

CLASSROOM UNIT FOR *DEAR MARTIN* AND *DEAR JUSTYCE*



Photos © Nigel Livingstone



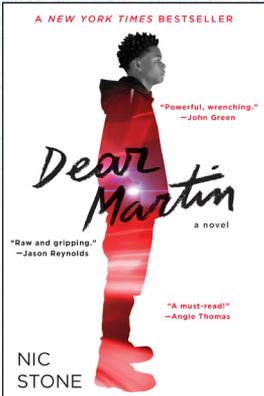
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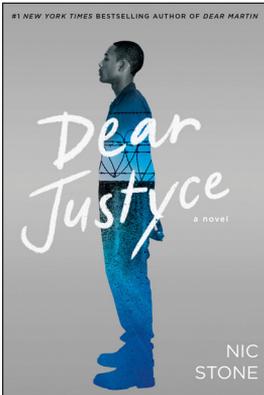
[TheRandomSchoolHouse](https://www.facebook.com/TheRandomSchoolHouse)



TR: 978-1-101-93952-9
EL: 978-1-101-93951-2

Justyce McAllister is top of his class and set for the Ivy League—but none of that matters to the police officer who just put him in handcuffs. And despite leaving his rough neighborhood behind, he can't escape the scorn of his former peers or the ridicule of his new classmates.

Justyce looks to the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for answers. But do they hold up anymore? He starts a journal to Dr. King to find out. Then comes the day Justyce goes driving with his best friend, Manny, windows rolled down, music turned up—way up—sparking the fury of a white off-duty cop beside them. Words fly. Shots are fired. Justyce and Manny are caught in the crosshairs. In the media fallout, it's Justyce who is under attack.



TR: 978-1-9848-2969-6
EL: 978-1-9848-2968-9
GLB: 978-1-988-2967-2

Vernell LaQuan Banks and Justyce McAllister grew up a block apart in the southwest Atlanta neighborhood of Wynwood Heights. Years later, though, Justyce walks the illustrious halls of Yale University . . . and Quan sits behind bars at the Fulton Regional Youth Detention Center.

Through a series of flashbacks, vignettes, and letters to Justyce—the protagonist of *Dear Martin*—Quan's story takes form. Troubles at home and misunderstandings at school give rise to police encounters and tough decisions. But then there's a dead cop and a weapon with Quan's prints on it. What leads a bright kid down a road to a murder charge? Not even Quan is sure.



Photo © Nigel Livingstone

NIC STONE is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Clean Getaway*, which received starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly* and *Booklist*, who called it “an absolute firecracker of a book.” She is also the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestselling and William C. Morris Award finalist *Dear Martin*, its *New York Times* bestselling sequel *Dear Justyce*, and the acclaimed novels *Odd One Out* and *Jackpot* for teens. Nic spent several years on the softball field as a kid, and *Fast Pitch* grew out of her love of the sport and the movie *The Sandlot*, and her desire to see more Black female athletes represented on the field and on the page. Nic lives in Atlanta with her adorable little family. You can find her online at nicstone.info.

A LETTER FROM DR. JARRED AMATO, HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER AND PROJECT LIT COMMUNITY COFOUNDER

We know that great books, books like *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce*, have a unique ability to connect us and comfort us, to challenge us and change us. They help us make sense of our society and our place in it. We also know that great books like *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce* are being written for today's students to read now, so thank you for doing your part to make that happen.

However, if you're looking for traditional comprehension questions to quiz students at the end of each chapter, you've come to the wrong place. The goal of this guide is to help classrooms and communities read and discuss *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce* together. It is a starting point, not the finish line. It is full of possibilities, but not a playbook. Our hope is that you take some of these ideas and activities and make them your own. We're so excited to see what everyone comes up with as we strive to better ourselves and the world around us.

