

Anchor, Compass, and Sail: The Black Panther Party in
African-American Children/Adolescent Fiction

Abstract

In 2017, author Angie Thomas published *The Hate U Give* to immediate and enduring critical acclaim. In this novel, 16 year-old Starr Carter witnesses the death of her best friend at the hands of a police officer. She struggles not only with trauma caused by the encounter, but also with indecision about how to respond to the event. Her father, Maverick, is integral to her recovery and her discovery that her voice matters. His teachings largely focus on Black history, alluding to figures such as Malcolm X and Nat Turner, but also to the ideologies of the Black Panther Party.

Thomas is one of numerous authors of recent children's and adolescent fiction who use their works to rewrite Black history and emphasize the achievements of African-Americans. This essay analyzes Rita Williams-Garcia's *Gaither Sisters* series, particularly *One Crazy Summer* and *P.S., Be Eleven*, Kekla Magoon's *Fire in the Streets*, and Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give*, with attention to the authors' allusions to the Black Panther Party. Scholar Rudine Sims Bishop asserts that accurate, culturally conscious representations of history act as "anchor, compass, and sail" for young Black readers by offering insight into the struggles they are facing (249). These representations enable all readers to understand what it means to be an American. Determining which Black Panther ideologies are most relevant for the protagonists, and studying how these ideologies continue to resonate in modern works, readers can learn about movements of the past while also seeing contemporary society with greater clarity.