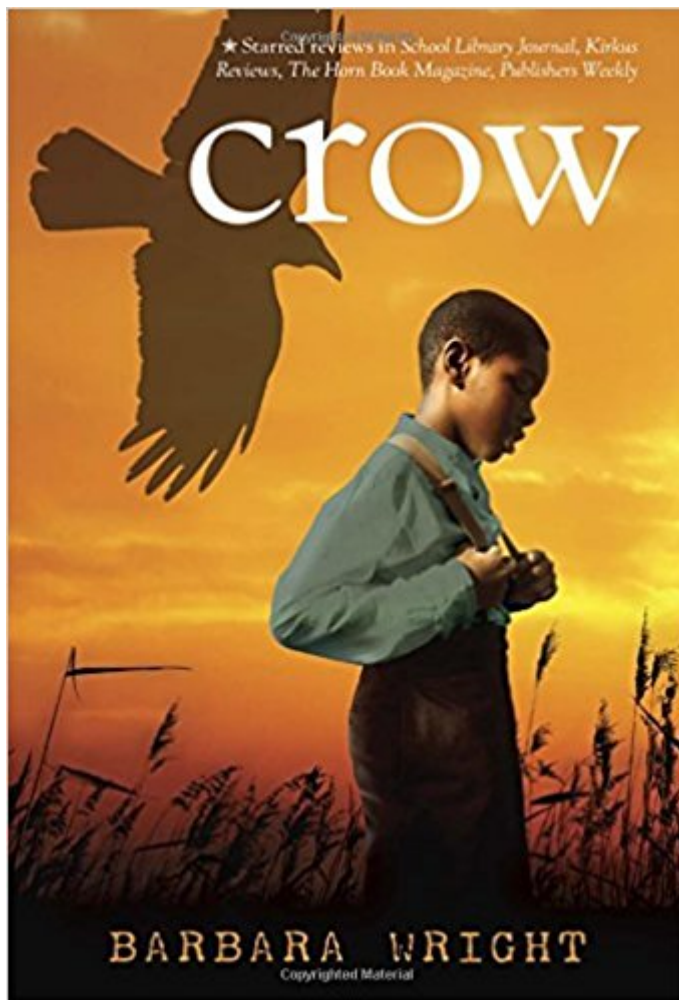




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Crow



Synopsis

The summer of 1898 is filled with ups and downs for 11-year-old Moses. He's growing apart from his best friend, his superstitious Boo-Nanny butts heads constantly with his pragmatic, educated father, and his mother is reeling from the discovery of a family secret. Yet there are good times, too. He's teaching his grandmother how to read. For the first time she's sharing stories about her life as a slave. And his father and his friends are finally getting the respect and positions of power they've earned in the Wilmington, North Carolina, community. But not everyone is happy with the political changes at play and some will do anything, including a violent plot against the government, to maintain the status quo. One generation away from slavery, a thriving African American community—enfranchised and emancipated—suddenly and violently loses its freedom in turn-of-the-century North Carolina when a group of local politicians stages the only successful coup d'état in US history.

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

Starred Review, School Library Journal, January 1, 2012:—“The expert blending of vivid historical details with the voice of a courageous, relatable hero makes this book

shine.—Starred Review, The Horn Book Magazine, January 1, 2012:—“Wright has

taken a little-known event and brought it to vivid life, with a richly evoked setting of a town on the Cape Fear River, where a people not far from the days of slavery look forward to the promise of the twentieth century. —Starred Review, Publishers Weekly, December 12, 2011: —“This thought-provoking novel and its memorable cast offer an unflinching and fresh take on race relations, injustice, and a fascinating, little-known chapter of history. —Starred Review, Kirkus Reviews, November 15, 2011: “Relying on historical records, Wright deftly combines real and fictional characters to produce an intimate story about the Wilmington riots to disenfranchise black citizens. An intensely moving, first-person narrative of a disturbing historical footnote told from the perspective of a very likable, credible young hero.”

BARBARA WRIGHT grew up in North Carolina, and has lived all over the world, from France, to Korea, to El Salvador. She has worked as a fact-checker for Esquire and as a screenwriter. This is her first novel for children.

