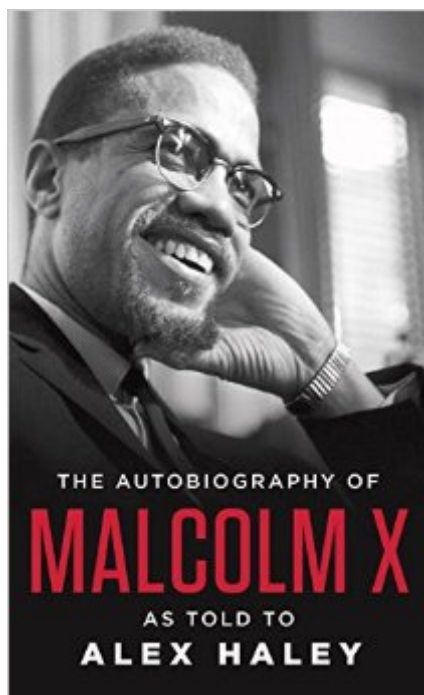


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The Autobiography Of Malcolm X: As Told To Alex Haley



Synopsis

ONE OF TIME'S TEN MOST IMPORTANT NONFICTION BOOKS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

With its first great victory in the landmark Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the civil rights movement gained the powerful momentum it needed to sweep forward into its crucial decade, the 1960s. As voices of protest and change rose above the din of history and false promises, one voice sounded more urgently, more passionately, than the rest. Malcolm X "once called the most dangerous man in America" challenged the world to listen and learn the truth as he experienced it. And his enduring message is as relevant today as when he first delivered it.

In the searing pages of this classic autobiography, originally published in 1964, Malcolm X, the Muslim leader, firebrand, and anti-integrationist, tells the extraordinary story of his life and the growth of the Black Muslim movement to veteran writer and journalist Alex Haley. In a unique collaboration, Haley worked with Malcolm X for nearly two years, interviewing, listening to, and understanding the most controversial leader of his time.

Raised in Lansing, Michigan, Malcolm Little journeyed on a road to fame as astonishing as it was unpredictable. Drifting from childhood poverty to petty crime, Malcolm found himself in jail. It was there that he came into contact with the teachings of a little-known Black Muslim leader renamed Elijah Muhammad. The newly renamed Malcolm X devoted himself body and soul to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and the world of Islam, becoming the Nation's foremost spokesman. When his conscience forced him to break with Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity to reach African Americans across the country with an inspiring message of pride, power, and self-determination.

The *Autobiography of Malcolm X* defines American culture and the African American struggle for social and economic equality that has now become a battle for survival. Malcolm's fascinating perspective on the lies and limitations of the American Dream, and the inherent racism in a society that denies its nonwhite citizens the opportunity to dream, gives extraordinary insight into the most urgent issues of our own time.

The *Autobiography of Malcolm X* stands as the definitive statement of a movement and a man whose work was never completed but whose message is timeless. It is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand America.

Praise for *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

"Malcolm X's autobiography seemed to offer something different. His repeated acts of self-creation spoke to me; the blunt poetry of his words, his unadorned insistence on respect, promised a new and uncompromising order, martial in its discipline, forged through sheer force of will."

Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father*

"Extraordinary . . . a brilliant, painful, important book."

The New York Times

"A great book . . . Its dead level honesty, its passion, its exalted purpose, will make it stand as a

monument to the most painful truth.â•â "The Nation Â â œThe most important book Iâ™ll ever read, it changed the way I thought, it changed the way I acted. It has given me courage I didnâ™t know I had inside me. Iâ™m one of hundreds of thousands whose lives were changed for the better.â•â "Spike LeeÂ â œThis book will have a permanent place in the literature of the Afro-American struggle.â•â "I. F. Stone

