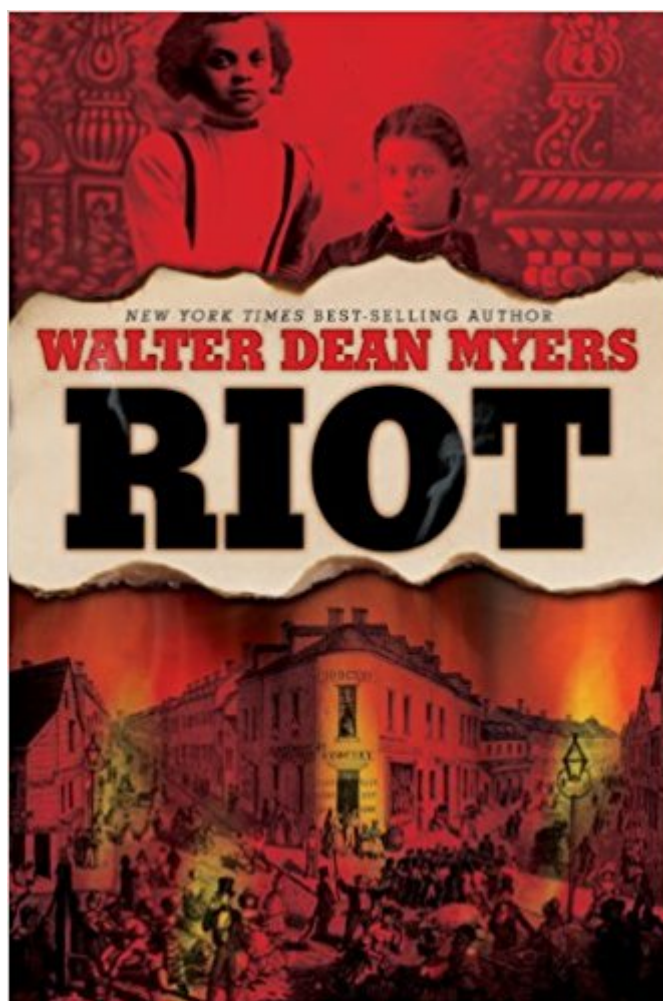


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# Riot



## Synopsis

The Civil War is raging and in a desperate effort to find more recruits, the Union begins a draft - a draft with a difference. The wealthy can pay \$300 to be released from their obligation, but the poor must go and fight and die. In New York City, the recently arrived Irish are the hardest hit by the draft and during the long hot days of July the city explodes in a rash of arson, marches, attacks, and lynchings, with the immigrant Irish taking out their anger on the black inhabitants of the city. Fourteen-year-old Claire, the daughter of an Irish mother and a black father, has never had to choose between the two sides of the family - she has never had reason to consider her own identity. When she learns that a friend of hers is in danger, she decides to go to her aid, but by venturing out on the streets, she puts her own life at risk.

Myers's use of the screenplay format allows his readers a birds-eye view of the four hot days in July when New York City burned, using multiple points of view from both sides of the conflict.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 7 Up •The setting is New York City, July 1863. Lincoln has just called up more troops after the devastation at Gettysburg. Tensions rise and then boil over into riots as Irish immigrants rail against the draft and direct their wrath at the city's African-American population. Fifteen-year-old Claire, daughter of a black father and white mother, finds herself at the center of the

vortex. She is forced to grapple with the notion that her race has suddenly become the entirety of her identity while friends and family are pulled into different camps and a mob mentality consumes the city. The author revisits the screenplay format utilized to much acclaim in *Monster* (HarperCollins, 1999), yet here it serves a wholly different purpose. While the screenplay helped *Monster*'s Steve reveal a creative identity apart from his mug shot, in *Riot* it gives a sense of the proportion and chaos of the times, as the camera pans across the city jumping from one incident to another, simultaneously tracking numerous characters. Myers crafts a sympathetic cast, which is excellent fodder for conversations about race and class, and the book is also a choice pick for reluctant readers who will relish both format and pacing. Once again, this master storyteller has delivered. --Jill Heritage Maza, Greenwich High School, CT END --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Walter Dean Myers is one of the best known writers of children's literature working today. His work has received numerous awards, including two Newbery Honors, five Coretta Scott King Awards, the Michael L. Printz Award, the Margaret A. Edwards Award, two Lee Bennett Hopkins Awards, the ALAN Award, and many others, including the 2008 Arbuthnot Award from the ALA. This year, he is the first time winner of the Coretta Scott King-Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement, which will be presented at ALA in Washington. Besides writing, Walter loves collecting photographs and ephemera dealing with black history, and owns several pieces from this period, including an actual \$300 waiver of the Civil War draft.

Okay. So maybe I'm a "little young" but I had too. My teachers made me rush this book and if I could've read more in depth... But still this book blind sighted me! I loved it only 4 stars cuz', well I explained that...