Put simply, books like *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce* are needed in our classrooms and curriculum. Just ask Jakaylia, a Project LIT founder and now college sophomore. She wrote:

"Being a part of Project LIT has given me the space and confidence to share my opinions with others and listen to what they have to say. It's helped me learn a lot about real-life issues and what we can do together to make a change. A lot of kids today don't enjoy reading because they think it's boring and, if we're being real, they're not wrong. A lot of the books students are forced to read in school are not relevant, interesting, or enjoyable. They're out-of-date and out of touch with our lives. That's why Project LIT is so important. We're showing kids and adults that books can be just as cool as TV shows, video games, and sports. Through Project LIT, we've had the opportunity to read some amazing books by authors who understand what it's like to be a teenager today. One book that stands out is *Dear Martin* by Nic Stone. Nic is one of the most influential people in my life, and I am honored to know her. She's one of the sweetest and funniest people you'll ever meet, but most important, she's real. She's not afraid to tell you how it is. She will tell you that your opinion always matters. She inspires all of us to be ourselves and reminds us that it's okay to be different, to stand out."

We encourage educators to do their homework before diving into the worlds of *Justyce* and *Quan*. Know your students. Know the books (that means taking time to read them before starting the unit). Know yourself. Know what your goals are, not just for *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce*, but for the quarter, for the semester, for the year.

Whether you're a first-year teacher (congrats!) or a thirty-year veteran (congrats!), take a moment to reflect. What other texts are you and your students reading and discussing? What came before *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce*? What's next? How do you build community in your classroom? How do you allow for student voice and choice? How do you ensure that all students feel safe, seen, heard, and valued? Again, we cannot wait for you and your students to read and discuss *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce*! We are so excited to see the writing, conversation, and change that comes from it. Continue to listen to our young people, and let them lead the way. Continue to do the work. Continue to connect and collaborate with others, online and offline. Continue to block out the noise and provide all students with the positive literacy experiences they deserve, day in and day out. Continue to read, reflect, and resist.

Happy reading,
Jarred



BEFORE READING

We encourage educators to continue their own internal work, reflecting on racial identities and classroom practices, before diving into *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce*. What community norms and agreements do you already have in place regarding discussion in your classroom? Is there anything that you need to revise or revisit? What does discussion look like? Small group? Whole class? How do you encourage student reflection? How do you normally talk about race in your classroom? What texts have you read before *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce*? What texts do you plan to read next? What connections can students make between *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce* and other texts? Is this the right time to begin the unit? If the answer is yes, we recommend that educators and students explore the following topics and themes before diving into the novel(s), whether it's through a gallery walk, journal writing, anticipation guide, or something else.

Activism

Adolescent Brain Development

Civil Rights Movement

Complexities of Gang Culture

Criminal Justice Reform

Domestic Violence

Family

Friendship

Identity

Implicit Bias

Justice

Juvenile Justice System

Masculinity

Mass Incarceration

Media

Mental Health

Police Brutality

Privilege

Racism

School-to-Prison Pipeline

Social Justice Movements

Support Systems

Trauma and PTSD

ACTIVITIES FOR DURING AND AFTER READING

CHARACTERIZATION

- What adjectives would you use to describe each character (Quan, Justyce, Martel, SJ, Doc)? What traits or qualities does each possess? Be sure to provide evidence to support your answers!
- Trace the evolution of one or more characters (Justyce, Jared, Quan, SJ) throughout the novel(s).
- Create a playlist for a character or for each novel as a whole.
- Create a Twitter/Instagram/Facebook profile for one or more characters.
- Write an interview with one of the characters for the school newspaper.
- Create a text message conversation (or group chat) between characters.

POETRY

- Write a bio poem from the point of view of a character in the novel(s).
- Create a haiku inspired by the novel(s).
- Find seven to ten words from the novel(s) that stand out and include them in a poem.
- Create an acrostic poem using anything related to the novels (titles, character names).
- Create blackout poetry inspired by the novel(s).
- Craft a two-voice poem, featuring Justyce and Quan, Justyce and SJ, or Justyce and Manny.
- Find poems that connect to the novels.
- Host a poetry slam inspired by *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce*.

LETTERS

- Write a letter to a character in the novel, offering advice, commenting on a conflict they went through, or sharing how you can relate.
- Write a letter to the author about what you took away from the book, how it changed your thinking, its importance and impact, favorite scenes, favorite characters, why you enjoyed it, and why you'd recommend it to others.
- Write a letter from one character to another extending the conversations between Justyce and Quan or other characters.
- Write a letter to a character's past or future self.
- Write a letter to someone in your life who is in need of encouragement.
- Write a letter to someone in your life who has always been in your corner.
- Write a letter to someone you consider heroic.

