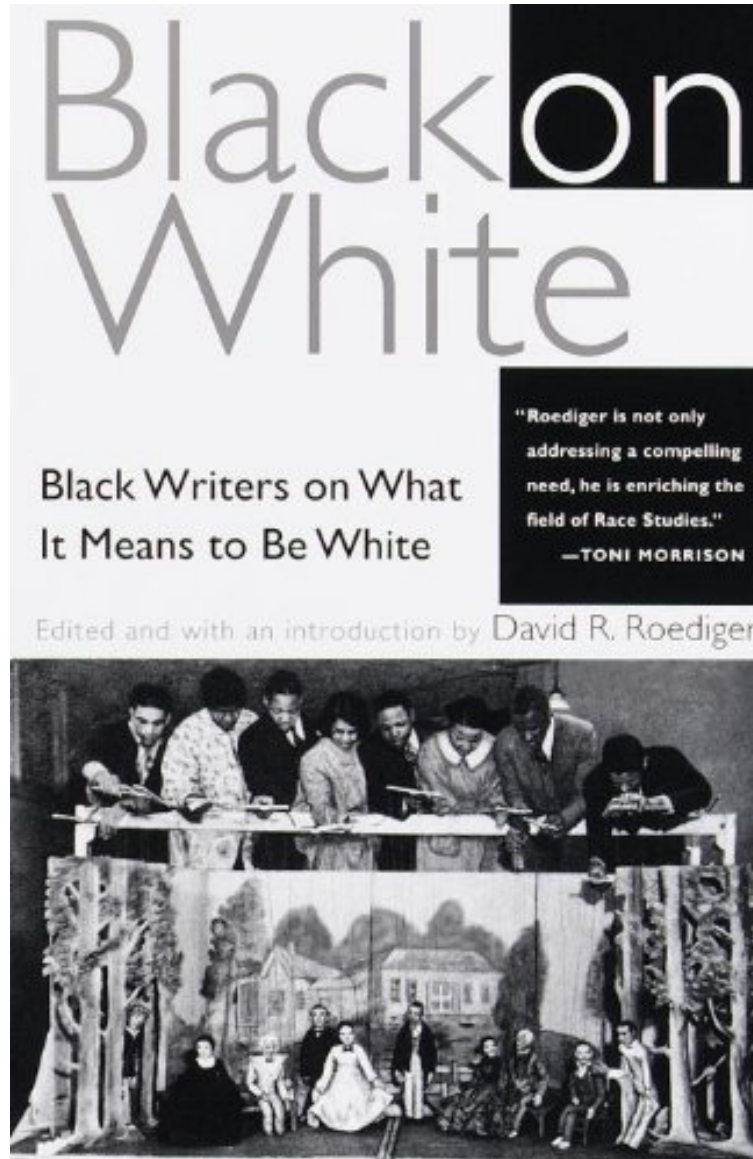


(Free read ebook) Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to Be White

Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to Be White

David R. Roediger

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David R. Roediger : Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to Be White before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to Be White:

5 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Well presented and an eye-opening perspective By Deborah Surprisingly candid perspective on the Caucasian American. This was purchased as a text for a course in Communicating Across Cultures and it's a keeper. I have not completed the book, but I am 'meeting' an array of writers

from a range of era through the 1900's. You can sit down and plow through, but I am enjoying a small grouping of 'chapters' each time I open it. Then taking some time to consider i just read before taking on another chunk. Don't expect a book full of anti-white man rants...but a series of snapshots that show us how American culture has not shone their brightest in response to a supposed racial superiority. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Maya Elliott nice 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Looking At White from the Outside By Customer I've never written a book review here before but might as well give it a try. I have not yet finished the book but can't imagine my opinion will change. I have always hesitated to suggest anyone read or see or experience anything just because I enjoyed or found meaning in the experience. That said, I believe this should be "encouraged reading" for open-minded white Americans. I've been around for a long time and thought I "understood" until I read this book. I wish I could provide a comparison to anything else I have read, but there's nothing even close that comes to mind. The premise, as I understand it, is that black Americans have been paying attention to who we are and what we do (often for their own survival) since the day the first people of color stepped foot on this continent, and many of them see through our pretenses. In this book, scholars, artists, and authors, tell us who it they see as they observe white American culture, including its history. Think about it, folks. We (I am white myself) assume that we have the corner on morality, values, intelligence, and human worth, simply by virtue of the lack of pigment in our skins. Every day in multiple ways, we are assured that we're just a little better. But these black folks have been looking at what we DO and see a whole lot of contradiction and downright hypocrisy. What smug conceit sends missionaries to other lands to "introduce" our superior culture? What made it possible for the Founding Fathers, morally, to enshrine racism in the Constitution? As they say at the Poker table, "read 'em and weep." So this collection of articles, poems, and narratives range from the very scholarly to the very raw. Each author is his or her own way shares his or her thoughts about who we really are and in some cases delve deeply into the economic and social history of America. The history you will read isn't your grandfather's history or social studies class, but if you read this book and have a shred of humility, you will perhaps better understand why we are so NOT living in a post-racial era. One particular perspective you will confront again and again is the way the ruling class has been able to subjugate newly arriving immigrants and working class whites, especially in the South, through the implicit message that "you might not have it all that great, but it could be a whole lot worse...you could be a N - - - -" By the way, please don't read this because you think you might better understand "the black experience." Don't read it to soothe your guilt, because that is not what this books asks of you, and neither would the authors and scholars. Don't read it because you think you suffer from "the white man's burden" and learning about the black perspective is one way to loosen the burden. Read it because it is an opportunity to see your culture from the outside, even though it isn't pretty. I gave this book four stars because a couple of the selections were, for my tastes, a little dry and difficult to follow, which may have much to do with the era in which they were written. On the other hand, it is a great book to read a little at a time, and I believe you will find yourself going back to revisit several of the selections, as I have, even as I continue to plow through it in order.

