The Hate U Give

by Kay Whaley



In The Hate U Give, Starr is a black girl who lives in a poor, black neighborhood, and attends a posh, mostly white prep-school. Starr balances her worlds by keeping them separate. Embarrassed by neighborhood, she never has her school friends over. which is how she is able to keep her white boyfriend a secret from her dad. Starr’s separate worlds become less manageable after she sees her best friend from childhood, Khalil an unarmed black man, shot by a white police officer. Starr must learn to navigate the racism she realizes her friends have, to working through the grief of seeing her friend shot in a senseless fashion. Starr finds out how strong she is and who her friends are in this novel about a young black woman who comes of age in highly racial times.

Angie Thomas was born and raised in Mississippi. Prior to becoming an author, she was a teen rapper. Angie has an MFA in Creative Writing from Belhaven University. The title of her book, The Hate U Give, is from part of the acronym, THUG LIFE, coined by Tupac Shakur. Angie’s book has been made into a movie with a release date of October 2018. While the movie doesn’t follow the book exactly, she’s called the two versions “fraternal twins,” she promises those who read the book won’t be disappointed by the move. Her website is [www.angiethomas.com](http://www.angiethomas.com).



https://www.amazon.com/The-Hate-U-Give/dp/3570164829/

**Quote #1**

The officer parks and puts his brights on. I blink to keep from being blinded.

I remember something else Daddy said. *If you’re with somebody, you better hope they don’t have nothing on them, or both of y’all going down.*

“K, you don’t have anything in the car, do you?” I ask.

He watches the cop in his side mirror. “Nah.”

The officer approaches the driver’s door and taps the window. Khalil cranks the handle to roll it down. As if we aren’t blinded enough, the officer beams flashlight in our faces.

“License, registration and proof of insurance.”

Khalil breaks a rule – he doesn’t do what the cop wants. “What you pull us over for?”

“License, registration, and proof of insurance.”

“I said what you pull us over for?

“Khalil,” I plead. “Do what he said.”

Khalil groans and takes his wallet out. The officer follows his movements with the flashlight.

My heart pounds loudly, but Daddy’s instructions echo in my head: *Get a good look at the cop’s face. If you can remember his badge number, that’s even better.*

With the flashlight following Khalil’s hands, I make out the numbers on the badge – one-fifteen. He’s white, midthirties to early forties, has a brown buzz cut and a thin scar over his top lip.

Khalil hands the officer his papers and license.

One-Fifteen looks over them. “Where are you two coming from tonight?”

“Nunya,” Khalil says, meaning none of your business. “What you pull me over for?”

“Your taillight’s broken.”

“So are you gon’ give me a ticket or what?” Khalil asks.

“You know what? Get out the car, smart guy.”

“Man, just give me my ticket—“

“Get out the car! Hands up, where I can see them.”

Khalil gets out with his hands up. One-Fifteen yanks him by his arm and pins him against the back door.

I fight to find my voice. “He didn’t mean—”

“Hands on the dashboard!” the officer barks at me. “Don’t move!”

I do what he tells me, but my hands are shaking too much to be still.

He pats Khalil down. “Okay, smart mouth let’s see what we find on you today.”

“You ain’t gon’ find nothing, “Khalil says.

One-Fifteen pats him down two more times. He turns up empty. “Stay here,” he tells Khalil. “And you.” He looks in the window at me. “Don’t move.”

I can’t even nod.

The officer walks back to his patrol car.

My parents haven’t raised me to fear the police, just to be smart around them. They told me it’s not smart to move while a cop has his back to you.

Khalil does. He comes to his door.

It’s not smart to make a sudden move.

Khalil does. He opens the driver’s door.

“You okay, Starr—”

*Pow!*

One. Khalil’s body jerks. Blood splatters from his back. He holds on to the door to keep himself upright.

*Pow!*

Two. Khalil gasps.

*Pow!*

Three. Khalil looks at me, stunned.

He falls to the ground. (pp 21 – 23)

**Commentary on Quote #1**

This scene, which happens in the first 25 pages of the novel. This scene is the impetus for the social justice Starr takes on for the rest of the novel. Khalil is Starr’s best friend from childhood. They are in a car together, after leaving a party. They are driving and talking, doing nothing illegal. However, as the text points out, Khalil’s car has a taillight which is out. The police pull over the car. Starr’s parents had given her lessons on what to do if she ever got pulled over – things to which she adhered to. She wondered if Khalil had been given the same lessons, and she fears he hadn’t. During the stop, while Khalil isn’t necessary disrespectful, he doesn’t do exactly as the cop asks and his shot and killed. Starr is the only witness to the killing. In the upcoming months after Khalil’s death, she must decide what steps she should and shouldn’t take to help avenge his death and to quit living in a divided world.

**Quote #2**

I get out of the car. For at least seven hours I don’t have to talk about One-Fifteen. I don’t have to think about Khalil. I just have to be normal Starr at normal Williamson and have a normal day. That means flipping the switch in my brain so I’m Williamson Starr. Williamson Starr doesn’t use slang – if a rapper would say it, she doesn’t say it, even if her white friends do. Slang makes them look cool. Slang makes her “hood.” Williamson Starr holds her tongue when people piss her off so nobody things she’s the ”angry black girl.” Williamson Starr is approachable. No stank-eyes, side-eyes, none of that. Williamson Starr is nonconfrontational. Basically, Williamson Starr doesn’t give anyone a reason to call her ghetto.

I can’t stand myself for doing it, but I do it anyway. (pp 71)

**Commentary on Quote #2**

This quote is also taken from the beginning of the book, when we’re learning who Starr is and what makes her tick. I thought this quote very telling as it shows how Starr feels as though she has to straddle two worlds, a black world and a white world. She feels like at school, she can’t be herself – she must be a white version of herself. It’s obvious she doesn’t like herself for acting this way, but she feels like this is the only way she’ll fit in and success, if she hides her true self from her friends at school.

