

Title: *Concrete Rose*
Author: Angie Thomas
Genre: Realistic Fiction

Reviewer Name and Grade: Yujay A., 10th Grade

Date Reviewed: February 22, 2022

Concrete Rose starts off with Mav, the main character, and his friends playing basketball at a local park. Mav explains that he and his friends are members of the King Lords, a local gang. The King Lords are based in a city called Garden Heights, and are rivals with the Garden Disciples gang. Mav lives with his mother, as his father has been in jail since Mav was seven years old. Mav's father was once the leader of the King Lords, but was arrested. The gang has levels, with Mav being a "li'l homie" who sells weed and initiates new members, and older members being the "big homies" who sell more dangerous drugs. Maverick and his best friend King sell their own drugs for extra money on the side, without the gang knowing, because they need the money. Maverick uses the money to support his mother with the bills and to buy gifts for his girlfriend Lisa. However, a couple weeks before Maverick enters his senior year in high school, he finds out that he is the father of a girl named Iesha's children. When Mav and Lisa broke up for a very short amount of time, Mav had a child with Iesha, but the baby was believed to be King's. However, a DNA test reveals Mav to be the father, and Iesha leaves Mav with the baby. Mav has never cared for a baby before and has great difficulty in doing so, even with the help of his mother. Mav's older cousin, Dre, who is also a King Lord, stops by to give some advice. Dre is very close with Mav and has his own wife and daughter. Dre tells Mav that he needs to be a good father by changing his lifestyle. Dre convinces Mav to look for a job instead of selling drugs. Mav begins working for his next door neighbor, Mr. Wyatt, who is strict and does not pay as well as selling drugs. However, the baby causes several problems for Mav. Lisa breaks up with Mav when she finds out that he had a baby with another girl, and King is angry at Mav for leaving the drug business. One night, after Mav and Dre hang out, Dre is shot dead in his car. Throughout the novel, Mav must take revenge on Dre's killer, all while dealing with problems with school, Lisa, the gang, and his family.

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.

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

The pace of the book was just right, as I could understand everything going on and still not be bored.

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

This book is appropriate for grade levels 9 and up, as there is violence, strong language, drugs, and inappropriate scenes.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to anybody who enjoys the realistic fiction genre.

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

The novel is the prequel to *The Hate U Give*, another realistic fiction novel written by Angie Thomas.

I would rate *Concrete Rose* 4 stars as it was a great book which showed life as a teenager in a gang. There was a lot of action, suspense, and drama and I was never bored while reading the novel. However, the storyline did not seem to have a main conflict so it became difficult at times to follow what was happening. Overall, *Concrete Rose* was a great book that I would recommend to anybody looking for a good realistic fiction novel.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Serena C., 10th Grade

Date Reviewed: June 12, 2022

Concrete Rose follows seventeen-year-old Maverick Carter as he navigates life in Garden Heights. The book opens up as Maverick plays basketball with his cousin Dre and his friends Shawn and King. The group belongs to a gang known as the King Lords. Shawn and Dre hold high positions in the gang, while Maverick and King are less respected and teased by the other members. The other gang members refer to them as L'il Don and L'il Zeke, respectively, because their fathers were once original gang members. Maverick's girlfriend Lisa is also watching the game, and cheers for him.

After the game, Maverick's mom takes him to get a DNA test, where he finds out that he is the father of a baby boy. The mother of the child abandons Maverick and his mother, leaving them to take care of the child. The pair bring the baby home, and Dre visits and offers advice. A few days later, Dre takes Maverick to Mr. Wyatt, the owner of a local grocery store. He also convinces Maverick to stop selling drugs, and start earning money by working for Mr. Wyatt. He then drops Maverick off to see Lisa, where Maverick tells her about the baby. Lisa breaks up with him, devastating Maverick.

Now starting senior year, Maverick's life is messy and chaotic. All of his energy is spent taking care of his son, Seven, leaving him no time to do homework or hangout with his friends. One night after putting Seven to sleep, Dre visits Maverick. The two sit in a car together, eating pizza and talking. Maverick goes inside to check on Seven, and suddenly hears gunshots. He rushes outside and sees that Dre has been murdered, with the perpetrator nowhere in sight. Dre's death crushes Maverick, causing his grades and friendships to suffer.

