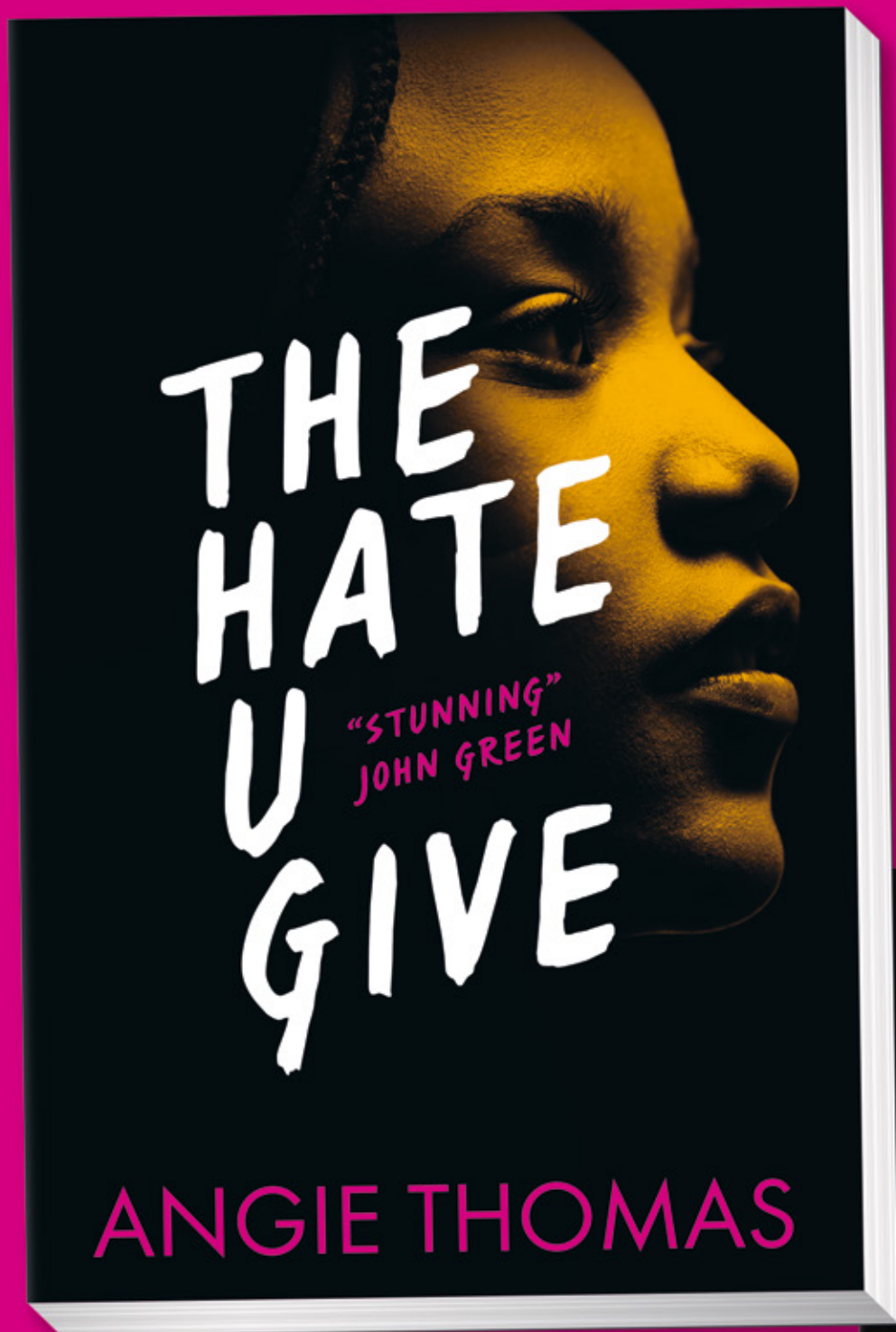


# THE HATE U GIVE DISCUSSION GUIDE

WITH **CONCRETE ROSE** BONUS CONTENT

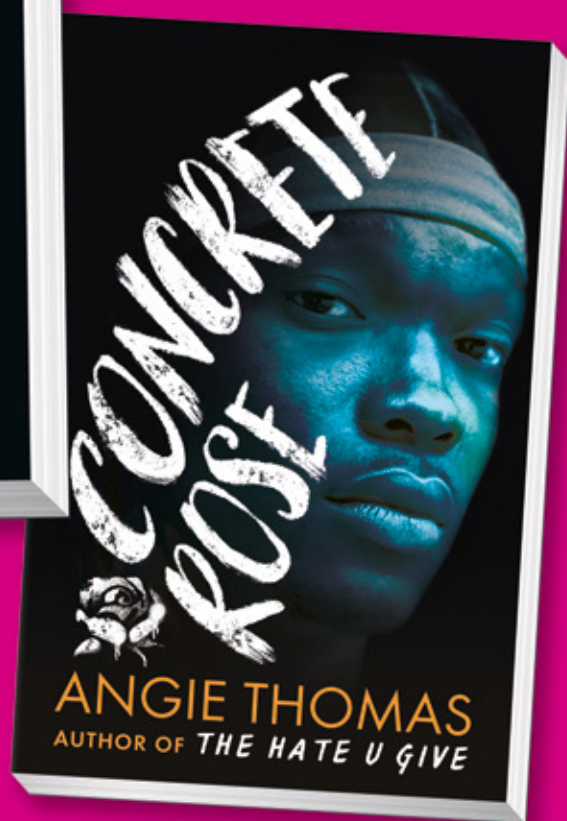


PRAISE FOR  
THE HATE U GIVE:

**'SHOULD BE ON  
THE SYLLABUS OF  
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WALKER BOOKS

#TheHateUGive / #ConcreteRose @WalkerBooksYA @AngieThomas @WalkerBooksYA @AngieCThomas

# THE HATE U GIVE ANGIE THOMAS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR WALKER BOOKS

### ABOUT THE BOOK

*The Hate U Give*, the groundbreaking debut from Angie Thomas, is a vital and brilliant portrayal of police brutality, race relations and modern politics in America. Starr lives two lives – her home life in Garden Heights, a poor, black neighbourhood, and her other life in her predominantly white private school. But when Starr witnesses a policeman shoot her unarmed friend after a traffic stop, her life changes forever and her worlds collide. Starr must challenge all her assumptions, and overcome expectations, stigma, drug lords, family histories and a political system rigged against her, as she searches for a way to speak out.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Angie Thomas' debut novel *The Hate U Give* launched straight onto the *New York Times* bestseller list and has sold over a million copies worldwide. In the UK, it was awarded the Waterstones Children's Book Prize, Children's Book of the Year at the British Book Awards and the Amnesty CILIP Honour for the Carnegie Medal. The book was adapted into a movie, starring Amandla Stenberg and released by 20th Century Fox. Her second novel *On The Come Up* was inspired by her time as a teen rapper, and is also a *New York Times* bestseller, with film rights acquired by Paramount Players and Angie on board as a producer. Most recently she has released *Concrete Rose*, which looks back in time to the lives of characters from *The Hate U Give* in the 90s, namely Starr's father Maverick as he becomes a dad for the first time as a teenager.

Angie Thomas was born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi, where she still lives today.

### NOTES ON GUIDANCE:

This guide relates to Angie Thomas's first novel, *The Hate U Give*. A separate guide exists for Angie Thomas's third novel, *Concrete Rose*, which tells the story of Maverick, Starr's father, as a teenage parent living in Garden Heights. Appended to this guide are a number of questions to allow groups to discuss the two books together. If considering both books, it may be worth choosing a handful of questions from each specific guide, and then tackling the broader questions. If the group is only considering one of the novels, then disregard the joint questions, as these will consider plot points that require knowledge of both stories.