PLOT AND POINT OF VIEW

- Rewrite a pivotal scene from either book.
- Rewrite a scene from a different character's point of view.
- Turn a scene (or the entire novel!) into a movie script or play.
- Chart the major moments in each book (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution).

SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE

- Create a six-word summary for each chapter, character, and book.
- Create a six-word critique for each chapter, character, and book.
- Create a book review that combines summary and critique. Share your review on a social media platform of your choice.
- Create a movie trailer for the book(s).

MORE PROMPTS AND IDEAS!

- Compare and contrast *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce* through art, video, essay, or poetry.
- Create a one-sheet that captures quotes, images, characters, themes, etc. from both books.
- Create artwork inspired by the novels (alternate book cover, character sketch, or collage, for example).
- Trace a theme through the novel(s).
- Create a one-sheet at the end of a chapter, section, or book that explains your thoughts.
- Find five (or more) words from the novel(s) that were previously unknown to you or that you found particularly important.
- How does Nic Stone use dialogue in the story? What purpose does it serve? What does it reveal?
- Analyze Nic Stone's technique and style.
- Pick a sentence from either book. What stood out to you about it, and why?
- Create new titles for each chapter.
- What are some of the big questions that you have at different points in the novel? What are you wondering or thinking about?
- Create a double-entry journal to reflect on key quotes and passages.

AFTER-READING ACTIVITIES, PROMPTS, AND PROJECTS

SNAPSHOTS

There are twelve snapshots in *Dear Justyce*, including the final one, six months after the main action. What does the reader learn from these moments? What effect do they have on the novel? After revisiting these snapshots, write your own for either *Dear Martin* or *Dear Justyce*. Or write a snapshot from your own life.

LETTERS

Quan writes nine letters to Justyce (along with a letter to his dad). What does he reveal in these letters? What impact do these letters have on Quan and Justyce? Trace Quan's evolution over the course of his communication with Justyce. After revisiting these letters, write your own letters (from Justyce to Quan, Quan to Justyce, or yourself to Quan).

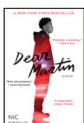
WRITING PROMPTS

We hope that *Dear Justyce* inspires students to write stories and letters of their own. Here are some prompts that may work during or after reading the novel.

- How are you similar to and different from Quan? Justyce?
- Write about a time when something changed.
- Write about one of your favorite childhood memories.
- Write about what you miss about being a “KID kid” (p. 70).
- Write about your neighborhood.
- Write about a time when you felt stuck or powerless.
- Write about your reaction to the Math Test, or a time you experienced something similar.
- Write about a teacher who believed (or didn't believe) in you.
- Write about a place you feel safe (playground, library, basketball court).
- Write about a time when you've been misunderstood or underestimated.
- Write a poem that asks the question: What if . . . ?
- Write about your hopes and dreams.
- Write about your strengths and talents.
- Write a letter to a friend or family member.
- Write about a time you felt like giving up.
- Write about a time when you've been in a catch-22 or no-win situation.
- Write a letter to your younger or future self.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- To borrow a prompt from Doc: How is the United States “currently failing to uphold the standards set forth in its foundational documents”? (p. 40)
- Quan asks Justyce, “Why’d we turn out so different?” (p. 43) How would you answer this question?
- Quan says, “When you’re in that like middle to high school range, the people you’re connected to REALLY influence what you wind up doing” (p. 70). Why do you think this is the case? What articles or research can you find about teenage brain development and the effects of peer pressure?
- We are told that for Quan, “There was no not noticing the number of brown faces that came and stayed compared to the number of not-brown ones that came and left” (p. 80). Research the juvenile justice system and school-to-prison pipeline, and share what you learn with your classmates.
- Martel wrote “Black Power is giving power to people who have not had power to determine their destiny” (p. 89). Research Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.
- Why does Quan join the Black Jihad? More broadly, why do young people join gangs?
- Analyze the symbolism of the rocket ship and its significance in the novel.
- To borrow another prompt from Doc: “Write a compelling argumentative essay that either supports or refutes the continued use of Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a seminal text on American racism” (p. 132).
- How does the “THE END/a short film” (pp. 118–125) connect to *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers?
- Read aloud the class scene (pp. 168–174), and write your own class discussion.
- Quan has a solid team of people in his corner—caseworker, therapist, teacher, and attorney. Which of these careers most interests you? Research what it takes to join that profession.
- Quan says, “Everyone should have somebody who believes in ’em. Like no matter what they’ve done. Somebody who won’t give up on them. . . . No strings attached” (p. 226). How do you feel about this statement? Who do you believe in? Who believes in you?
- What connections can you make between *Dear Martin*, *Dear Justyce*, and other texts you have read? Create a poster or brainstorm map to demonstrate connections.
- Select and analyze a podcast, film, documentary, TED Talk, or anything else that examines a theme from *Dear Martin* or *Dear Justyce*.

