ecstatic that it is a 1! NYT best seller, out in to the world, ready to help teens realize how important they really are. Please pick up "THUG". You will not regret it."

This review is quite long and structured in several paragraphs. She starts with a short sentence that catches our eyes with "**MUST READ**" in bold. She continues her review by

saying everything she loved about the book, giving details and developing her ideas. She talks about the characters but also the subject of the book. However, she never provides any quotes in her review, which could have illustrated and supported her arguments. She ends her review by recommending this book to everyone, which is a good way to end a review, because if someone recommends a book, people are more encouraged to read it.

Some passages of this review can help us to understand where she stands. For example, “I absolutely adored this book. I truly don't feel like it has a single flaw. Every topic addressed was approach so wonderfully and did not hold back” is seen as if she was talking directly to us, in a conversation between friends. It also shows that she may be a young adult, around 25 years old, according to her vocabulary. The idea of her being a young adult is emphasized with the sentence “This is the kind of book that should be in the hands of teens” which shows that she is not a teenager anymore, but she would have wanted to read this kind of book in her teenage years. The following sentences “I love Starr Carter so much”; “Every moment in this book just filled me with pride for this girl and it was a pleasure being able to watch her grow”; “the most healthy, realistic, close-knit family I've ever read” are a means to show that she identifies herself with Starr. She may not be an African American, as she uses the term “marginalized populations” to talk about black people, but she can definitely identify with the protagonist, even though she does not share the same skin color. This confirms that this novel is universal, that everyone should be able to identify to the characters, even if they do not share the same backgrounds.

With these two sentences “I believe this book has the power to make readers realize just how much their words matter”; “Please pick up "THUG". You will not regret it.”, the reviewer is encouraging and giving an order to other readers to read *The Hate U Give*. Indeed, these sentences is her way to raise awareness among readers, to tell them that this novel is a mean to educate themselves and to stand for their rights.

Deduced from her review, Emma must be a young adult and white. Even if she identifies herself to the protagonist, she might not be facing the problems black people are facing in real life. A relevant point would be to analyze a 5-star-review from a young African American, to whom the novel might be more pertinent.

The second review is from Olivia-Savannah, a 24-year-old African American who was 21 years old when she wrote her review.

This book definitely stirred something in me that will be hard to translate into words. It is not easy to make someone feel angry, devastated and hopeful all the in the same book, while handling complex topics, and writing so well. And yet, Angie Thomas gave me all of that and more.

There are so many things she talks about that she could relate to, and that are so important for black people to think about, evaluate and recognise in themselves. But then there is so much here that allies and non-black people can learn from. I appreciated moments where she talks about acting different with your white friends vs your black friends. The feeling of needing to ‘dampen’ your blackness because other people might not be comfortable about it. It’s so interesting to see the small ways in which some people – me sometimes included – change our personality and selves to accommodate other people. And we shouldn’t need to do so!

In this one we also have an interracial couple. The interracial couple is not the main focus – but it was a nice little addition to the story and enough time is given to for the topic to be well developed, in my opinion. I like that we have a small moment where we also get some discussion on teenagers in a relationship opening that discussion on sex, whether they’re ready or not, etc. Always healthy to see in a young adult novel. And while this isn’t a romance I ship, I quite liked them together.

We also need to talk about the friendships in this one. There is some friendship tension, and I liked what was said about handling difficulties within friendships. I agreed with how things ended up with the friends group situation. It also was a good moment to focus on how Starr realises when racism is happening to her but does not always mean that she picks up when discrimination is happening to others as well. It shows us that Starr has a while to go as well, and that fighting for other marginalised people’s rights is so important. She comes to recognise that while she may not have privilege in some ways, she does have it in some others.

We have to talk about the family in this one. The family dynamic in this one is complex and connected across two families – as well as a substitute family member too. It’s something I have seen often in families but not really discussed in literature all that much, so it was nice to see it finally represented here. And I loved how Thomas wrote it – she captured the complexity of emotions very well. The love that is there, but also sometimes a sense of rivalry, or a sense of ‘claim’ to one family member or the other. I don’t think I am articulating that complexity very well, but I loved seeing it.

There’s some talk about gentrification, business and safety in the neighbourhood too. It becomes a big debate in this novel, and it is something a lot of people experience too. A sense

of betrayal if they earn enough and leave their neighbourhood instead of sticking around to heal and repair the fractured community. Gangs are included in this book. Jail is mentioned, and people who have gone to jail who either deserve it or don't... I appreciated this again, as well. Jail and imprisonment are such taboo subjects, but it is something we should be talking about more.

