

Title: *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes (Published in 2018)

GHOST BOYS	JEWELL PARKER RHODES	PUBLISHED 2018
Approved for use in		

<p>Summary of the Work:</p> <p>Twelve-year-old Jerome is shot by a police officer who mistakes his toy gun for a real threat. As a ghost, he observes the devastation that's been unleashed on his family and community in the wake of what they see as an unjust and brutal killing. Soon Jerome meets another ghost: Emmett Till, a boy from a very different time but similar circumstances. Emmett helps Jerome process what has happened, on a journey towards recognizing how historical racism may have led to the events that ended his life. Jerome also meets Sarah, the daughter of the police officer, who grapples with her father's actions.</p>	<p>Rationale:</p> <p>“Ghost Boys makes connections to Emmett Till's life and death in order to highlight how systemic racism and state-sanctioned violence has persisted across time and history; the author uses Jerome's contemporary story to explore other relatable themes, like bullying, friendship, and family.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading with Relevance <p>We are using Reading with Relevance's unit plan for Ghost Boys which can be reviewed at the following site: https://readingwithrelevance.org/Ghost-Boys-Teacher-Guide.pdf</p>
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<p>Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:</p> <p><i>School Library Connection Star</i>, 02/28/2018 <p>Jewell Parker Rhodes, author of Towers Falling (Little, Brown, 2016), delivers another timely and politically charged novel. While playing with a friend's toy gun one day after school, 12-year-old Jerome is shot in the back and killed by a white police officer who thinks the gun is real. The impact of this act on Jerome's family, his friend, the policeman's family, and the community is devastating. Unable to "move on," Jerome, who is now a ghost, meets Emmett Till, another spirit killed years ago for allegedly interacting inappropriately with a white woman, and Sarah, the daughter of the police officer who killed him. These three go on a historical and political journey to understand how racism has impacted the US for decades and to try to make people more understanding and accepting of one another. This is an excellent novel that delves into the timely topic of racism and its effects on all individuals of all walks of life in the United States. This novel deals with the question of whether or not we really have come that far when dealing with race and race relations. This would be a good novel to pair with Angie Thomas' The Hate U Give (Balzer + Bray, 2017) or Nic Stone's Dear Martin (Crown Books, 2017) and is a must have</p>	<p>Noted Distinction:</p> <p>2019 Charlotte Huck Honor Award for Outstanding Children's Fiction; National Council of Teachers of English</p> <p>2019 Jane Addams Children's Book Award; Jane Addams Peace Association</p> <p>2018-2019 Read Across America Selection; NEA</p> <p>CSMCL Best Books of 2018: Center for the Study of Multicultural Children's Literature</p> <p>2019 Longlist, CILIP Carnegie Medal; CILIP</p> <p>2019 ALA Children's Notable List Pick</p> <p>2019 EB White Read Aloud Winner</p> <p>*For a more comprehensive list of awards and recognitions, visit http://jewellparkerrhodes.com/children/books/ghost-boys/</p>
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for school and classroom libraries.</p><p> Chris Dexter
HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Publishers Weekly Starred, 02/18/2018

Set in an impoverished Chicago neighborhood, this somber story blends history with current events. Jerome Rogers, a black 12-year-old, is playing outside with a toy gun when he is shot and killed by a white policeman who views him as a threat. Now Jerome wanders the earth with other “ghost boys” whose deaths are all connected to bigotry. Ironically, the only human who can see Jerome is Sarah, the young daughter of the officer who took his life. Jerome meets the ghost of Emmett Till and learns the horrific details of his murder. Emmett, like the other ghost boys, cannot rest until the world is swept clean of discriminatory violence; maybe Jerome can help if he can make Sarah understand that her father’s act was a result of deeply ingrained racism. Rhodes writes in short, poetic chapters that offer graphic depictions of avoidable tragedies; her hope for a better world packs a powerful punch, delivering a call to action to speak out against prejudice and erase harmful misconceptions. Ages 10–up. Agent: Michael Bourret, Dystel, Goderich & Bourret. (Apr.)