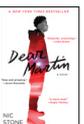


Project LIT Chapter Leaders

- Encourage students to read & discuss Project LIT titles of their choice during daily independent reading
- Nurture authentic reading & writing identities by celebrating and promoting literacy every day
- Increase access to high-quality, culturally sustaining books that affirm and value all students
- Advocate for anti-racist literacy policies and practices
- Facilitate LIT circles and whole-class reads of Project LIT titles
- Design student-centered lessons and units featuring Project LIT titles
- Encourage students to write and publish poems/stories/novels of their own
- Empower students to lead your school's Project LIT chapter and serve as LIT leaders in your community
- Host Project LIT Book Club discussions that bring students, educators, families, and community members together
- Create safe spaces to have courageous conversations as we strive to better ourselves & our communities
- Connect and collaborate with fellow Project LIT students, educators, and authors (locally, nationally, and globally)

#ProjectLITBookClub

@projectLITcomm



ABOUT PROJECT LIT

Dr. Jarred Amato and the incredible students at Maplewood High School (Nashville, TN) founded Project LIT in August 2016 with the goal of eliminating book deserts and promoting a love of reading. Since then, they have transformed a class project into a national grassroots literacy movement—one book, one conversation, one step at a time. From launching a book drive and setting up LIT libraries across East Nashville to hosting a monthly community-wide book club and redesigning our literacy curriculum, they developed a model Project LIT “chapter,” where students are empowered daily as readers, writers, and leaders. By June 2017, they encouraged other schools to join the movement. As of June 2020, there are more than 1,500 Project LIT chapters across all fifty states, and they’d love for you and your students to join! Follow @ProjectLITcomm on Twitter and Instagram for more information.

EXAMPLE PROJECT LIT BOOK CLUB PREPARATION for *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce*

- Share at least five possible discussion questions for our book club. Now that you've read *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce*, what would you like to talk about with your classmates? What's on your mind?
- Submit at least one piece of writing from our unit that you would like to share with Nic Stone!
- Go back to the text and create at least five questions (and answers) for our *Dear Martin/Dear Justyce* trivia competition!

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM STUDENTS IN DR. AMATO'S CLASS

- Overall, what are your thoughts on *Dear Martin*? How did your emotions change from beginning to end?
- What characters could you most identify with or relate to, and why?
- What scene(s) and quotes stood out to you? What do you think you'll most remember from this book?
- If you could change something about the book, what would it be? (Yeah, let's talk about Manny.)
- How do you think Dr. King would feel about our country today? Why does racism still exist?
- Who would you write letters to for guidance, and why? (How do you normally cope with stress and anger?)
- What can we do to make our world better?
- How does *Dear Martin* compare to other books we've read with similar themes, such as *All American Boys* and *The Hate U Give*?
- What questions would you like to ask Nic about the book and her experience writing it?

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, RESOURCES,
AND PROJECT LIT CONTENT, PLEASE FOLLOW

 [FACEBOOK.COM/PROJECTLITCOMMUNITY](https://www.facebook.com/projectlitcommunity)

  [@PROJECTLITCOMM](https://twitter.com/projectlitcomm)

TED TALKS

“The Danger of Silence”

by Clint Smith

[ted.com/talks/clint_smith_the_danger_of_silence?utm_term=social-justice&utm_campaign=social&utm_content=talk&utm_source=t.co&utm_medium=referral](https://www.ted.com/talks/clint_smith_the_danger_of_silence?utm_term=social-justice&utm_campaign=social&utm_content=talk&utm_source=t.co&utm_medium=referral)