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

This novel is searingly important, shining a light on characters, societies and experiences that have been conspicuously absent from published literature. Amidst the Black Lives Matter movement and worldwide fights for equality and justice, *The Hate U Give* is an astonishingly complex novel, fraught with politics, family, societal problems, community, love and friendship. While unflinching in its portrayal of the lived realities of the communities it depicts, it further challenges itself, with characters often coming to new realisations, having to challenge their own preconceptions and navigate a landscape of hostility and uncertainty. Many of the themes within this novel will be familiar to audiences, and it is vital that group members feel able to discuss the book openly, fairly, and without fear of any discrimination or sense of attack. Where many episodes may also have direct echoes in members' lived experience, care should be taken to ensure that adequate support



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is available should it be needed, and that topics are dealt with sensitively. It may be appropriate to establish some ground rules for the discussion before you begin.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Getting started:

To start, establish who has seen the film version of *The Hate U Give*, and who has read Thomas's other novels, *On The Come Up*, and *Concrete Rose*. Agree in advance how the group feel about spoilers, or information regarding these other texts. Once established, ask what the group thought of the novel. Does anyone want to expand on their response, and tell the group how the novel made them feel? Or if it caused them to think differently about anything? What were the group's responses on reading the book?

### 1. Belonging

'I'm not even sure I belong at this party.' – p.7

'My two worlds just collided. Surprisingly, everything's all right.' – p.355

Throughout the novel, many characters battle with a sense of belonging. Discuss the importance of this theme throughout the novel. Why is it so key to Starr, who leads 'two' lives? What creates, or destroys, that sense of belonging in the novel? What do the arguments Maverick and Lisa have about staying in Garden Heights say about what it means to belong somewhere?

### 2. Starr's perspective

'I can call Garden Heights the ghetto all I want. Nobody else can.' – p.139

'This is worse than denying him. I thought the worst of him. Like everybody else.' – p.235

Consider the language of the novel. Why does Thomas choose to narrate the story in the first person? What impact does this have on the reader? How does discovering Starr's revelations along with her throughout the novel change the way the reader understands the situation? Where Starr challenges her own ideas (e.g., about who Khalil was, or why Devante acts as he does), were readers able to see what Starr couldn't see at first, or did they find themselves on Starr's side until she made the realisation? What effect does this have?

### 3. Code Switching

'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.' – p.73'

Check the group's understanding of code-switching, or terms like covert and overt prestige. You may want to have a definition to hand. What do the group understand by this? How does it influence not just language but behaviour, identity? Is it something members of the group are conscious of doing themselves, or witnessing? Consider what happens when Starr's worlds come together, and she struggles to understand the extent to which she does, or needs to, code switch. What might Thomas be suggesting in these incidents?

### 4. Police relations

'When I was twelve, my parents had two talks with me.' – p.24

'It's weird to hear somebody say "Khalil was murdered" as easily as Ms, O'frah does. She doesn't bite her tongue or hesitate.' – p.212

How significant is it that Starr's uncle is a policeman? What does the novel say about police relations, and systemic



disparities and racism in US policing? Consider the second quotation above. Discuss the differences in the language used to discuss violence amongst members of the Garden Heights communities, and police violence and murder, by the media, or by other characters. What impact does this have? How are characters affected, either consciously or unconsciously, by this sort of language divide? How does this compare to the understanding and experience of the group, reflecting on their lives and the real world?

## 5. Fear and courage

'I always said that if I saw it happen to somebody, I would have the loudest voice, making sure the world knew what went down.

Now I am that person, and I'm too afraid to speak.' – p.38

Why is Starr afraid to speak out about what happened to Khalil? Is it as simple as just telling the truth? What does Starr's journey towards speaking out tell the reader about the realities of fighting for systemic change and justice?

## 6. Making change

""You don't get it," Daddy says.