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Autobiography of Malcolm X belongs on the short-list of any compilations of best biographies/autobiographies for two reasons. First, the fact that among all the public figures that American history has to offer, Malcolm is undoubtedly one of the most complex. Secondly, Alex Haley does an amazing job of transporting the reader into Malcolm's thoughts and feelings. Praise of this book is not simply praise of the subject; this is also a powerful literary work and a sharp piece of history. Autobiography is a classic American tale of one of the most misunderstood figures in American history. Malcolm has been and is viewed as everything from an evil racist hate-monger to the champion of modern day militant pro-Black radicals. What he was, in reality, was a remarkably intelligent and charismatic leader who reflected the ills of the society around him, changed throughout his life, and gradually evolved from ignorance to anger to enlightenment. Autobiography should be required reading for anyone who claims to have an opinion on Malcolm. My strong recommendation is not simply praise for Malcolm; certainly it would be possible to write an uninteresting book on a compelling figure. My recommendation for this particular biography comes

for the power and precision of Alex Haley's writing. Haley puts us in Malcolm's schoolroom, amongst the petty criminals of his youth, in the penitentiary, amongst the militants of the Nation of Islam, and in Mecca and Africa, where he underwent his final transformation. We see what Malcolm sees, and we feel what Malcolm feels. This is a critically important element in the success of this amazing biography.

Title: The Autobiography of Malcolm X as told to Alex Haley
Pages: 466
Time spent on the "to read" shelf: I must have purchased this book in 2001 or 2002, so about 7 or 8 years.
Days spent reading it: 10 days.
Why I read it: During college I wrote a report in my Intro to Islam class about Black Muslims. In writing that report I discovered that Malcolm X started off with a deviant form of Islam, but after his trip to Mecca he began to change his views about Islam and also his views on hating all "white devils." I picked up this book because I was interested in Malcolm X's life after writing that report.
Brief review: Wow. This book was not what I expected at all. Reading this autobiography was more compelling than I could have imagined. I was engaged in Malcolm's life from start to finish. Starting with his street hustler days in Harlem, to his conversion to Islam (as preached by Elijah Muhammad) in prison, to his break with Elijah Muhammad, to his pilgrimage to Mecca, and ending with his assassination, this book was informative and entertaining. A few things I found most interesting about Malcolm's life. First, Malcolm X was full of hatred for what the "white devil" had done to the black man. He saw injustice, called white men out on it, and sought to fix the situation. While I do not agree with his militant tactics, I respect his unflagging devotion to righting centuries of wrongs. Second, I find his change after his trip to Mecca as completely astonishing. He completely transformed his views. He stopped saying all white men were the devil. He started pointing to the system that oppressed, and that many white men perpetuated. It is a fascinating study to look at how drastically he changed in those last few months of his life.

I am not a racist in any form whatever. I don't believe in any form of racism. I don't believe in any form of discrimination or segregation. I believe in Islam. -Malcolm X
This was the final triumph of Malcolm X and the resolution that makes his life story into a classic American tale: that in the end, he was able to move beyond the chrysalis of his racial hatred and emerge an integrated enlightened being. I'm sure most everyone has either read this book or seen Spike Lee's excellent biopic, so we need not rehash the story too thoroughly. Anyway, what matters are the essentials. Malcolm Little was a street punk when he was exposed to the Nation of Islam in prison. This exposure, and the racial pride and anger that went with it, lead him to educate himself and get involved with the Nation,

where he became one of the most effective spokesmen and organizers. A confrontational proponent of racial separatism and black self-reliance, during the Civil Rights struggle, he was yin to Martin Luther King's yang (or as I read somewhere, he was the Old Testament figure, King was a figure from the New)--the constant reminder to whites that if King's nonviolent methods failed to produce results, millions of righteously resentful young black men were waiting in the wings. But, when Malcolm X made a hadj to Mecca, he discovered that there were Moslems of all races, worshipping together peacefully, and that racism played no part in traditional Islam. And so, in the closing days of his life, he split from the Nation of Islam, adopting true Islamic beliefs and practices and earning the enmity of Nation leaders who had him assassinated.

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