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***The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas**

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While it can be argued that the main selling point of Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* is its relevance in an age when it seems school shootings and police brutality stories dominate the news and the online conversation, the strength of the plot comes from the compelling arc of its protagonist, Starr. Like many leading characters in coming-of-age stories, Starr is trying to figure out her place in the world and exactly who she is, but the difference here and what elevates *The Hate U Give* is that Starr suffers from knowing who she is but not being able to admit it. The culture shock that allows for the inciting incident of the novel – the shooting of Khalil – to happen is reflected in Starr's constant struggle with being "too black" or "not black enough". Her growth in dealing with the aftermath of the shooting is what leads her to becoming comfortable in her own skin, a lesson that is delivered tastefully and deliberately throughout the novel.

Thomas' writing style paints a vivid picture of Starr's world and gives her a unique voice. Far from being a bleak outlook of the future, the book invites conversation about the importance of using your voice while remaining funny, relevant and in touch with its target audience. The characters are three dimensional, flawed and create a compassionate relationship with the reader.

In the movie adaptation, the story loses some of its power due to the fact we don't spend enough time with Starr's personal struggle, which is to be expected when over four hundred pages of material have to be condensed into two hours. However, where the movie fails is in eliminating some of the interesting conflicts that push Starr on her journey: namely the racist classmate who tests the protagonist's definition of friendship and the discussions between her parentes about moving out of the neighborhood and what that means for their "loyalty" to the culture. While the film is heartfelt and hits the right note on many points, it misses the slow buildup and satisfying but intimate resolution the novel allows the reader.

Overall, I believe *The Hate U Give* is an essential piece of modern literature that can spark important conversations not just about the reality of racial tensions in America, but about the nature of pride and truth when it comes to your own self knowledge.