I can't believe we have gotten this far into the review and I have yet to talk about racism and police brutality – the main theme of this novel. It was incredibly heart breaking and sad to see what Starr had to go through. It was incredibly heart breaking and sad to see how it echoed across the community, Starr's and the family's grief, and how people were siding with the policeman who did it. It echoes a lot of what happens in the present day. It showed me that it is okay to be angry, and how important protest is. I also appreciated that we got to see a good policeman in this one too. Thomas did a good job of showing us that the enemy is racist or discriminatory police figures who abuse their position of power.

Starr was an amazing main character. We get to see her in her weaker moments, and in her stronger ones. She develops so much and comes into her own as a strong, fierce black young lady, and I loved going along that journey with her. I loved seeing how much her family supported her in becoming who she was, and how much she loved those around her and was loved too.

I also loved the many music references. In books, there are usually a lot of references to music and pop culture, and it was so nice to finally see some to black music my parents listened to, or rap music at long last! I approved of all the music tastes (barring Taylor Swift, sorry not sorry.) There are quite a lot though, so be ready for the onslaught of references at the beginning. It does die out the further along we get into the book and the serious topics. I was also here for any and all of the basketball mentions.

This book made me so ANGRY. In a good way. Angry like I am burning to help work toward change and justice. Please do read the author's note as well – there is a good reason why it is there, and it made me feel some type of way as well. I loved how this book also managed to have such a strong sense of community and hope too. When reading about all this darkness, it was nice to see a glimpse of light at the end of the tunnel. Without hope, there is no reason to fight.

Her review is quite long and structured. However, it sometimes feels as if she was talking directly to us “We also need to talk about the friendships in this one. There is some friendship tension, and I liked what was said about handling difficulties within friendships”; “We have to talk about the family in this one”. By using “we”, it feels that we are included in her review and in her opinion, which can make us want to read the novel.

She continues to give her opinion about different subjects the novel tackles “... I appreciated this again, as well. Jail and imprisonment are such taboo subjects, but it is something we should

be talking about more”; “The interracial couple is not the main focus – but it was a nice little addition to the story and enough time is given to for the topic to be well developed, in my opinion”, and as she says, these are subjects that have to be more present in our daily conversations because they are very important. When dealing with these subjects, people have to understand that they apply to black people as well as white people. And she clearly states that “there are so many things she talks about that she could relate to, and that are so important for black people to think about, evaluate and recognise in themselves. But then there is so much here that allies and non-black people can learn from.” The idea of learning and education is something important. Indeed, the book targets young adults who are growing up and discovering life, they should be able to learn about such important subjects.

Angie Thomas’ idea was to write an anti-violence novel, not an anti-cop novel. And Olivia understood this point because she appreciated that she showed a good policeman in the book “I also appreciated that we got to see a good policeman in this one too. Thomas did a good job of showing us that the enemy is racist or discriminatory police figures who abuse their position of power.”

Moreover, the idea of identification is prominent and relevant here. As an African American, she can be facing the same situations Starr is facing. For example, the fact that they have to change their personalities whether they are with black or white people: “It’s so interesting to see the small ways in which some people – me sometimes included – change our personality and selves to accommodate other people. And we shouldn’t need to do so!”. But this identification also comes through little details such as the music the characters are listening to, which echoes the ones Olivia’s parents listened to “and it was so nice to finally see some to black music my parents listened to”. Also, she identifies with Starr and the novel is a way for her to grow up as a young woman in a world where it can be difficult to be black. But the story of Starr helped her understand that she must be strong to face challenges “Starr was an amazing

main character.”; “She develops so much and comes into her own as a strong, fierce black young lady, and I loved going along that journey with her”.

Finally, writing her review on Goodreads was a way to create a community around the novel. And the idea of community echoes the community on which Starr is living: “it was incredibly heart breaking and sad to see what Starr had to go through. It was incredibly heart breaking and sad to see how it echoed across the community, Starr’s and the family’s grief, and how people were siding with the policeman who did it. It echoes a lot of what happens in the present day. It showed me that it is okay to be angry, and how important protest is”; “I loved how this book also managed to have such a strong sense of community and hope too. When reading about all this darkness, it was nice to see a glimpse of light at the end of the tunnel. Without hope, there is no reason to fight”. Thanks to this book, Olivia understood the importance of raising her voice to denounce discriminations and violences against black people. However, she ends her review on a hopeful message, to give people reading her review hope about the future. Ending her review by saying she loved the book can make other readers want to read it.