“The Danger of a Single Story”

by Chimamanda Ngozi

[ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en)

“How to Overcome Our Biases? Walk Boldly Toward Them”

by Verna Myers

[ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_toward_them/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_toward_them/transcript)

“How to Raise a Black Son in America”

by Clint Smith

[ted.com/talks/clint_smith_how_to_raise_a_black_son_in_america?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/clint_smith_how_to_raise_a_black_son_in_america?language=en)

“The Path to Ending Systemic Racism in America”

by Chris Anderson and Whitney Pennington Rodgers

[ted.com/talks/dr_phillip_atiba_goff_rashad_robinson_dr_bernice_king_anthony_d_romero_the_path_to_ending_systemic_racism_in_the_us?referrer=playlist-talks_to_help_you_understand_r](https://www.ted.com/talks/dr_phillip_atiba_goff_rashad_robinson_dr_bernice_king_anthony_d_romero_the_path_to_ending_systemic_racism_in_the_us?referrer=playlist-talks_to_help_you_understand_r)

“We Need to Talk About an Injustice”

by Bryan Stevenson

[ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice?language=en)

“3 Ways to Speak English”

by Jamila Lyiscott

[ted.com/talks/jamila_lyiscott_3_ways_to_speak_english](https://www.ted.com/talks/jamila_lyiscott_3_ways_to_speak_english)

RESOURCES

Black Lives Matter

blacklivesmatter.com/resources/

Equal Justice Initiative

<https://eji.org/>

Facing History

facinghistory.org

Teaching Tolerance

tolerance.org

The 1619 Project

[nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html)

Guide prepared by Dr. Jarred Amato,

High school English teacher and Project LIT Community Cofounder

INTERVIEWS

“A Frank Conversation About YA Literature, Police Brutality, and the Nuances of Black Storytelling”

by Nic Stone and Kim Johnson

[ew.com/books/author-interviews/nic-stone-kim-johnson-conversation/](https://www.ew.com/books/author-interviews/nic-stone-kim-johnson-conversation/)

Trevor Noah Interviews Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds

[youtube.com/watch?v=6D6Ge1VXySo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6D6Ge1VXySo)

Trevor Noah Interviews Jason Reynolds

[cc.com/video-clips/avk8pe/the-daily-show-with-trevor-noah-jason-reynolds---serving-young-readers-with-long-way-down-](https://www.cc.com/video-clips/avk8pe/the-daily-show-with-trevor-noah-jason-reynolds---serving-young-readers-with-long-way-down-)

“Why Teens Should Understand Their Own Brains (And Why Their Teachers Should, Too!)”

[npr.org/sections/ed/2018/05/15/609769519/why-teenagers-should-understand-their-own-brains-and-why-their-teachers-should-t](https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/05/15/609769519/why-teenagers-should-understand-their-own-brains-and-why-their-teachers-should-t)

OP-EDS

“The Case for Reparations”

by Ta-Nehisi Coates

[theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/](https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/)

“Don’t Just Read About Racism—Read Stories About Black People Living”

by Nic Stone

[cosmopolitan.com/entertainment/books/a32770951/read-black-books-nic-stone/](https://www.cosmopolitan.com/entertainment/books/a32770951/read-black-books-nic-stone/)

“Even When They’re Hunting Us, I Would Still Choose to Be Black Over and Over Again”

by Tiffany D. Jackson

[cosmopolitan.com/politics/a32747529/young-people-protests-tiffany-jackson/](https://www.cosmopolitan.com/politics/a32747529/young-people-protests-tiffany-jackson/)

“How to Make This Moment the Turning Point for Real Change”

by Barack Obama

[medium.com/@BarackObama/how-to-make-this-moment-the-turning-point-for-real-change-9fa209806067](https://www.medium.com/@BarackObama/how-to-make-this-moment-the-turning-point-for-real-change-9fa209806067)

“Where Are the People of Color in Children’s Books?”