The only successful coup d'état in American history occurred in Wilmington, North Carolina in 1898. In that year a white mob took control of the city by force, whisking away its democratically elected integrated government. Crow tells the story of Wilmington in 1898 through Moses Thomas, a 12-year-old boy from a black middle-class family. In the first half of the book Moses tells us about his day-to-day life. We learn about Moses mother, who loves music and works as a maid. We learn about Moses grandmother, Boo Nanny, who was a slave until she was 30. And we learn about Moses father, a college educated writer at the Wilmington Daily Record, the only black daily newspaper in the South. Moses father is also an alderman in the city government. Moses tells us about his friend Lewis, and what happens when he borrows Lewis's bicycle. We see him try to keep a job picking okra, only to lose it because he tells the truth. We see him becoming friends with a white boy named Tommy, and watch as they explore tunnels under the city. The narrative takes over from the vignettes by the time Moses and his father take a train to Fayetteville. When they arrive in Fayetteville, they find themselves in the middle of a white supremacist rally. By the end of the narrative, the government of Wilmington has been forcibly removed by white supremacists. Democracy is of fundamental importance to Moses father. He views the right to vote as a sacred requirement and he and Moses worked together to encourage blacks to vote. Moses' father expounds on the value of democracy even as he and other members of the existing government in Wilmington are put on a train by the white mob and exiled from Wilmington. We have just witnessed a presidential inauguration in this country. An inauguration is, in a way, a symbol of

our democracy. It's a peaceful transfer of power which comes about as a result of an election. This is basic to our country. I had no idea power had ever changed hands as a result of violence in the United States. Crow is a powerful cautionary tale.

Although this book is marketed as middle-grade fiction, it has a depth and complexity that I believe will appeal to sophisticated readers in all age groups. Filtering the story of the little-known Wilmington Massacre and the events leading up to it through the eyes of a boy of eleven-going-on-twelve was an inspired choice. Moses learns about racism in a similar way to that in which a younger child discovers there is no Santa Claus, only it's a much ruder awakening. To feel the confusion of a boy who can't participate in a writing contest because even though he's the right age "there could be other restrictions," or who can't understand why he and his father have to sit in the dirty car at the back of the train, is to be reminded of the irrational nature of prejudice in all its forms. Tensions in Moses' town rise during an election season, as the white community spreads rumors that the black community is plotting to take their women, their jobs, and their political power. Their only evidence is the willingness of a few educated black men to exercise their rights to free speech and participate in the local government and economy. Irrational fear spirals into violence. The people the mob wants to drive out of town are not the poorly educated or the criminal, as they claim, but the most highly educated and respected men in the African-American community. I was struck by the timely implications of this story as our country today navigates a contentious political season in which, for better or worse, race has taken center stage. I felt a chill at reading how quickly a nervous coexistence can explode into us-versus-them violence. But I was grateful that author Barbara Wright pulled this forgotten historical event out from under the rug so that we could learn from it. I was even more grateful that her choice of a child's-eye view allowed me to witness the human capacity for growth. In the end, I felt hope. This is an important story that deserves a wide audience.

This is the story of a boy living in North Carolina just before the turn of the 20th century leading up to the bloody Wilmington Race Riots of 1898. Moses is not just a vehicle for the events but an engaging protagonist, coming of age in an era where 'people of color' were striving to take advantage of the promise of the Thirteenth Amendment. His granny, 'Boo Nanny,' is uneducated but respected for her herbal/apothecary knowledge and common sense. His college educated father dabbles in local politics, and instills in Moses a love of reading and optimism about the future but tragically underestimates the extent of racial hatred brewing in this city. Powerful, and an interesting

view point of this time period.

Though I had gotten this book for an assignment in class, I didn't think it would capture me as much as other books that I read do; this book really sunk in with history- and it delicately danced along its lines with grace. I started to really get sucked into the book, and I couldn't put it down. I could feel emotions that had been laced into Moses' heart, and it was really opening my eyes about the conditions and racism then. This was a great book in my opinion, and I suggest grabbing some tissues, just so you know.

This book was added to the choice of books for the students I tutor.

Starts slow, but keeps you engaged. The story is clearly a true reflection of the times, with racial discrimination and bias, and the violence which most often comes with it.

This book portrays an event in history that is little known. It is well written from the perspective of a young boy. Good read.

I was hooked from the beginning of this book. Very well-written. Being based on actual historical events made this book even more intriguing.

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