These two reviews give us two different perspectives on the book. Even if they are both positive and encouraging other readers to read *The Hate U Give*, the two reviewers have not the same personal background and it is felt in these reviews.

To add another perspective on the book, it is relevant to analyze another review. However this time, it is a review from someone who rated it 1-star out of 5. This is what Lea wrote, on February 11th, 2018.

“Most people seem to love this book and a big part of the negative reviews sounds like people who are upset this book is not more "All Lives Matter" (or even "Blue Lives Matter") instead of "Black Lives Matter", so let me just clear up from the start that was definitely not the problem I had with the book. Yes, there are a lot stereotypes about white people but there's also a lot of stereotypes about black people and stereotypes about any and everything else. A lot of the people are just written as cliches regardless of their skin color. I also definitely didn't feel this book was anti-police. There's some ACAB-chanting but there's also the main protagonist's black uncle/father figure who's in the police force and a "good cop". So, yeah,

this book is not bad because of its timely and important topic, it's bad because it lacks an interesting story, depth of characterization and a good writing style.

Before reading this book I knew this book was about a girl dealing with police brutality against black people. And in way, it is, but also it's really not. The novel is framed around the killing of the protagonist's childhood friend-turned drugdealer, but the story itself is... well... lacking. I really didn't see much or any of a character development and nothing much happens, except typical teenager stuff. When she realizes her white friend is racist (after she literally says something very racist), this is solved by dropping her as a friend and made it hard to sympathize with her. It just made me wonder: why were you friends with such a shitty person in the first place? And why did you mainly care about her unfollowing your stupid tumblr page, like that's the worst that can happen? It didn't feel like you were actually sad about losing a friend.

And here's the thing: lack of believable emotions. I actually had to force myself to remember "this girl's friend was just killed by the police" to have some sympathy, because I really did not like her or got to "fee)" like her. Every emotion and everything else is the exact opposite of "show don't tell". This was not limited to the main protagonist but to everyone else in this story, I disliked every single character when I think I was actually supposed to like them. Even the token "good white person", her boyfriend Chris was just horrible, he definitely did give me creepy black-fetishizing vibes.

The story was meandering and boring, the writing style were YA-annoying, and the actual important topic of police brutality and racism from law enforcement felt almost trivialized. While reading this I thought it was still an okay book, but the more I think about it, it's really not. It's a badly written book full of cliches and stereotypes, plain and simple.

In the end one could say I probably just had too high hopes for a YA book because of its backdrop of social injustice. If you want to know about how good kids become drugdealers and living in bad neighborhoods, you're bound to get a more realistic picture from watching *The Wire*. I also had to think of "Welcome to Braggsville" by T. Geronimo Johnson while reading this, not because it's completely the same topic, but because it's such a stark contrast in how you can write about race and racism in a nuanced way while also focusing on a story and good literary writing (and this isn't even a perfect book, I'm sure there are even better examples out there). For the more general topic of racism in the USA Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie "Americanah" is of course recommended, too. And of course, there's some great non-fiction writing on the topic."

Her review is quite negative about the book because she did not like it. And she has every right to do so. As she explains, the topic of the novel is important and should be dealt with, but it is the style of writing and the story that made her dislike it "So, yeah, this book is not bad because of its timely and important topic, it's bad because it lacks an interesting story, depth of characterization and a good writing style."

Even if she did not like it, she wrote a constructive review giving her opinion on a lot of aspects she did not like and giving details: “I really didn't see much or any of a character development and nothing much happens, except typical teenager stuff”, “And here's the thing: lack of believable emotions”, “. It's a badly written book full of cliches and stereotypes, plain and simple.”

At the end, she does not recommend reading the book, but she recommends others works related to the subject that can be more accurate according to her “For the more general topic of racism in the USA Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie "Americanah" is of course recommended, too”.

In conclusion, social media and the internet are both ways to find reviews on book. Each gives the opportunity to readers to express themselves and their feelings about a book, and to discuss about it with others. It is important for readers to know the opinion of others on a book because it can help them in their choice of reading. A review has some characteristics but in reality, not everyone respects them because, when it comes to talking about what someone liked or did not like, people talk with their hearts and do not think about making it well-structured.

