

Title: *Light It Up*
Author: Kekla Magoon
Genre: Realistic Fiction

Reviewer Name and Grade: Yujay A., 9th Grade

Date Reviewed: February 18, 2021

One night in the town of Underhill, African-American 13-year old Shae Tatum is walking home, when she is shot and killed by a white police officer. The story instantly goes national, sparking outrage in communities across the country. Throughout the story, we learn more about the situation and the response through the perspective of many characters. Shae Tatum was mentally disabled, and was jogging home with headphones on. She was described as big for her age, and could be mistaken for a man. Kimberly and Zeke work at a local volunteer activist group, and immediately organize peaceful protests and spread the news through social media. Brick is the leader of the local gang 8-5 Kings, and believes the protests should take a more violent approach, following the Black Panthers. Robb, Tyrell, and Devante are friends attending a university outside of the town of Underhill. Robb comes from a rich family, and is white, but wants to take action and fight the injustices against African-Americans. Tyrell comes from Underhill, and years prior, his best friend Tariq was shot by a white man, which also became a national news story. Tyrell distracts himself from the pain of losing his best friend by burying himself in his studies, and has no interest in knowing anything about the Shae Tatum case. Will is a high schooler obsessed with graffiti and street art. When the protests start, Will makes inspiring murals dedicated to Shae Tatum which call for the African-American community to rise. Through Officer Young and the sole witness of the shooting, we learn about what happens in the police department. Law enforcement believes the officer who shot Tatum was in the right, and believe there should be no punishments, and will do anything to make sure the officer is not charged. Racist white supremacists send the officer money and have counter protests, hurling insults at the Black protesters and even using violence. These characters are all entwined and will be integral in the fight for justice for Shae Tatum. Throughout the rest of the novel, the African-American community strives to attain justice for Shae Tatum through demonstrations, while law enforcement and racists try to stop them.

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

The plot definitely kept me interested, as there was a lot of action and suspense. The entire book had me waiting to see whether there would be justice for Shae, and there was a lot of comedy as well as heavy and deep parts.

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

The pace of this novel was just right, as it gave you enough time to process all of the information and think about what was happening, but was not too slow and boring.

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

This book is appropriate for grade levels 9 and up as there is a lot of mature content such as strong language, violence, and racism. There is also drugs and alcohol and there are some racist slurs used.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

Any reader who likes a book very relevant to current day issues would enjoy this novel.

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

The book takes place from many different character's viewpoints, and the author adds in parts of news interviews and social media to explain what is going on outside of Underhill.

Rating:

I would rate *Light It Up* 5 stars as it is very relevant to current day issues and had a lot of action, comedy, and made you think about injustice. The story flowed very well and was very interesting. *Light it Up* really showed the extent of police brutality in the U.S. and helped shed light on injustice and racism.