



THE COLOR OF WATER: A BLACK MAN'S TRIBUTE TO HIS WHITE MOTHER

By James McBride

Freshman Connections Common Reader 2007 – 2008

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Background Information:

The book recounts the life of James' mother, Ruth Jordan McBride, born Ruchel Dwarja Zylska to a Polish Orthodox Jewish family that emigrated to the U.S. in 1921. McBride gives an engaging and personal account of her growing up, her marriage to a black Baptist minister, and her efforts to raise twelve children. The biography explores the ideas of race, gender, religion, and identity in the United States during the 20th century.

McBride's book awards include the 1997 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award and the ALA Notable Book of the Year award. His most recent book, *Miracle at St. Anna*, released January 2002, is set in Italy during World War II. McBride currently resides in Pennsylvania.

His music related awards include: the 1996 American Arts and Letters Richard Rodgers Award, the 1986 ASCAP Richard Rodgers Horizons Award, and the American Music Festival's 1993 Stephen Sandheim Award. His award-winning jazz, hip-hop musical "Bobos" won the prestigious Alton B. Jones Foundation Grant and his 2003 jazz CD/documentary project, "The Process," was seen on Comcast Cable nationwide in fall 2003.

Biographical Information Sources:

Information was gathered from the following websites:

www.loc.gov/today/cybelc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=3556

www.loc.gov/bookvest/2003/mcbride.html

www.powells.com/authors/mcbride.html

www.jamesmcbride.com

<http://www.albany.edu/writers-inst/mcbride.html>

Materials compiled by: Michael Brown, Jean Dinwiddie, Angelia Zielke, and Melinda Messineo



James McBride – Author, Composer, Musician

Photo Credit: Judy Lawne

About the Author

McBride was born in 1957 and raised in Brooklyn New York's Red Hook projects. The 8th of 12 children, he received his B.A., from Oberlin College, a MS.J in Journalism from Columbia University and is an accomplished writer, composer, and saxophonist. As a writer, he is known for the work he produced in his eight years at the Boston Globe. He has also written for People Magazine, The Washington Post, Essence, Rolling Stone and The New York Times. As a composer, he has written songs for Anita Baker and Grover Washington, Jr., Purafe, Gary Burton, the Silver Burdell music textbook series, and even for the PBS television character "Barney." James served as musical director of the acclaimed Billie Holiday musical "Lady Day," and wrote the scores for the musicals "All Roads Lead Home" and "Harlem Kids Symphony" written in 1993 for the Osaka, Japan Manaichi Broadcasting System.. As a musician he has worked as tenor saxophonist for the highly-regarded Little Jimmy Scott.