To conclude a book review, it can be a useful way to write a few sentences that summarize the opinion of the reader on the book. “Sum up or restate your thesis or make the final judgment regarding the book”⁶². Indeed, what is read at the end by someone is what he keeps in mind. That is why the end of the review must summarize the reader’s opinion. These last sentences may contain another book recommendation related to the one just read or a type

⁶² “Book reviews”

of reader who would enjoy reading this book “Summarise some of your thoughts on the book by suggesting the type of reader you'd recommend the book to.”⁶³

Writing book reviews can be a great exercise for children to improve their writing skills, as well as develop their analytical mind. However, a book review on the novel *The Hate U Give* is also a means to raise awareness among these children because some of them may be facing similar situations Starr is facing. But it can also raise awareness among white children who may not know racism but still be confronted to it, so it is important to teach them that racism is wrong. Working on this novel can be difficult but is important for some, such as Caroline Sandvik who wrote “The objective of this core value is to facilitate for the students to develop and utilize critical thinking skills and to act with ethical awareness.”⁶⁴

Conclusion

While *The Hate U Give* has been the beginning of an awakening for most people, police brutalities remain ongoing. Indeed, more black people died at the hand of police officers. But if in the past we might safely have assumed these brutalities to be perpetrated by white police officers, this state of affairs is changing. In fact, on January 7th, 2023, Tyre Nichols, a 29-year-old black American, was beaten by five black police officers in Memphis. He was first arrested because he was driving irresponsibly but he decided to run away to his mother's house. However, he was caught next to it and was beaten by police officers.⁶⁵ After a few moment, Tyre Nichols complained about having troubles breathing and an ambulance

⁶³ “How to write a book review”

⁶⁴ Caroline Sandvik, “Incorporating *The Hate U Give* in the English language classroom to promote critical thinking and ethical awareness regarding racism and social justice”, Inland Norway University, 2022, accessed April 20, 2023

⁶⁵ “What We Know about Tyre Nichols' Death and the Memphis Officers Charged with His Murder”, CBS News, 8 March 2023, accessed April 24, 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tyre-nichols-death-investigation-memphis-police-officers-charges-what-we-know/>.

was sent. However, he died three days later. After this terrible event, police officers involved were “charged with second-degree murder, and all five entered not-guilty pleas.”⁶⁶ However, the police officers involved were decertified, which means that they will never be able to work in law enforcement in Tennessee again, but they will be able to carry out police duties outside this state.⁶⁷ On January 27th, four videos were released, showing what really happened on that horrific night of January 7th. Following this release, demonstrations were organized across the United States. If the novel promoted an idea of community against police brutality, these police officers may not have heard of it. Indeed, the fact that there are black police officers beating a black man to death may be seen as a step back in the fight for the Black Lives Matter Movement. In fact, it seems that these black police officers might have internalized the institutional racism inside the police. They seem to act as if they were white officers believing that black lives do not matter as much as white people’s.

The creation of the Black Lives Matter movement was the beginning of a wave rebellion from African American who were asking for justice for those who were killed by police officers. Angie Thomas decided to raise her voice and write about the struggles African American are facing concerning their safety. In fact, being a black woman was not easy for her, especially growing up in a state where racism is still very present today. But when her book was published, it was an enormous step in raising awareness among black and white people. However sometimes, people are not into reading. Thus, her book was turned into a movie, released in 2018, one year after her novel was published. Starr is played by Amandla Stenberg, who experienced a hard time filming the scene when Khalil is shot dead by a police officer “I had this understanding the whole time that this was real. Even though I personally

⁶⁶ Kaitlyn Radde, “4 Ex-Memphis Police Officers Charged with Tyre Nichols’ Murder Have Been Decertified”, *NPR*, 24 March 2023, sec. National, accessed April 24, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/03/24/1165859546/tyre-nichols-memphis-police-officers-decertified>.

⁶⁷ “4 Ex-Memphis Police Officers Charged with Tyre Nichols’ Murder Have Been Decertified”

have never experienced losing someone to police brutality, I understand it's something real, and within black communities we feel the pain of that institutional racism."⁶⁸ However, even though she never experienced this sort of event in her real life, she could easily identify with Starr because of their similar background. In fact, both were raised in a black neighborhood but went to a more privileged white school.⁶⁹ And Angie Thomas also experienced this duality in her personality because she went to a white university. This code-switching in black population is very common because they feel that they need to change their personality to fit in the society, to be accepted but not for who they are "Code-switching – that capacity to alter your behaviour according to the company you're in – is something that people of colour are especially familiar with"⁷⁰.