This book shed light on a new part of American history I didn't know existed! I had read about various race riots that occurred much later than this story but had no clue that there was a draft during the Civil War, not to mention a riot in response to a desire not to fight. This is a great read for anyone!

Great buy!!!

My 7th graders love this book!

I chose this book because it was on my 10 year old son wish list. I will recommend it to other kids.

Riot is the story of a young girl who struggles not only with the harsh environment of race riots but also with her racial identity as a child of mixed backgrounds. This is a well written piece of multicultural literature that can be used as a springboard for many different discussions and learning experiences in the classroom and beyond.

"I just wanted to be a human being. I just wanted to be whoever I saw in the mirror, without a race or a place in life." I wanted to like this book/play about the Civil War race riots in New York City. Maybe because it was written for Young Adults it was too simplistic for me. It's also acted out like a movie, with screen shots and camera angles which takes away a lot of your imagination in a book. I don't like being told what to look at, and who is important. I would rather find my own way. I also found it hard to believe that a young woman, half black/half white, had never encountered racial bigotry before the riots. I would imagine that would be a day to day thing in those days, after all even the most ardent Abolitionists thought the negroes should be sent back to Africa, even though the majority had been born on American soil. That said, I do believe this is an important story that needs to be told. The riots occurred because the poorer Irish had to sign up for the draft while the richer people could pay \$300 and hire a substitute. The Irish also feared the freed slaves would take their jobs and cut wages as they were told they would work for next to nothing once freed. These were real fears that no one had addressed. I certainly could never condone the actions of the rioters but I can understand the fears that cause people to act that way. I do recommend this book to anyone that wants to learn what life was like in New York City during the Civil War and why such riots occurred.

In the summer of 1863 the civil war was well underway, and the congress made the first conscription act in the United States. The conscription act allowed men, to be drafted into the Union army and get payed 300 dollars, which is about a years pay for an average citizen. But the upper class men had an option of paying off the 300 dollars and have someone else fight in their place. This caused an outburst in New York City, working class men flooded the streets and started riots around the city. Which led to fires, buildings and stores being looted and raided, and brutal attacks on other citizens. The mobs targeted their attacks on African American citizens. This was because a predominate amount of the rioters were Irish immigrants, and most of the Irish immigrants faced

poverty, and with the newly freed African American slaves, the Irish resented them because they were afraid of the freed slaves cutting their wages. Therefore several deaths occurred, and the riots forced some of the Union army to come down from Gettysburg and put down the riots, this led to even countless more deaths, on both sides. In the mix of these incidents, are a group of fictional characters. The main group of characters are Claire, a biracial middle class 15 year old girl, John and Ellen (Claire's parents), and the owner of the Peacock Inn/restaurant, Liam an employee at the Peacock Inn, Maeve Liam's fiancée, and Priscilla, Claire's best friend. In the book there are some characters that are introduced, but in my opinion that's the main group of characters. In the book Claire, who appears Caucasian, but is biracial, is conflicted about her racial identity when the riots are happening. An example of this is on page 66, when Claire's talking to her mother, she says this "Maybe it's me who should be out there trying to find myself. Trying to discover who I am, instead of hiding behind this door wondering what they will call me. I'm not afraid that they will hurt, I'm afraid they'll discover who I am before I do". This is why mid way in the book Claire defines herself as black to people she's close with. Maeve is quite rude to Claire and Priscilla for most of the book. This is because Maeve thinks less of African Americans and Priscilla's black and even though Claire appears Caucasian, once Maeve found out that Claire was biracial she acted the same way to Claire, and because Maeve is Liam's fiancée she's jealous of Claire. An example of Maeve being mean to Claire is on page 81, when Claire was rounding the corner of a building, she is spun around by Maeve, and pushed to the ground. Then Maeve starts teasing Claire and slaps her, but Claire is able to run away. Liam is more of a respectable character than Maeve, even though he does join the riots. Priscilla is Claire's best friend, and is not safe on the streets of New York City, but during the riots she went on the streets to help keep the African American children safe from the mobs that want to destroy the orphan asylum. In the process she tries to find her aunt with Claire to make sure she's alright. In my opinion I would give riot by Walter dean Myers a 3.5 out of 5 stars. I would give it this rating because it wasn't a book that I was glued to, but it kept me interested in the topic. A downside to the book for me was how it was written in screen play format. The screenplay format made it difficult to get into the book for the first several pages. What it also impacted was fully connecting with the characters. For example, because of the way it was structured the pages were limited to character actions, dialogue, and different camera angles. But for me that was the only downside to the book. The characters were believable with how they interacted with each other and the reasoning behind it. Although it was a very concise book, it gave a fairly accurate example of the New York City draft riots. The plot was fast paced, and discusses economic principles, such as competitiveness for jobs, and racial discrimination. Also the political, and social tensions that arose

because of this. Overall Riot is a historical fiction novel, that brings the New York City draft riots alive. It has a fast paced plot, and would be good for readers that are new to the topic of violence and racial problems.

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