by Walter Dean Myers

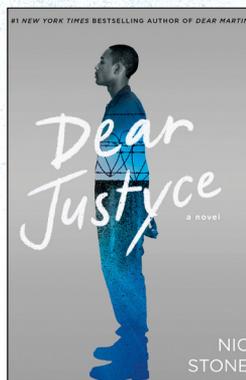
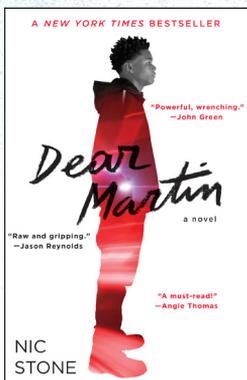
[nytimes.com/2014/03/16/opinion/sunday/where-are-the-people-of-color-in-childrens-books.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/16/opinion/sunday/where-are-the-people-of-color-in-childrens-books.html)

“100 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice”

by Corinne Shutack

[medium.com/equality-includes-you/what-white-people-can-do-for-racial-justice-f2d18b0e0234](https://www.medium.com/equality-includes-you/what-white-people-can-do-for-racial-justice-f2d18b0e0234)

PRAISE FOR DEAR MARTIN AND DEAR JUSTYCE



A WILLIAM C. MORRIS AWARD FINALIST
AN ALAN AMELIA ELIZABETH WALDEN
AWARD FINALIST!

“A powerful, wrenching, and compulsively readable story that lays bare the history, and the present, of racism in America.”

—John Green, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Turtles All the Way Down*

“Painfully timely and deeply moving.”

—Jodi Picoult, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author

“Raw and gripping.”

—Jason Reynolds, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Long Way Down*

★ “Teens, librarians and teachers alike will find this book a godsend. . . .

Vivid and powerful.”

—*Booklist*, Starred Review

★ **“A visceral portrait of a young man** reckoning with the ugly, persistent violence of social injustice.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review

AN NPR BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR

★ **“An unforgettable tour de force** of social-justice and activist literature.”

—*Booklist*, Starred Review

★ **“A powerful, raw must-read**

told through the lens of a Black boy ensnared by our broken criminal justice system.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, Starred Review

★ “Stone tackles the American juvenile justice system and its unjust persecution of Black boys in this gritty, powerful sequel to *Dear Martin*.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review

“This book expands the conversation about systemic racism to include young men of color who don’t fit the demands of respectability politics. . . .

A nuanced perspective on the juvenile justice system.”

—*School Library Journal*

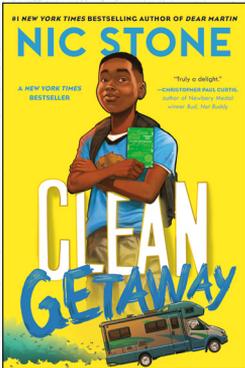
“An emotionally intense follow-up to the William C. Morris Debut Award finalist *Dear Martin*.”

—*Shelf Awareness*

“Teens can relate to the feelings of alienation, loneliness, and confusion that lead Quan to make many of the choices that he does, even as the book explores the various ways our current justice system disenfranchises young people of color.”

—*The Horn Book*

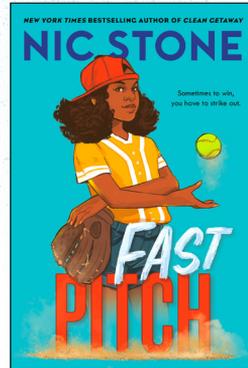
MORE TITLES BY NIC STONE!



A MIDDLE-GRADE ROAD-TRIP STORY THROUGH AMERICAN RACE RELATIONS PAST AND PRESENT

★ “An absolute firecracker of a book and a **must-have for children’s collections.**”

—*Booklist*, Starred Review



A CHALLENGING AND HEARTWARMING COMING-OF-AGE STORY ABOUT A SOFTBALL PLAYER LOOKING TO PROVE HERSELF ON AND OFF THE FIELD

★ “**Black girl magic hits a home run** in Stone’s latest novel.”

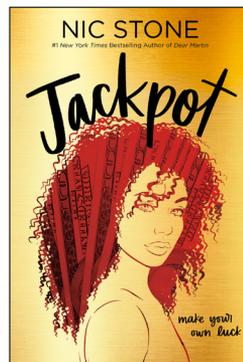
—*Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review



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“Stone challenges stereotypical notions of what it means to be straight, bisexual, or gay, showing how sexual identities and desires can be as complicated as the individual human brain.”

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