Even if the book has become popular worldwide, it remained banned in some states in the United States from schools and libraries because of its content. However, in other countries and especially in Nordic countries in Europe, the book had been studied in school and was the topic of a number of academic articles and theses. For example, in Sweden, a report showed that people having origins from African countries were often the target of injustice and racism.⁷¹ In order to counter these discriminations, books such as *The Hate U Give* are studied in classrooms to "develop students' understanding of cultural diversity and to develop their ability to think critically, to take personal responsibility as well as to participate actively in society"⁷²

⁶⁸ Steve Rose, "The Hate U Give's Amandla Stenberg on Bringing Black Lives Matter to the Box Office", *The Guardian*, 19 October 2018, sec. Film, accessed April 24, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/oct/19/the-hate-u-give-movie-amandla-stenberg-black-lives-matter-george-tillman-jr>.

⁶⁹ "The Hate U Give's Amandla Stenberg on Bringing Black Lives Matter to the Box Office"

⁷⁰ "The Hate U Give's Amandla Stenberg on Bringing Black Lives Matter to the Box Office"

⁷¹ Amy Roxburgh, "Voices as Weapons Incorporating The Hate U Give in the EFL Classroom to Discuss Institutional Racism, Doubleconsciousness and the Importance of Minoritized Voices", Thesis, Sweden, Linnaeus University, 2020, accessed May 1, 2023

⁷² Amy Roxburgh

To conclude the journey of Angie Thomas's novel, *The Hate U Give* has been hugely successful worldwide, and its adaptation into a movie made it even more universal. Still today, black people have to fight against police brutality because, even if the book has raised awareness among a lot of white and black people, it continues to be perpetrated.

Partie Didactique

Dans les programmes de l'éducation nationale, le thème de l'inclusion des minorités est présent à chaque niveau, du collège au lycée. En effet, il est important de prôner l'acceptation de tous et d'éduquer les élèves à celle-ci.

I. Présentation générale de la séquence

Pour cette séquence didactique, j'ai décidé qu'elle sera à destination d'une classe de terminale, avec comme axe d'étude « Diversité et Inclusion ». Il est attendu des élèves qu'ils aient le niveau B2 du CECRL en fin d'année. Pour y parvenir, la séquence sera axée sur les discriminations récentes envers les personnes d'origines Africaines aux Etats-Unis particulièrement mais aussi en Angleterre. Cette séquence portera notamment sur le mouvement Black Lives Matter. Le titre de celle-ci sera : « Fighting racism, our daily battle » et aura pour problématique : « To what extent is racism still present in our life ? ». Cette séquence se déroulera en 6 étapes.

1. Intégration de l'œuvre *The Hate U Give* dans la séquence

En tant qu'enseignant, notre but est d'éduquer nos élèves. Pour ce faire, les éveiller sur des sujets importants tel que la lutte contre les discriminations raciales est un devoir. Mais aussi, notre rôle est de leur faire découvrir de nouvelles choses. Pour beaucoup des élèves, les réseaux sociaux et les téléphones ont remplacé les livres et la lecture. Pour contrer cela, les

faire participer à une lecture suivie tout au long de l'année est un bon moyen de leur faire découvrir une œuvre littéraire tout en les faisant lire. C'est pour cela que je prévois de leur faire lire le livre *The Hate U Give* en lecture commune et suivie.

Pour mettre en place cela, les élèves devront, au début de l'année, acheter le livre. Ensuite, lors de la première semaine de classe, un planning leur sera donné avec des dates et les numéros de chapitre qu'ils devront avoir lu pour chaque date.

Date	Chapitres (n°... à n°... INCLUS)
25-sept	1-3
16-oct	4-6
06-nov	7-9
24-nov	10-12
18-déc	13-15
15-janv	16-18
05-févr	19-21
26-févr	22-24
18-mars	25-26

A chaque date donnée, un exercice sera effectué pour vérifier s'ils ont bien lu les chapitres. Cela pourra prendre la forme d'un résumé à écrire, d'un questionnaire Kahoot, d'un qcm à créer en groupe et à donner à un autre groupe qui devra y répondre etc. Ainsi, chaque élève devra participer et montrer qu'il a bien lu les chapitres du livre tout en faisant une activité ludique. A la fin de la lecture suivie, il sera demandé aux élèves d'en faire une critique et de donner leur opinion sur le livre, comme ils pourraient le faire sur Goodreads par exemple.

