Dear Martin



Nic Stone

Nic Stone was born in a suburb of Atlanta.

After college she worked in teen mentoring in Israel before coming back to the states to write. Her goal is to bring different cultures, religions, and backgrounds into her own work.

Dear Martin is her first book and is based on true events that involved the death of unarmed African American teens. Stone wrote this book in an attempt to look at current racial issues through the eyes of Martin Luther King Jr.’s teachings.

Nic stone still lives in Atlanta.

<https://www.bookreporter.com/authors/nic-stone>

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**Summary**

Justyce is a young black man nearing the end of his high school career. With grades that land him in the honor roll, Justyce is considered one of the top students at his school. Living in a primarily white neighborhood in Atlanta, Justyce finds out first hand what it is like to be the victim of racial prejudice. Being wrongfully arrested for trying to help his girlfriend get home safe, he must deal with what it means to be black in a world that only sees color. To help him understand the world, he begins to write letters to Martin Luther king Jr. as an experiment to try and be like Martin himself. He finds himself trying to learn about prejudice and stand up against it, quickly realizing just how hard of a battle that is. Martin Luther King Jr. died fighting this fight didn’t he?

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**Text Complexity:**

**Dale-Chall Readability Index:** Grades 5-6

I believe that the Dale-Chall Readability index places Dear Martin in this grade level because of it’s easy to read language, and informal dialogue.

**ATOS Score**

book level: 4.8

Interest Level: Upper Grades (UG 9-12)

AR points: 6.0

Interest level may be placed in high school because of the heavy theme of the book and the events that occur as a result.

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**Quotes:**

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| “’You hear about Tavarrius Jenkins?’ ‘The Kid who got shot in Florida, right?’ ‘Yeah. He died yesterday.’ ‘Damn. That’s sad.’ ‘I keep thinkin’ that coulda been me. What if that cop thought I had a gun?’ ….‘Shit’s fucked up, man’” (89). | Justyce tell his friend Manny about how the cops misjudged a kid because of the color of his skin and compares it to his own experience of being misjudged. This is part of Justyce’s realization that prejudice lives stronger than ever and can cost him his life. It only makes his experience sink in further.  |
| “’There are still people in that office who refuse to look me in the eye, fellas. They’ll show cursory respect for the sake of keeping their jobs, but a good majority of my subordinates resent having to answer to a black man. I was reminded of that today.’ ‘You fired that guy, right?’ Manny asked. Mr. Julian shook his head. ‘It’s not the first time it’s happened, and it won’t be the last. This is what I mean by preparation.’ Manny was livid. ‘But, Dad-‘ ’The young knows I heard what he said. I have no doubt he’ll be on his best behavior going forward. People often learn more from getting an undeserved pass than they would from being punished.’ ‘That’s kinda deep,’ I said” (113). | Manny’s father speaks to both Manny and Justyce explaining that prejudice is in all types of places. Often times Manny and his family are looked at as a family that isn’t a victim to inequality because they are successful, but this part of the novel explains that Manny’s dad has to deal with it every day. He had to worker harder than his coworkers in order to get his job and now that he has it he still hears racial slurs in the office addressed to him. This shows a level of prejudice outside of cops and Justyce’s social circle, adding a view from a typical modern day work place.  |
| “’I’ve got one memory of the day everything happened: sharp pains in my chest and shoulder, and then not being able to breathe. In that moment when I thought I was dying, it hit me: despite how good of a dude Martin was, they still killed him, man’” (151). | Justyce explains to his teacher that his “be like Martin experiment” was turning out to show him that no matter how good of a person you are, it is how you look that decides how people will treat you.  |

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* Dear Martin should be read in schools because it shows the reality of a society full of unequal opportunities. I think that it is important for a younger generation to understand the reality that some people may face because this doesn’t only bring awareness to these students, but also challenges students to view the world without prejudice eyes. I would teach this book to high schoolers, because it deals with the life of a high schooler and these age groups are the ones that are supposed to get prepared for the world.
* An activity to be done in class can be having the students anonymously write an example of prejudice they have read about, witnessed, or experienced then pass them randomly and have students read them and write a short reaction response.
* This book falls under “Books about Real –Life Experiences” in Adolescents in the Search For Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story because it deals with the reality of prejudice. The book itself was based off of real life experiences and deals with the real situations that some teenagers have to face. The question of where they fit into society and asking yourself, “how do people look at me?” are questions everyone has asked themselves at some point. The tough decisions that Justyce must make and the harsh consequences to some of his actions are all reflections of the real world.
* Dear Martin has the Exeter qualities of number 6 and number 7 because it shows themes that are of immediate concern in the world like inequality and shows the emotional growth of a character that has to deal with the issue of inequality.