Booklist Starred Reviews, 01/31/2018

Grades 5-8 - *Starred Review* Jerome, a young black boy gunned down while playing in a park with a toy gun, invites readers to bear witness to his story, to the tragedy of being dispatched simply because of a policeman’s internalized prejudice masquerading as fear. One day at school, while he and his new friend Carlos are being bullied, Carlos pulls out a toy gun to scare their attackers. Afterward, he gives it to Jerome so he can have a chance to play with it, to pretend that he is in charge. But when he is shot in the back while running from the police, his soul leaves his body and he becomes one of the army of ghost boys hoping to communicate with those still consumed with racial bias. While looking in on the preliminary court hearing, Jerome realizes that the police officer’s daughter can see and talk to him, and together they try to understand how the world around them could be so cruel. Rhodes (Sugar, 2013; Towers Falling, 2016) beautifully weaves together the fictional and the historical—Jerome comes across the ghosts of real-life individuals like Emmett Till and Trayvon Martin—in this gripping and all-too-necessary novel about police brutality, injustice, and the power of bearing witness to the stories of those who are gone.

School Library Journal Starred, 12/31/2017

Gr 4–8—The Towers Falling author once again tackles a timely yet difficult subject. In Chicago, 12-year-old black youth Jerome is shot and killed by a white police officer who mistakes a toy gun for a real one. As a ghost, Jerome witnesses the aftermath gripping both his family and that of the police officers. Jerome also meets another ghost—

Readability

- Lexile Score: L360
- Readability Level: 6-8th grade (even though the Lexile for this book is lower than 6th grade Lexile band, the topic is a heavy topic appropriate for 6th graders. This Lexile allows all students to access the text while providing access to higher level reading comprehension strategies.)

Learning Resources Guidelines

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: [\(link\)](#)

- RL.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- RL.6.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- RL.6.3 Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
- RL.6.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.
- RL.6.5 Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.
- RL.6.6 Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text
- W.6.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- W.6.2.a Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- W.6.2.b Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
- W.6.2.c Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

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that of Emmett Till, a black boy murdered in 1955. Through Till's story, he learns of the hundreds of other "ghost boys" left to roam and stop history from continually repeating itself. The only person who can see Jerome is the daughter of the white police officer, Sarah, and through her eyes, he realizes that his family isn't the only one affected by the tragedy. Two families are destroyed with one split decision, and Sarah and Jerome together try to heal both of their families, along with Jerome's friend Carlos. It was Carlos' toy gun that Jerome was playing with, leaving Carlos with great guilt and the intense desire to protect Jerome's little sister, Kim, from bullies and other sorrows. Deftly woven and poignantly told, this a story about society, biases both conscious and unconscious, and trying to right the wrongs of the world. VERDICT Rhodes captures the all-too-real pain of racial injustice and provides an important window for readers who are just beginning to explore the ideas of privilege and implicit bias.—Michele Shaw, Quail Run Elementary School, San Ramon, CA Copyright 2018 Reed Business Information.

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

This novel is a high-interest story which attempts to grapple with themes such as bias, grief, bullying, systemic racism, and friendship. The unique format of the narrative flowing between alive and dead, and the fantastical addition of Emmett Till as a ghost trying to guide Jerome through the days, weeks, and months following his own death, make this story a compelling read, but also provides rich content for discussions and extended writing activities.

W.6.2.d Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. W.6.2.e Establish and maintain a formal style. W.6.2.f Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.

SL.6.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.6.1.a Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.

SL.6.1.b Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

SL.6.1.c Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.

SL.6.1.d Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing

L.6.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing

L.6.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

Approval:

Submitted to Committee:

Approved for Adoption:

Connection to the Curriculum:

Ghost Boys is appropriate for the English curriculum which emphasizes exposure to quality and high-interest literature and how literary elements affect plot. This novel allows for in-depth conversations and discussions around the themes of cultural diversity and tolerance, which supports the Social Studies curriculum. This novel exposes students to the reality of our times by making connections to our world through its plot, themes, and character development.

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Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)

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