En plus d'en faire une lecture suivie, certains extraits seront étudiés durant la séquence présentée.

2. Tâche finale

Pour cette séquence, la tâche finale sera une tâche d'expression orale en continue. Celle-ci prendra la forme d'une vidéo, individuelle ou à deux, dans laquelle les élèves parleront du mouvement Black Lives Matter.

La consigne est la suivante: « We are in 2050, it is the Black History Month. You are asked to testify in a video about the Black Lives Matter movement. Make a video explaining the history of the Black Lives Matter movement and what has happened since its creation. Examples: are there any changes? Is there still police brutality against black people? ». En tenant compte du niveau B2 du CECRL, ils seront amenés à devoir s'exprimer de façon claire et détaillée sur une grande gamme de sujets, mais aussi de savoir développer un point de vue sur un sujet d'actualité. Pour mener à bien cette tâche finale, ils auront comme modèle la vidéo vue au cours de la séquence pour s'inspirer sur la mise en forme. Pour les arguments à avancer dans leur vidéo, ils utiliseront les éléments historiques vus pendant la séquence et leur imagination pour ce qui a bien pu se passer jusqu'en 2050.

Afin de réaliser cette tâche finale, des objectifs doivent être atteints tout au long de la séquence.

3. Objectifs

De nombreux objectifs sont à prendre en compte dans cette séquence.

Objectifs pragmatiques : Savoir réaliser une vidéo ; Savoir réaliser une affiche ; Savoir justifier ses choix

Objectifs culturels : Le racisme aujourd'hui ; le mouvement Black Lives Matter ; l'œuvre littéraire *The Hate U Give*

Objectif citoyen : La lutte contre le racisme

Objectifs informatiques : Compétence 3 de PIX, Création de contenu : Savoir créer une vidéo

Objectifs grammaticaux : Le present perfect et le présent perfect continu, pour parler d'un événement qui a commencé dans le passé mais qui continue aujourd'hui (African American have endured racism... / African American have been fighting for their rights...)

Objectifs lexicaux : Lexique des discriminations (racism, injustice, discrimination etc.), lexique des manifestations (protest, fight against, pay tribute to etc.), lexique de l'analyse littéraire (oxymoron, anaphora, metaphora etc.)

Objectifs phonologiques : les différentes prononciations de la lettre « a » (anaphora, racism, African, American etc.) ; prononciation du « ed » selon la nature du mot (différence entre chaque prononciation + différence entre participé passé et adjectifs : have **wanted** VS **tired**)

Ayant en tête ces objectifs et la tâche finale, passons maintenant au déroulé de cette séquence.

II. Déroulé de la séquence

1. Etape 1

Comme j'ai déjà pu le remarquer et mettre en place durant mon stage, commencer la séquence avec un document traitant d'un sujet connu des élèves peut les amener à parler et à se sentir plus concerné par le sujet. C'est pour cela que j'ai décidé de commencer ma séquence avec un extrait de vidéo de la série *All or Nothing : Tottenham*. L'extrait de vidéo choisi relatent des événements survenus lors de la finale l'Euro 2020 opposant l'Angleterre à l'Italie. En effet, l'Angleterre ayant perdu aux tirs au buts, les joueurs ayant manqués ceux-ci ont subi une vague d'injures racistes à la suite de leur défaite. Le football étant un des sports

les plus pratiqués et regardés, beaucoup des élèves seront concernés par cette vidéo.

Néanmoins, certains ne sont peut-être pas au courant des conséquences de cette défaite. Une étude de la vidéo sera donc faite afin d'introduire le sujet des discriminations raciales et de leur montrer que ces injustices font toujours parties de notre réalité.

Après l'étude de cette vidéo, je leur montrerai des images de manifestations afin d'en faire une description et de faire émerger le mouvement Black Lives Matter. Certains ont déjà entendu ces mots voir même déjà travaillé dessus les années précédentes tandis que d'autres ne connaissent pas la signification de ceux-ci.