"Yeah I do. Hell, I get you."" – p.188

How does the community of Garden Heights develop across the novel? Consider the different generations, in particular: the place of grandparents in the novel, Mr. Lewis 'snitching' on television, Maverick and Tim 'getting out of the game' and Khalil and Starr's peer group. What does change look like for these different generations? Do they all want the same thing?

## 7. Thug Life

'That's the hate they're giving us, baby, a system designed against us. That's Thug Life.' – p.169

Consider the title of the novel, and where it comes from. What is so significant about it? How do members of the group interpret Thug Life as an acronym? (See p. 166 onwards.) Discuss the impact of the historical incidents, murders, and political generations that came before, on Starr's life and on Garden Heights, from the murder of Emmett Till, to the Black Panthers, to Tupac, to contemporary cultural figures, etc. How does Thomas explore this collective black history through the novel? What effect does it have?

## 8. Art imitating life

'They finally put a sheet over Khalil. He can't breathe under it. I can't breathe.' – p.29

Introduce the movie into the discussion, if it hasn't been. How significant is it that this novel was turned into a film? What about the awards that *The Hate U Give* has won, or been nominated for? What impact have the book and the movie had? Consider the relevance of the book within the Black Lives Matter movement – is there anything this novel can achieve that reporting on the realities of black experience, or police brutality, or any of the headline-dominating stories of recent years, cannot?



# CONCRETE ROSE and THE HATE U GIVE, Angie Thomas

## DISCUSSING THE TWO NOVELS TOGETHER

### 1. Scope and reach

Consider the scope of the worlds in the two novels – both take place predominantly in Garden Heights, but the world of *The Hate U Give* is much larger, expanding to other communities but also to national coverage of Khalil’s murder and the trial. Is Thomas doing different things with each of the novels? How is Maverick’s world, in the 90s, different from Starr’s world, in the same Garden Heights a generation later? Are there ways in which they are the same?

### 2. Tupac

Why are both novels named after Tupac works? Discuss the importance of the titles, and their meanings. Is the scope of each novel reflected in the title? Is *Concrete Rose* simply about what it takes for an individual to succeed in harsh climates, and is *The Hate U Give* simply about what happens when a system refuses to take care of children as it should?

### 3. Same story, new generation

How does reading *Concrete Rose* influence the reader’s understanding of Maverick in *The Hate U Give*? Look in particular at the decisions and the difficulties faced by a young Maverick, and by Khalil and Devante, a generation later. In what ways are their situations, and the choices they make, comparable? What, if anything, has changed?

### 4. Family and friends

Throughout both novels, the idea of family and community is hugely significant. Discuss the evolution of Maverick’s situation, as a teenage father with another child on the way, to his life as a father of three. What role does family play, across the two novels? What role, or roles, does community play? In what ways does loyalty to family and community create support, and are there ways in which this causes problems?

### 5. The story still untold

What do we still not know after reading both books? Were any readers surprised at where *Concrete Rose* stopped, knowing what happens between the two books? What do members think of Thomas’s choice to tell Maverick’s story up to a certain point, but not to include future events as significant as those revealed in *The Hate U Give*?

### 6. Relevance

Below is a quotation from an interview with Angie Thomas. Read it aloud or share it with the group. What does anyone think of this? Is this equally applicable to *Concrete Rose*? Is one book more relevant than the other? Are both books reflections of the time in which they are set? Or are elements of the books ‘timeless’? What do group members think the legacy of Angie Thomas’s novels will be?

**“My biggest hope for *The Hate U Give* is that it becomes irrelevant; that young people read it at some point and it doesn’t reflect the world we live in; that police brutality no longer exists. For us to reach this world, we must allow young people to read about such topics and we must discuss such issues with them. Through literature, we can grow their empathy, and through their empathy, change can be born.”**

**ANGIE THOMAS**



(Flood, Alison. (2021) ‘Children read more challenging books in lockdowns, data reveals’ *The Guardian*, 29 April [Online]. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/apr/29/children-read-longer-more-challenging-books-in-lockdown>)