



2017

The Cay

Olivia Noli

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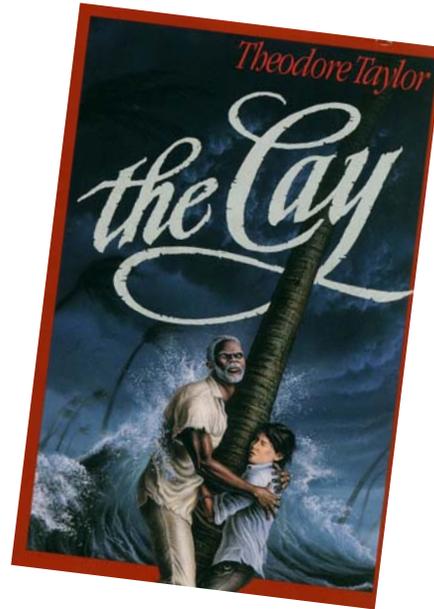
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Book Review

Title: The Cay
Author: Theodore Taylor
Reviewer: Olivia Noli
Publisher: Yearling
Publication Year: 1969
ISBN: 9780440416630
Number of Pages: 137
Interest Level: Primary, Intermediate
Rating: Outstanding



Review

The Cay is a coming-of-age story about Phillip Enright, a eleven year old boy who lives on a small Dutch island during the beginning of World War II. Initially excited by war, Phillip is upset that his mother insists on leaving his father and the island to go back to America. While in route to Panama, Phillip and his mother's ship is torpedoed. Phillip awakes on a raft with an old black man named Timothy, a cat, and a bump on his head. As they drift on the sea, Phillip's injury causes him to lose his sight. Eventually they land on a deserted island and Phillip has to learn to live as a blind person. Timothy insists on teaching him to do things for himself because they both know that Timothy is old enough that he could die on the island. Phillip comes to accept Timothy as a friend and no longer judges by the color of his skin.

With an initial quote from Martin Luther King, Jr., it is clear that Taylor is addressing racism when he wrote this book in the 1960s. The story is engaging while teaching children about not being prejudiced. It is best read with an adult who can explain the themes of war and racism. One fascinating aspect of this novel is that the narrative is not sacrificed despite its original intent for a young audience, and can be enjoyed by readers of all ages. Taylor's messages on racism are as relevant today as they were in the 60s. His discussion of different cultures speaks of the value of acceptance and appreciation for different lifestyles. Taylor also explores the varying perspectives on voodoo, comparing a white boy's judgements on mysticism to a practitioner's belief in a karma-like religion. Religious persecution is prevalent today and Taylor actively tries to dispel stereotypes in his writing. His crusade against prejudice in this novel is a great theme for any reader.

*Contains mild violence