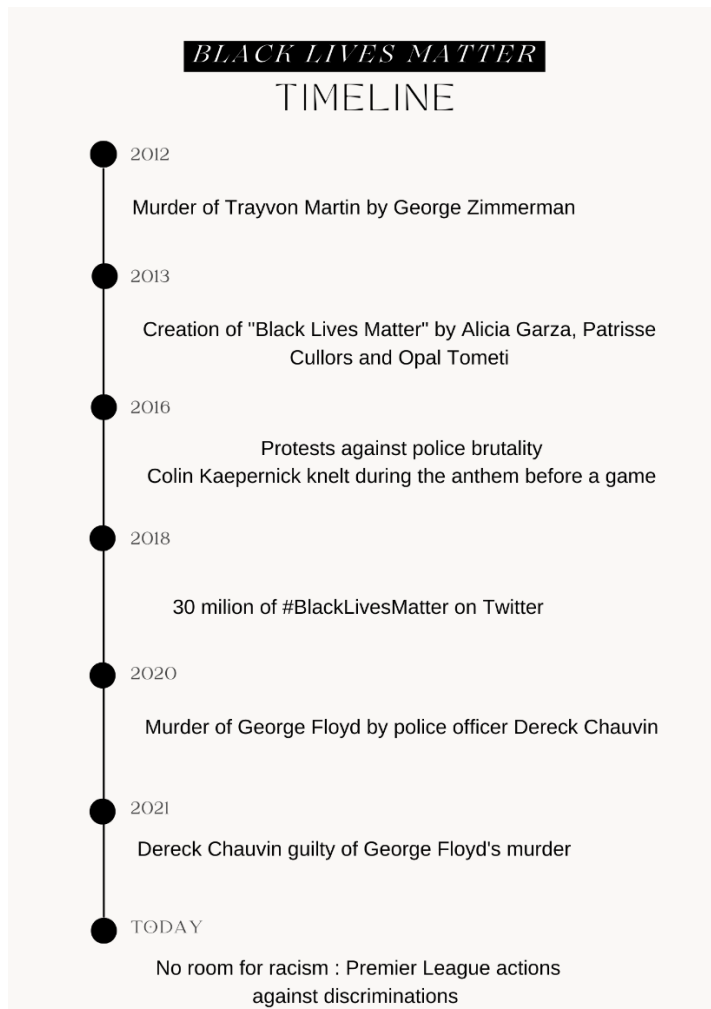


Cette première séance est une séance d'introduction sur le sujet, afin de les amener progressivement sur l'étude du mouvement Black Lives Matter.

2. Etape 2

Pour cette deuxième séance, les élèves travailleront en autonomie autour de l'histoire et des événements marquants du mouvement Black Lives Matter. Ils auront tous à disposition une frise chronologique vide à compléter. Afin de compléter celle-ci, ils devront aller à différents ateliers, chaque atelier ayant un document différent qui sera nécessaire pour compléter leur frise. A intervalle de temps régulier, les élèves changeront d'ateliers pour aller voir un autre document afin de compléter leur frise chronologique. Les documents sont pour la plupart des compréhension écrites, mais il y a aussi une compréhension orale provenant

d'une vidéo. Grâce à tous ces documents, ils compléteront en autonomie leur frise chronologique et devront s'auto-corriger à la fin. La frise chronologique complétée est celle-ci :



3. Etape 3

Pour cette troisième étape, l'étude de la vidéo *Black Lives Matter Movement* par Global Citizen sera étudiée. Dans celle-ci, de nombreuses personnes Afro-Américaines témoignent et expliquent ce qu'est le mouvement Black Lives Matter tout en expliquant pourquoi il est important dans notre société. Cette vidéo est le modèle sur lequel les élèves pourront se baser pour leur tâche finale. Cette vidéo sera étudiée par les élèves et ils devront ensuite en faire une trace écrite pour la résumer et en tirer les points les plus importants.

Cette étape permet de sensibiliser les élèves au mouvement en leur montrant son importance et aussi son développement. Elle sensibilise aussi au fait que tout le monde doit être uni et que ces discriminations doivent cesser. Dans cette vidéo, les réseaux sociaux sont mentionnés comme un moyen de dénoncer ces discriminations. Pour faire un lien avec *The Hate U Give*, un extrait sera étudié par la suite.

'She's lying,' Maya says. 'That's not why she unfollowed you. She said she didn't wanna see that shit on her dashboard.'

