

Title: *Color Me In*
Author: Natasha Diaz
Genre: Realistic Fiction

Reviewer Name and Grade: Oliver W., 8th Grade

Date Reviewed: August 19, 2020

Nevaeh Levitz is a biracial fifteen-year-old girl who lives in a wealthy area of New York City. Her mom is Black and Christian while her dad is white and Jewish. When her parents split up after her mom caught her dad cheating, she is forced to think about her two cultural identities for the first time. She now lives part-time with her dad in the suburbs and part-time with her mom in Harlem. Her dad, Samuel, is a famous and very good lawyer, and her mom can't find a lawyer who is willing to represent her in the divorce case. Nevaeh's mom Corinne is depressed at the beginning of the book, and she doesn't get out of bed and doesn't talk to Nevaeh. Her dad at first appears to be very likable and charming, but Nevaeh is trying to learn to not get tricked by his act. When she finds herself connecting with her mom's side of the family more, Nevaeh starts to experience the injustices Black Americans face for the first time, which she didn't have to go through because of her white skin color. Nevaeh goes to a mostly white school named Pritchard with her best friend Stevie, who is half Chinese, half American. Stevie has wanted to get accepted to a ballet academy in London his entire life, but Nevaeh can't bear the thought of going to school without Stevie. Her dad decides that she should embrace her Jewish origins and schedules for her to have a belated bat mitzvah. Nevaeh begins to take classes with a rabbi named Sarah. Nevaeh wants to understand her family's past more, so she starts to read her mom's journal secretly. When Nevaeh meets a black boy named Jesus, they start dating. Nevaeh begins to express her voice through her poetry, which she is very good at. When Nevaeh is invited to read some of her writing at an anti-police brutality fund-raiser, she accepts, but it turns out that it's the same day as Stevie's dance audition. She promises to be there to watch him after her reading, but she misses it, and Stevie no longer wants to talk to her. When Jesus comes to Pritchard to pick her up on her sixteenth birthday, Nevaeh's enemy Abby decides to post an embarrassing selfie of Nevaeh that she had, and the two get into a fight. But when a security guard comes, he automatically assumes that Jesus was harassing the two girls. Nevaeh feels as if she has lost control of her life now and she must find a way to start anew as a new person. This book takes place in the year 2018. I know this because the date that Nevaeh's father scheduled her bat mitzvah for was June 9, 2018.

Did the plot keep you interested?

The plot kept me interested. It was really captivating reading about Nevaeh's journey to find herself. I enjoyed the way that Nevaeh's character developed and there was plenty of drama in this book to keep it interesting.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the book was pretty good. There were many things happening that caused the reader not to get bored. Also, Nevaeh would occasionally read from her mother's journal so the reader got to learn about her family's past as the story progressed.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

This book contains occasional profanity. It also explores a lot of the discrimination that Americans of color face, and contains some racist scenes. It explores the prejudice that some

white Americans might have towards black Americans just because of the color of their skin. I think this book would be appropriate for readers in grades 7 and up.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to readers who enjoy books about people of color and the injustices they might face. This book would also be good for people who like coming of age stories.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

I think that teens reading this book should know that many of the things in this book are based on true events that the author, who is multiracial, experienced herself.

I would rate this book *4 stars*. It was a really great book that taught me a lot about cultural differences. Also, it showed what it might be like for a child whose parents are getting divorced, and was told nothing about what was happening, but had to deal with the aftermath. The characters are all very well developed and each plays an important role in Nevaeh's quest to find who she is. This was an awesome debut novel. The only reason why I didn't rate this book 5 stars was because there were a lot of characters and a lot going on so there wasn't really just one main story. A lot of the details about the minor characters didn't really add anything to the story other than some drama. Also, Nevaeh's mom spends around half of the book depressed and unreachable, but then all of a sudden after a few therapy sessions she comes out of her shell and starts doing all types of things. I don't think this change should have happened so fast as it is probably not what would have happened in real life. But the characters were portrayed nicely and realistically so I thought this was a great book overall.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Yaseen V., 9th Grade

Date Reviewed: August 6, 2020

Color Me In is a realistic fiction novel written by Natasha Diaz. This book follows Nevaeh, a fifteen year old who is having trouble trying to figure out where she fits in. Her parents are separated, so she spends half of her time with her white, Jewish father in the house she grew up in, and the other half of the time with her black mother and extended family in Harlem where her mother grew up. After her parents' divorce, Nevaeh and her mother move to Harlem to live with her mother's family, which is headed by her Baptist pastor grandfather. Moving to a new environment that is very different from her life before, Nevaeh is forced to confront her identity for the first time. This novel does a great job at showing the struggles that a half white and half black child faces. To her mother's side, Nevaeh is seen as white, too privileged, pampered, and selfish to relate to the injustices they face on a daily basis as African Americans. On the other hand, Nevaeh stands out when with her dad's family and in her private school. In an effort to blend their families, Nevaeh's dad decides that she should have a belated bat mitzvah instead of a sweet sixteen. However, this brings up conflicts and almost guarantees social humiliation at her private school. Throughout the novel, Nevaeh's best friend Stevie is the only person who truly understands her struggles. Later in the novel, Nevaeh gets into a relationship with a boy who is ironically named Jesus, and learns more about herself and her identity. Overall, Color Me In is a coming of age story about a half black, half white girl trying to find her place in the world. I enjoyed this book a lot because it shows the different sides to Neveah and her family, and how different people's perspectives can be.

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for non-fiction) keep you interested?

The plot of this book was very eye opening and is a great coming of age story because it shows the difficulties of being a half black, half white child.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the book was just right! I was able to appreciate the way the characters acted with one another and how they grew together.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

I recommend this book for grades eight and up, due to its story, plot, and overall tone.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to someone who enjoys realistic fiction and books about coming to terms with your identity.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

I think it is important to realize how different both sides of Nevaeh's family are and how it ultimately makes her the way she is.

4 stars: I enjoyed this book and found it worthwhile reading.

Color Me In has a lot of heart and I loved much of it. This novel does a great job at showing how people from different places perceive you. Ultimately, it is a great story that shows you how to face your obstacles and come to terms with your identity and be proud of it!