



2006

Away West

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Leydsman, Thomasania (2006) "Away West," *Children's Book and Media Review*. Vol. 27 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol27/iss1/7>

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McKissack, Patricia C. *Away West*. Illustrated by Gordon C. James. Viking, 2006. 0670060127. \$14.99. 121 p.

Reviewer: Thomasania Leydsman

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: African Americans--Juvenile fiction; West (U.S.)--History--1860-1890--Juvenile fiction; Brothers--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

African-American history comes alive in this story as two of the three Webster brothers wrestle with their futures. Each brother has a different view of their respective destinies. Fourteen year old Everett is torn between leaving and remaining on the family farm, left to him and his older brothers by their late father. A farm owned by African-Americans was a precious thing after the Civil War, but already, the oldest brother Cole, has left to seek his fortunes in the Army, leaving the farming to Gus and Everett. Gus feels that they owe it to their father to make the farm a success, but Everett does not want the life of a farmer. He thinks his destiny lies in making it out West, so he runs away from home.

Away West is the second story in the Scrap of Times Series. McKissack's series exposes children to African-American history, through the exploits of one fictional family, the Websters. This is a story of family loyalties and how the family eventually works out their differences. McKissack's series will help the reader to learn about the African-American pioneers and the important events and experiences that encouraged former slaves to leave the South and go West. This series fills a gap in children's historical fiction about African-Americans. *Away West* will interest children, ages nine to twelve; it can be used to teach Westward Expansion in American history.