A few weeks later, Lisa visits Maverick, and the two find out that she is pregnant. Maverick's mother comes home, and after finding out the news, she declares that Maverick needs to visit his father in prison. During the visit, Maverick argues with his father, and he storms out in anger. Afterwards, King and the entire Carter family come to Maverick's house to celebrate Thanksgiving. The two friends talk until Carlos, Lisa's brother, arrives and beats up Maverick. Some time later, Maverick and Lisa go to her doctor's appointment, and Maverick decides that he needs to sell drugs again in order to provide for his two kids. Maverick drops Lisa home, and sees Red – a local vendor who often cheats people out of their money – wearing Dre's watch; Maverick learns that Red murdered Dre.

Maverick decides that he has to kill Red, but is unable to go through with it after holding a gun to Red's head. He visits Lisa in tears, later returning home and deciding to quit selling drugs for good. While retrieving the drugs, Maverick accidentally flushes some of them down the toilet, angering King. The book ends with Maverick starting to take classes so that he can get his GED and eventually own a business. Maverick and Lisa also find out that they will be having a girl, and the two discuss possible names.

Did the plot keep you interested?

Yes, the plot was very engaging for the entirety of the story. There was always something happening, which made the book enjoyable to read. Also, since the novel was told from Maverick's point of view, it was easy to connect with the characters and the story.

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

I thought that the pace of the book was just right; there was always something crazy happening to Maverick which kept the book very interesting.

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

I would recommend that people in grades 8 and up read this book, as there is some explicit language and events that happen. Also, the book explores complex themes, which one would be more likely to understand if they are older.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to anybody who enjoys reading books with a lot of action, adventure, and drama. The book is over 300 pages, but it is a quick read that anyone can finish within a few days.

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

Concrete Rose is a prequel to *The Hate U Give*. I would highly recommend for people to read *The Hate U Give* first because it provides context for this book.

I would rate this book *4 stars*. I found the book to be very enjoyable and interesting. The characters were lovable and the author's overall writing style was unique. However, I personally enjoyed *The Hate U Give* more than *Concrete Rose* because I liked the plot of the former better.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Joon-Gi K., 7th Grade

Date Reviewed: July 21st, 2022

Concrete Rose begins with Mav, the son of the gang leader called Big Don, playing basketball with his friends. Mav and his friends are part of a local gang called the King Lords, in which they have settled in the city of Garden Heights. Maverick lives with his mother, while his father remains in prison. His father used to be the leader of the King Lords but got arrested. There are many levels to the gang, Mav being a "I'il homie"; someone who sells weed and recruits other people into the gang. There are also the "big homies", who make alliances and sell the more dangerous drugs. Mav and his best friend King sell drugs on their own, secretly making extra money. With the money Mav makes, he supports his mother's bills, and buys many gifts for Lisa, his girlfriend. However, with great risks came great costs. During one of his high school classes, he gets notified that he is the father of a boy from one of Iesha's children. When Mav and Lisa had broken up for a short time, he had had a child with Iesha, but a child believed to be King's. A DNA test was taken, and it was confirmed that the child was Mav's. Iesha, overcome with "hardships", leaves the baby to Maverick and disappears. Mav had no experience with babies or newborns whatsoever, so he had lots of trouble and stress at the beginning. With the help of his parents and his cousin Dre, he steadily made progress. However, he needed to take care of his son, and so he had to give up on the secret drug business that King and he had done before. King got upset and did not stay on very happy terms with Mav. Due to this, Maverick did not make as much money and struggled to keep up with the taxes and checks for the house. Not long after this did Lisa break up with Mav because Lisa had a baby girl with him. Later, after Mav and his cousin hang out, Dre gets shot in his car and dies. During the book, Mav tries to hunt down the killer of his cousin, fix his issues with his children, and get back together with Lisa.

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for nonfiction) keep you interested? Yes, it kept me interested, and there was always some kind of event going on, which kept the story flowing and fun to read.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right? I think it was a bit too fast because the story had many negative events that kept on coming and made the story a bit fast paced.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for? What type of reader would you recommend this book to? I think the book is appropriate for grade levels 8-10 because it has lots of harsh language, sexual content, and talk about drugs. In my opinion, anyone who loves to read realistic fiction or even just fantasy fiction would enjoy this.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book? The book has lots of talk about drugs and sexual content, and it is the sequel to the book *The Hate U Give*.

I would rate this book 4 stars. The novel is very interesting and enjoyable; however, it is a bit too fast paced compared to other novels. There are many events that speed up the climax and it skips past events very quickly. It does include lots of realistic events and actions about gangs, which helps visualizing and connecting with the real world very helpful. In conclusion, the novel is very fun and enjoyable for anyone who enjoys reading fiction and suspense.