

Title: *Ace of Spades*
Author: Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé
Genre: Mystery, Thriller, LGBTQ+, Young Adult

Reviewer Name and Grade: Julianna V., 11th Grade

Date Reviewed: August 9, 2022

The novel *Ace of Spades* written by debut author Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé follows the two main protagonists Devon Richards and Chiamaka Adebayo. They are both high school seniors, and the only African American students that attend the infamous Niveus Private Academy, which is known for its wealth. This story takes place at the start of the new school year. Although Devon is extremely passionate for music and hopes to get into Juilliard, he feels like an outcast at his school not only because of his skin color, but, unlike all his other fellow wealthy students, he comes from the very poor side of town; his mother has to work multiple jobs to pay off his expensive tuition while struggling to pay the house bills, put food on the table, and provide for his younger brothers. The only other student at Niveus who he considers his “friend” is Jack, who also comes from his poor neighborhood, but the other students ignore him as if he were a ghost. That is why Devon is surprised to find out he was one of the Senior Perfects, which is given to the most well known and intelligent students at school. Chiamaka, on the other hand, is known as the “popular girl” in school, who takes as many challenging classes as possible while maintaining a high GPA and being the head of many after school clubs in hopes of getting into Yale. However, Chiamaka does not have real friends, except for Jamie; she only talks to other popular girls for social status. Due to her popularity and grades, no one is surprised to find out that she was chosen to be Senior Head Perfect. Although Devon and Chiamaka are the only African American students at their school, they never associate with each other ... until Aces comes along. At the start of the first week of the new school year, an anonymous person known as Aces exposes Devon and Chimaka’s darkest secrets and private relationships by texting private photos and videos to the entire students body at Niveus to try to take down Devon and Chiamaka's reputation. As Aces shows no signs of backing down, Devon and Chimaka work together to try to uncover who is behind these anonymous texts as they unravel surprising secrets along the way.

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for nonfiction) keep you interested?
Absolutely, without a doubt! I felt that in almost every chapter throughout the book, there were many secrets revealed regarding the character’s personal life or the truth behind Aces which kept me interested and I wanted to continue reading.

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

I felt that the overall pace of the book was just right. As I previously mentioned, many things were taking place in every chapter of the book and I felt that the pace of this book was slightly faster compared to the pace of other books I have read, but it kept the book interesting.

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

I believe that this book is appropriate for older high schoolers (grades 11-12) or any older people. Like many Young Adult books, this book contains mature language and discusses mature topics; therefore, I feel that older readers may have a better understanding of this book. Also, because the main protagonists of the story are both high school seniors, I feel that it is more relatable for older audiences.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to any reader, but especially those who enjoy thriller books, mystery books, or books that discuss racism. The two main protagonists of this book are African American who receive prejudice and are treated unfairly by other white students, and even teachers. Also, this book involves LGBTQ+ romantic relationships and the discovery of one's sexuality. This book contains many topics that will keep any reader interested in the story.

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

Some readers may be sensitive to certain topics discussed in this book, so I would recommend searching trigger warnings before reading. I would also recommend going to the author's website where one can find the trigger warnings of the book, artwork of some of the characters and some information about them, and even a spotify music playlist that correlates with the book (which I think is pretty cool!) Also, there is mature language throughout the book, so I would advise readers to be aware of that as well.

I would rate this book *4 stars: I enjoyed this book and found it worthwhile reading.* I had heard of this book before I read it, and I knew it was popular on social media, especially TikTok (or "booktok"). After reading the book, I now see why it is popular! Going into the book, I had high expectations because I knew it had a great reading on Goodreads, and this book did not disappoint; in reality, I would rate this book 4.5 out of 5 stars. I feel that many people should read this book at least once in their lives because I feel it is an important read. This book discusses racism, which I feel that more people should read about because it is unfortunately a prevalent topic especially in today's society; no one should ever receive the treatment that Devon and Chimaka received just because of their race. Also, this book discusses topics about discovering one's sexuality and LGBTQ+ relationships. This topic is also prevalent in today's society, and I feel that people should not be treated disrespectfully for being who they are and expressing themselves. Not only does this book teach readers about important topics in today's society, but it also has a mystery component to it that makes the book even more interesting. This book will for sure entertain and inform any type of reader, and I highly recommend that everyone should read this book at least once.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Alexandra P., Grade 9

Date Reviewed: March 24, 2023

Ace of Spades by Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé is a young adult thriller set in an elite private school in England during the present day. The story revolves around two main characters, Chiamaka Adebayo, a talented musician and scholarship student, and Devon Richards, the

popular and charismatic head boy. Chiamaka is a black student from a working-class background, while Devon is a biracial student from a wealthy family. Despite their differences, they are paired together to work on a school project. However, Chiamaka soon becomes the target of a series of attacks that threaten to ruin her reputation and her future. The attacks begin with anonymous letters and escalate to hacked social media accounts and videos. Chiamaka believes that someone is targeting her, but the school administration refuses to take her seriously. Desperate for help, she turns to Devon for assistance. They are startled to learn that the perpetrator has been utilizing the Ace of Spades as their emblem as they begin their inquiry. As they work to solve the case, they become more and more caught up in a web of secrets and lies that makes them suspicious of others around them and even leads them to suspect someone they never would have thought of. Chiamaka is a strong and uncompromising girl who is determined to enroll in a top music school despite her circumstances and refuses to let them ruin her spirit. Devon, on the other hand, progressively reveals a raw and exposed side as he struggles to maintain his standing after being initially portrayed as an arrogant and entitled head boy. The bold novel *Ace of Spades* boldly addresses issues of privilege, power, and identity. Everyone who wants to learn more about the difficulties that students from minority populations have when attending elite colleges should read it. Until the very last chapter, the novel keeps readers on the edge of their seats as they traverse the ugly realities of racism, homophobia, and cyberbullying. In addition to being an exciting thriller, *Ace of Spades* asks readers to consider their place in society. It skillfully combines aspects of mystery and social critique, giving readers a thought-provoking and educational experience.

Did the plot keep you interested?

Yes, the plot of *Ace of Spades* kept me very interested as it was very captivating and entertaining. The plot, a mystery, kept me on the edge of my seat the whole time I was reading.

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

In my opinion, the pace of the book was just right.

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

This book is appropriate for grades 8 and above.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to teen readers who enjoy mysteries and thrillers. It would be especially appealing to readers who are interested in exploring themes of power, privilege, and identity.

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

The book deals with some heavy themes such as racism, homophobia, and cyberbullying, so it may not be suitable for all readers. Also, in general, the book has received positive reviews and has been praised heavily for its plot and representation of real-life issues.

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

This book, in my opinion, was a very worthwhile read- I loved the way it covered heavy, real life topics while still being an interesting thriller read. However, I think the book covered slightly too many different issues and themes, so it was a bit overwhelming at times.