

# *The hate u give*

*By Angie Thomas*

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## **Genre and Subject**

*Race relations*

*African Americans*

*Police-community relations*

## **Synopsis**

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed.

Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr.

But what Starr does—or does not—say could upend her community. It could also endanger her life.

## **Author Biography**

Angie Thomas was born and raised in Mississippi, but now calls Atlanta her home. She is a former teen rapper whose greatest accomplishment was an article about her in *Right-On Magazine*. She holds a BFA in Creative Writing from Belhaven University and an unofficial degree in Hip Hop. She can also still rap if needed.

Angie is an inaugural winner of the Walter Dean Myers Grant 2015, awarded by We Need Diverse Books. Her debut novel, *THE HATE U GIVE*, started as a senior project in college. It was later acquired by the Balzer+Bray imprint of HarperCollins Publishers in a 13-publisher auction and debuted at #1 on the New York Times bestseller list, winning the ALA's William C. Morris Debut Award and the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award (USA), the Waterstones Children's Book Prize (UK), and the Deutscher Jugendliterapreis (Germany). *THE HATE U GIVE* was adapted into a critically acclaimed film from Fox 2000, starring Amandla Stenberg and directed by George Tillman, Jr.

Angie's second novel, *ON THE COME UP*, is a #1 New York Times bestseller as well, and a film is in development with Paramount Pictures with Angie acting as a producer. In 2020, Angie released *FIND YOUR VOICE: A Guided Journal to Writing Your Truth* as a tool to help aspiring writers tell their stories. In 2021, Angie returned to the world of Garden Heights with *CONCRETE ROSE*, a prequel to *THE HATE U GIVE* focused on seventeen-year-old Maverick Carter that debuted at #1 on the New York Times bestseller list.

## Discussion Starters

1. As Starr and Khalil listen to Tupac, Khalil explains what Tupac said "Thug Life" meant. Discuss the meaning of the term "Thug Life" as an acronym and why the author might have chosen part of this as the title of the book. In what ways do you see this in society today? (Chapter 1, p. 17)
2. Chapter 2 begins with Starr flashing back to two talks her parents had with her when she was young. One was about sex ("the usual birds and bees"). The second was about what precautions to take when encountering a police officer (Chapter 2, p. 20). Have you had a similar conversation about what to do when stopped by the police? Reflect upon or imagine this conversation
3. Thomas frequently uses motifs of silence and voice throughout the book. Find instances in the book where silence or voice and speech are noted, and talk about the author's possible intentions for emphasizing these motifs
4. At the police station after Starr details the events leading up to the shooting, the detective shifts her focus to Khalil's past. Why do you think the detective did this? Discuss Starr's reaction to this "bait" (Chapter 6, pp. 102–103). Discuss the way that Khalil is portrayed by the media. How does Starr work to counteract this media portrayal?
5. Once news of Khalil's shooting spreads across the neighborhood, unrest arises: "Sirens wail outside. The news shows three patrol cars that have been set ablaze at the police precinct.... A gas station near the freeway gets looted.... My neighborhood is a war zone" (Chapter 9, pp. 136–139). Respond to this development and describe some parallels to current events
6. How do you think Starr would define family? What about Seven, DeVante, Kenya, and Khalil? Do you have to be related by blood to consider a person family? How do you define family?
7. Chris and Starr have a breakthrough in their relationship—Starr admits to him that she was in the car with Khalil and shares the memories of Natasha's murder (Chapter 17, pp. 298–302). Discuss why Starr's admission and releasing of this burden to Chris is significant. Explore the practice of "code switching" and discuss how you might code switch in different circumstances in your own life
8. How and why does the neighbourhood react to the grand jury's decision (Chapter 23)? How does Starr use her voice as a weapon, and why does she feel that it is vital that she does? Refer back to "Thug Life" and discuss how the acronym resonates in this chapter
9. Maverick's rose garden is a recurring symbol throughout the course of the novel. Discuss the symbolism of the rose garden and how it contributes to the overall theme.
10. Starr pledges to "never be quiet" (Chapter 26, p. 444). After reading this book, how can you use your voice to promote and advance social justice? Reflect on how you and your community discuss and address inequality.

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