

Kenny Fung

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Book Talk

Warner

All American Boys by Brendon Kiely and Jason Reynolds

1. Author information/biography

Brendon Kiely

<https://www.brendankiely.com/>

<https://www.brendankiely.com/about-menu>

Jason Reynolds

<https://www.jasonwritesbooks.com/>

<https://www.jasonwritesbooks.com/about>

- 2016 Coretta Scott King Author Honor Award
- 2016 Amelia Walden Award
- 2016 The Walter Dean Myers Award

2. Summary

Brendon Kiely and Jason Reynolds story opens with a little dialogue in the pretext, describing a piece of video with directions such as zoom in and zoom in and describing the stills in the video of a man on top of a boy with blood on the street. The pretext ends with describing the boy moving and then not. Though it is very bare, the graphic nature of the pretext expresses the severity of what the story wants to discuss, police brutality. The story then first opens with Rashad's point of view, a black boy with his ROTC drill

team after school on a Friday. The chapters are split between Rashad and Quinn as they are both dealing with police brutality on different sides, Rashad being the victim of it and Quinn understanding where he fits in the racial tension as he is a white boy. Both try to do their best as they navigate the racial tension within their town and discover where they fit in the contemporary period as they both are reflections of the young men that are affected by police brutality in America.

3. Quotes

“They were probably afraid too. Afraid of people like Paul. Afraid of cops in general. Hell, they were probably afraid of people like me. I didn’t blame them. I’d be afraid too, even if I was a frigging house like Tooms. (115)

Spoken from Quinn’s point of view, this quote shows Quinn trying to understand Rashad and other young men of color go through as he expresses his fear for law enforcement. He sees that because he is white, he can walk away from the Rashad’s incident, unlike the other black students at school. This changing in ideology that is being seen in Quinn highlights a climatic point in his story.

“Because racism was alive and real as shit. It was everywhere and all mixed up in everything, and the only people who said it wasn’t, and the only people who said, “Don’t talk about it” were white. (184)

From Quinn’s point of view, he decided to take action as readers can see that his character is changing. This change prompts him to take responsibility as he starts to understand the position that he is in and that he has freedoms that his other classmates do not have. He also reveals that he cannot stand by, as seen from his language, that he, as a white man, needs to help in taking

action for this particular cause, and to help represent the white men that need to take action as it is understood that the action of police brutality is not okay under any circumstance.

“Actually, it started Tuesday night after my friends and family left my room, and I decided to finally read Chief Killabrew’s card. I couldn’t figure out if he had inserted the creed as some kind of reminder to me that if I’m guilty to fess up, and that I was expected to never lie and steal, or what. Maybe he really was trying to encourage me.” (144)

Rashad, here, is unable to understand a card that was sent to the hospital, that Chief Killabrew had written. Though it is a simple scene, Rashad’s lack of understanding and revelation is a reflection of how he does not understand the situation that he is in. He was attacked by a police officer from Killabrew’s force. The situation doesn’t allow Rashad to comprehend that he was just assaulted and that it was due to him being a black man.

4. Plans on teaching

In this contemporary time period, police brutality is a large topic across America. Using *All American Boys*, this book can be used as a supplement to understand civil rights and the movement. With young adult characters, this book is easily relatable to students within the same age and even using similar circumstances such as Rashad being in his school’s ROTC. It can show students that the Civil Rights Movement never ended as it is still difficult for minorities. This book also shows Quinn showing solidarity and can provide encouragement to other students to stand and represent solidarity in our contemporary age. Though the reading level is not difficult as the sentences are structured in a way that simulates speaking patterns of the contemporary period, it can prove to be another bridge for students to show interest in the book.

5.

All American Boys is rated as HL770L according to the LEXILE RANGE of complexity. HL representing High Low, as this book is high-interest while low-readability. This means that the book's average reading level is lower than the intended age range for the readers, meaning that the sentences are not complex but the content of the book is highly sought after. This book reveals to be intended for high school students, grade 9-12.

The diction used in the text reflects more of the emotional turmoil that individuals have to face as they are searching for their identities. Using the age range, Quinn and Rashad are easily relatable and can prove to be manifestations for young adult students to express the turmoil. The switching between Quinn and Rashad, and being different ethnicities, allows a wider audience to take interest in the book and to help understand where these young adult students stand in the social justice climate and topic of police brutality.

When looking over "reader-task" considerations, *All American Boys* is an excellent choice as students can read literature that is relatable to the contemporary time period as it addresses the events of police brutality. This book allows students to open up about a social topic that is being addressed all over the nation and has permanent effects to all individuals, colored or not. Police brutality is a viral topic as there are groups on both sides that are in contention with the topic and this book can help students understand what is currently happening in their social situations. Even if students have not experienced police brutality such as Rashad Butler, there are students like Quinn Collins that are affected in an indirect way.