**Quote #3**

“Who said talking isn’t doing something?” she says. “It’s more productive than silence. Remember what I told you about your voice?

“You said it’s my biggest weapon.”

“And I man that.” She stares at me a second, then sights out her nose. “You want to fight the system tonight?”

I nod.

“C’mon then.”

Ms. Ofrah takes my hand and leads me through the crowd.

**Quote #3, continued**

“Fire me,” she says.

“Huh?”

“Tell me you no longer want me to represent you.”

“I no longer want you to represent me?” I ask.

“Good. As of now I’m not your attorney. So if your parents find out about this, I didn’t do it as your attorney but as an activist. You saw the bus near the intersection?”

“Yeah.”

“If the officers react, run straight to it. Got it?”

“But what –”

She takes me to the patrol car and motions at her colleague. The lady climbs off the hands of Ms. Ofrah the bullhorn. Ms. Ofrah passes it over to me.

“Use your weapon,” she says.

Another one of her coworkers lifts me and sets me on top of the cop car.

About ten feet away there’s a shrine for Khalil in the middle of the street; lit candles, teddy bears, framed pictures, and balloons. It separates the protestors from a cluster of officers in riot gear. It’s not nearly as many cops as it was on Magnolia, but still...it’s cops.

I turn toward the crowd. The watch me expectantly.

The bullhorn is as heavy as a gun. Ironic since Ms. Ofrah said to use my weapon. I have the hardest time lifting it. Shit, I have no idea what to say. I put it near my mouth and press the button.

“My—” It makes a loud, earsplitting noise.

“Don’t be scared!” somebody in the crowd yells. “Speak!”

“You need to exit the street immediately,” the cop says.

You know what? Fuck it.

“My name is Starr. I’m the one who saw what happened to Khalil,” I say into the bullhorn. “And it wasn’t right.”

I get a bunch of “yeahs” and “amens” from the crowd.

“We were’t doing anything wrong. Not only did Officer Cruise assume we were up to no good, he assumed we were criminals. Well, Officer Cruise is a criminal.

The crowd cheers and claps. Ms. Ofrah says, “Speak!”

This amps me up.

I turn to the cops. “I’m sick of this! Just like y’all think all of us are bad because of some people, we think the same about y’all. Until you give us a reason to think otherwise, we’ll keep protesting.”

More cheers, and I can’t lie, it eggs me on. Forget trigger happy—speaker happy is more my thing.

“Everybody want to talk about how Khalil died,” I say. “But this isn’t about how Khalil died. It’s about the fact that he lived. His life mattered. Khalil lived!” I look at the cops again. “You hear me? Khalil lived!”

“You have until the count of three to disperse,” the officer on the loudspeaker says.

“Khalil lived!” we chant.

“One.”

“Khalil lived!”

“Two.”  
 “Khalil lived!”

**Commentary on Quote #3**

This scene is at the end of the book and is the culmination of the ordeal Starr has gone through. Starr has a choice, she can partake in the violence and the rioting that happens after the community finds out there will be no indictment of the white police officer who shot Khalil. She has a moment where she’s in – she wants to burn something down. But, in the end, she doesn’t. She uses her voice and become an activist. She understands being quiet won’t help – she must speak up for her community and more importantly for the senseless killing of Khalil.

**Text Complexity**

Lexile Level: 590L Ages 14 – 18.

The Lexile Score associated with this book is 590L which corresponds to a 4th grade reading level. Neither the sentence structure nor the vocabulary used in this book are complex or hard to understand. However, the content of this book has a mature and complex theme, thus more appropriate for high school students. There is also some language in this book which makes it more suited for the upper grades.

ATOS: 3.9 Book Level, Upper Grades 9 – 12

Typically, an ATOS score of 3.9 is more indicative of a book for 3rd grade students. However, because of the subject matter and profanity, the book is deemed more suitable for kids in high school.

Dave-Chall 5.8 Grades 5 – 6

**Rationale is this a good book for high school students to read:**

1. This book is a great conduit for talking about race relations especially in terms of relations with law enforcement.
2. The Hate U Give can help open dialogue about income equality especially in education.
3. I think this book can help slay some stereotypes people have regarding people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.
4. Some students may have had a brother, uncle, dad or somebody in their life who has been killed unjustly. It can help them articulate the pain and loss they feel for such a senseless killing.
5. The book shows that different is good, you can have a little different family set-up and that’s not a bad thing, just a different thing.

**Why this is a good book and why everyone should read it:**

As a book to teach to high school students, I like this book because it has some of the important Exeter qualities. These qualities, in my opinion, should put The Hate U Give on a short list of books to read. It has an exciting, fast paces plot with a touch of tension. The theme in this book allows for the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth. An Exeter theme which this book covers is the theme of engaging readers with difficult and challenging themes to help broaden the viewpoint. The book is well written with believable characters – including a strong female protagonist.

On a personal note, I like this book for many reasons. It’s a fast read, with a lot of action and emotion. There’s a hint of romance, which I think gives more depth to Starr’s character. It has suspenseful and tense moments. It has family issues which I can relate to – and a whole lot of things I’ve never experienced. I like the style in which it is written, in a conversational way so that I feel as if I am eavesdropping on Starr. I like Starr, the main character, she’s real.

Unfortunately, I find this book to be a sad testament on today’s society. The I think and hope that the lack of understanding between people can be overcome with compassion and education. I think by reading books such as this, the compassion and education can begin – which is why this book is worth reading.