

**Title:** *Genesis Begins Again*

**Author:** Alicia D. Williams

**Genre:** Realistic Fiction

**Reviewer Name and Grade:** Karan S. 8<sup>th</sup> grade

**Date Reviewed:** March 29, 2020

This book is about a thirteen-year-old Genesis, an African American girl who lives in Detroit with her parents. Her mother has lighter skin and wishes Genesis looked more like her. Because of this, her mother calls her nicknames such as “charcoal” and “eggplant.” Her father is dark-skinned as well as an alcoholic who pays no attention to his family. He makes Genesis feel that it is her fault that life is so tough for them all, blaming her for his alcoholism and gambling addiction. Genesis convinces herself that she is monstrous and keeps a diary listing all the things that she hates about herself. Wanting to make her mother happy, Genesis tries everything she can think of to lighten her skin, from scrubbing herself down with bleach to covering her skin in yogurt Genesis convinces the most popular girls in school to play with her to show her parents that she is in with the cool gang, but that day they get an eviction letter to vacate the house as her father did not pay the rent due to his addictions. She has to go live with her grandma and start a new school. Suddenly her life is filled with happiness as she is welcomed in the new school. No one notices her skin color, the teachers treat her equally, they encourage her to join the school talent show, and to show the class her music skills. This makes her father realize how wrong he was but as he was also a victim of racism he always blamed his daughter. From that, he wanted to make things right for his family. Even her mother realizes that her daughter is very talented and that she was wrong in always putting her down for her skin color. Eventually, she decides to be a better mother. Genesis starts feeling better after a while. She feels as if she belongs somewhere and starts focusing on her qualities, instead of her flaws.

*Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for non-fiction) keep you interested?* -Yes, it did, I was always very curious to know how Genesis adjust in her new school.

*Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?* -I felt that the pace of the book was just right.

*What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?* -I think it is good for students from grades 5-8.

*What type of reader would you recommend this book to?* -I would recommend this book for someone who likes to be a winner when they are faced with life challenges.

*What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?* -I think it would be helpful for teens to know that it's a book that shows how to overcome the societal norms and not to discriminate against anyone for their skin color.

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

**Reviewer Name and Grade:** Prisha S. 11<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Date Reviewed:** July 30 2020

This book takes place in present day Detroit, Michigan. It is narrated by the main character, Genesis Anderson.

Genesis is a teenager who struggles with friends, home-life, and self love. She is African American which she believes adds to her problems. The reader learns from the beginning of the story that Genesis and her family live in poverty and are forced to move frequently because of her father's, Emory's, inability to pay rent. Emory has an alcohol problem and struggles to have a stable job. Genesis is forced to move to another school and make new friends, again. By some miracle, her father got a hold of a large house in an affluent community named Farmington Hills. Genesis and her mother, Sharon, are in awe, although they know they'll be evicted soon enough.

From the beginning of the story, Genesis introduces the reader to a list she received from two "friends" of her old school, titled "100 Reasons to Hate Genesis." The two girls only wrote about sixty reasons, so Genesis constantly adds to this list, fostering her problems mainly about her beauty. She says that she is dark-skinned and has "nappy" hair which she wishes she never had. Genesis tries harmful ways to lighten her skin which include rubbing lemons on her skin, taking a bath in milk, spreading yogurt on her skin, and even soaking herself in bleach, all attempts to look like her light-skinned mother.

Emory abandons Genesis and Sharon days at a time, most likely to drink, smoke, and gamble. He claims that he got a promotion and the family will stay at their new house for a while, but Genesis finds a warning note of eviction at their door. She hides this from her parents to try to ignore the fact that they'll be moving soon.

Genesis makes two new friends at school: Sophia, a kind girl with OCD who has been bullied, and Troy, an African-American boy classified as a "nerd." Genesis advances her passion of singing at this new school by forming a bond with her music teacher and auditioning for the highly-anticipated school talent show. Although Genesis runs into problems making fake friends to join a performance group, she performs solo at the show and proves her bravery to her parents, Troy, Sophia, and herself. The story ends with Emory confessing to Genesis that he's trying to conquer his addiction, and Sharon interviews for new jobs. The family has to move at the end of Genesis's school year, but she's formed friendships which will last much longer.

*Did the plot keep you interested?*

Yes, the plot kept me interested with Genesis' several problems she tried to overcome, but always looking to music and friendship as her safe haven.

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

The pace of the book was just right. It wasn't difficult to follow the storyline while it was developing.

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

This book is appropriate for grades 8-10.

*What type of reader would you recommend this book to?*

I would recommend this book to a teen struggling with self-love, friendship, or other problems teens face while discovering themselves.

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

This book will captivate almost any teen, whether they share the same problems as Genesis or not. We can all sympathize for her pain and struggle, and find deep emotions while connecting with her.

**Rating: 5 stars:**

I'm really glad I read this book; it was awesome!

This book made me further realize that any person can be dealing with a variety of problems no matter who they are or how they look like. So, we shouldn't be quick to judge others and what we assume their life is like.