I figured. 'That Emmett Till picture, right?'

'No. All the 'black stuff,' she called it. The petitions. The Black Panther pictures. That post on those four little girls who were killed in that church. The stuff about that Marcus Garvey guy. The one about those Black Panthers who were shot by the government.'

'Fred Hampton and Bobby Hutton,' I say.

'Yeah. Them.'⁷³

Cet extrait permet de montrer l'importance du mouvement sur les réseaux sociaux mais dénonce aussi le fait que certaines personnes n'acceptent pas et ne veulent pas voir ces dénonciations sur leurs réseaux sociaux.

4. Etape 4

A la suite de ces différentes étapes, vient l'étape de la tâche intermédiaire. Celle-ci permet de vérifier les connaissances acquises par les élèves depuis le début de la séquence tout en les préparant à la tâche finale. Pour cette tâche intermédiaire, chaque élève devra effectuer des recherches sur un événement marquant depuis le début du mouvement Black Lives Matter, en faire une affiche et expliquer cet événement à la classe tout en justifiant son choix. Cet événement peut être une manifestation particulière, un meurtre commis par la police qui les aurait interpellés, un discours prononcé par quelqu'un se rattachant au mouvement etc. Le but ici étant de faire découvrir aux autres élèves de la classe des événements marquants de l'histoire du mouvement mais aussi qu'ils puissent s'entraîner à parler à l'oral pour leur tâche

⁷³ Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give*, (London: Walker Books, 2018), 247.

finale. Les affiches effectuées seront affichées dans la salle et les élèves s'enregistreront tous pour créer un document audio afin que ceux-ci soient disponibles pour les autres élèves en vue de leur tâche finale. La consigne de cette tâche intermédiaire est la suivante : « Create a poster about one event related to the Black Lives Matter Movement. Explain this event and the reason why you chose it. »

5. Etape 5

Cette étape sera celle dédiée au terme de « code-switching ». Ce terme est très important dans la culture Afro-Américaine puisqu'ils sont très nombreux à devoir adapter leur personnalité et comportement en fonction de l'environnement social dans lequel ils se trouvent. Et ce code-switching a notamment été ressenti par Angie Thomas ainsi que par Starr, le personnage principal de *The Hate U Give*. Pour aborder ce sujet, un brainstorming sera tout d'abord fait pour expliquer et mieux comprendre le terme. Ensuite, un extrait du livre ainsi qu'un extrait du film relevant tout deux du code-switching seront étudiés, pour en relever les similitudes et différences ainsi que pour repérer quels sont les changements que Starr a effectués. Un extrait du livre peut, par exemple, être le suivant :

I shouldn't have come to this party.

I'm not even sure I *belong* at this party. That's not on some bougie shit, either. There are just some places where it's not enough to be me. Either version of me. Big D's spring break party is one of those places.⁷⁴

Ou bien encore celui-ci :

People glance over at me with that “who is this chick, standing against the wall by herself like an idiot?” look. I slip my hands into my pockets. As long as I play it cool and keep to myself, I should be fine. The ironic thing is though, at Williamson I don't have to “play it cool”—I'm cool by default because I'm one of the only black kids there. I have to earn coolness in Garden Heights, and that's more difficult than buying retro Jordans on release day.

⁷⁴ Thomas 7

Funny how it works with white kids though. It's dope to be black until it's hard to be black.⁷⁵

Pour terminer cette étude du code-switching, le passage suivant sera analysé

I go quiet. If I face the truth, as ugly as it is, she's right. I was ashamed of Garden Heights and everything in it. It seems stupid now though. I can't change where I come from or what I've been through, so why should I be ashamed of what makes me, me? That's like being ashamed of myself. Nah. Fuck that.⁷⁶

Cet extrait permet de montrer le changement d'attitude de Starr par rapport à ce code-switching et de leur montrer qu'il est important de s'assumer tel que l'on est.

6. Etape 6

Cette dernière étape est celle de la préparation à leur tâche finale. Une heure de cours sera dédiée aux recherches complémentaires et à l'écriture du speech de leur vidéo afin que je puisse les aider à bien la structurer. Par la suite, ils devront se filmer chez eux en racontant l'histoire du mouvement comme si nous étions en 2050, en imaginant ce qu'il a pu se passer de 2023 à 2050.

⁷⁵ Thomas 14-15

⁷⁶ Thomas 435.

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