

Title: *Black Girl Unlimited:
The Remarkable Story of a Teenage Wizard*

Author: Echo Brown

Genre: Young Adult, Fiction, Fantasy

Reviewer Name and Grade: Yaseen V., 10th Grade

Date Reviewed: July 9, 2021

Echo Brown's book, Black Girl Unlimited: The Remarkable Story of a Teenage Wizard, vividly portrays the remarkable life of a black girl living on the Eastern side of New York. The East side of New York is characterized by poverty, toxic home environments, drug abuse, and other difficult topics that are not as prevalent in the Western side of New York. The author names the main character after herself, and it's revealed that Echo is a wizard who sees magic all around her. When she moves to a new school on the West side, she observes new magical portals being opened up. Everyday, she is able to travel between two worlds and leaves her friends, brothers, and a part of herself behind as she crosses over. However, despite being able to see the magic around her, Echo is also able to see the black veil of depression that threatens to ruin the hard work Echo has done thus far. I found this book to be incredibly captivating because it is largely autobiographical to the author's life. This book contains very heavy topics, such as the evils of drug abuse, the traumatic experiences of poverty, horrific sexual violence, outright racism, and crippling depression. However, through these difficult topics, readers learn more about Echo as a person and various types of struggles humans deal with. This book is not one that is read lightly because it is full of various types of trauma and pain Echo dealt with as a child. However, the way the author wrote this book is very moving, and I found it hard to put down. I think this book did a great job at introducing such topics because the author included magical realism. Overall, the story of echo brown is incredibly poignant and should be a must read for all young adults.

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

Yes, I found that plot of this book to be mesmerizing because of the amount of topics that the author shed light on. The fact that part of this book is autobiographical and that the main character is named after the author herself shows how important the story is to Echo Brown. I liked how the plot progressed and found the plotline of magic a great addition to the story.

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

I thought the pace of this book was just right because I was able to fully understand the depth of certain things that happened to Echo and the people around her. I think if the plot had been faster, it would have skipped over the overall importance of heavy topics such as drugs, abuse, poverty, sexual violence, and racism.

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

Due to the very heavy contents of this book and the experiences that the main character went through, I think this book is suitable for readers in ninth grade and up. I believe this because much of the topics discussed in the book are for mature audiences that can understand the gravity of the situations and why they are important to recognize.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to a reader who is mature and is able to handle heavy topics with the correct understanding of why it is important. Without this maturity, readers would not be able to understand the gravity of certain situations and the experiences that Echo goes through in the book.

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

Before reading this book, I think it is important for readers to understand the scope of the different topics that are brought to light in this book. This information is important because if readers are uncomfortable with reading about difficult topics, they should refrain from reading this book. Throughout the book, the author discusses heavy drug abuse such as cocaine usage, sexual violence and rape, toxic home environments, blatant racism against black people, and the stark difference in class between the Eastern and Western parts of New York. If readers are okay with these topics, I would recommend this book because I think it is important to read about these topics.

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

In conclusion, I would rate this book four stars. One thing I really liked about this book is how the author incorporates relatable and realistic scenarios where people have to choose between choices that will not always benefit from. I also loved how the book is both autobiographical and fictional by infusing it with magical realism. Ultimately, the book fearlessly explores the intersections of poverty, sexual violence, depression, racism, and sexism through the lens of an coming-to-age African American girl from the East side of New York and how she navigates the various difficulties in life.