In this thought-provoking volume, David R. Roediger has brought together some of the most important black writers throughout history to explore the question: What does it really mean to be white in America? From folktales and slave narratives to contemporary essays, poetry, and fiction, black writers have long been among America's keenest students of white consciousness and white behavior, but until now much of this writing has been ignored. *Black on White* reverses this trend by presenting the work of more than fifty major figures, including James Baldwin, Derrick Bell, Ralph Ellison, W.E.B. Du Bois, bell hooks, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker to take a closer look at the many meanings of whiteness in our society. Rich in irony, artistry, passion, and common sense, these reflections on what Langston Hughes called "the ways of white folks" illustrate how whiteness as a racial identity derives its meaning not as a biological category but as a social construct designed to uphold racial inequality. Powerful and compelling, *Black on White* provides a much-needed perspective that is sure to have a major impact on the study of race and race relations in America.

.com American literature boasts a long history of white authors writing about blacks. From Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, to Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's controversial study of ethnicity and intelligence, *The Bell Curve*, the right of white writers to examine the lives of black people is accepted without comment. But where are the commentaries by black writers on white culture? They exist, to be sure--Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Zora Neale Hurston, to name just a few, have all written on the subject of "white folk"--but little if any of this work ever makes it into the consciousness of mainstream America. This new anthology might just change all that. Edited by David R. Roediger, *Black on White* brings together some of the most succinct writing ever on what it means to be white--from the African American point of view. Consider, for example, William J. Wilson's satiric "What Shall We Do with the White People?": For many centuries now have they been on this continent; and for many years have they had entire rule and sway; yet they are today no nearer the solution of the problem, "are they fit for self-government"--than they were at the commencement of their career. Or bell hooks's critical "Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination": Usually white students respond with nave

amazement that black people critically assess white people from a standpoint where "whiteness" is the privileged signifier. Their amazement that black people watch white people with a critical "ethnographic" gaze, is itself an expression of racism. Toni Morrison, Amiri Baraka, Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, and Alice Walker are just a few of the heavy-hitters included in an anthology that runs the gamut of African American writers and thinkers. --Alix Wilber
From Library Journal
These two books belong to a growing body of work that examines white identity through African American writings. Historian Roediger (*Towards the Abolition of Whiteness*, Norton, 1994) here collects illuminating views of "whiteness" from black writers ranging from such early figures as the revolutionary David Walker to contemporaries like Toni Morrison. Some of the expected sources are here, including James Baldwin's *Going To Meet the Man* and Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, but among several delightful surprises are George S. Schuyler's essay "Our White Folks" and Alice Walker's "The Dummy in the Window: Joel Chandler Harris and the Invention of Uncle Remus." Although the anthology includes a range of perspectives, Roediger has essentially excluded "the more reflexively antiwhite tradition represented (at times) by the nation of Islam, or by Leonard Jeffries's recent writing on whites." This results in some notable omissions, including Malcolm X. Still, this is a valuable collection that should go a long way in helping us to understand America's troubled racial relations. Recommended for all collections. Sartwell (philosophy, Pennsylvania State Univ.) analyzes the perception of whiteness in the slave narratives of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, Zora Neale Hurston, and Malcolm X, and contemporary rap music. He contends that whites, in seeking to establish their identity as the norm, ultimately render themselves invisible. Furthermore, white identity is typically constructed in comparison with nonwhite identities, often portraying the latter as inferior, he notes. Through the writings of African Americans, Sartwell believes whiteness can be viewed in a more objective manner. At the same time that he seeks to elucidate the texts, he grapples with his own whiteness. In the process, he has presented an engaging though disturbing investigation of the complex politics of identity. Recommended for academic libraries. ?Louis J. Parascandola, Long Island Univ., Brooklyn Campus, NY
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From Booklist
Historian Roediger, author of *The Wages of Whiteness* (1991), has been at the forefront of the study of "whiteness," or what it means to be white, the latest approach to understanding racial divisiveness. In this trailblazing anthology of essays and other works by 50 African American writers of the last two centuries, Roediger presents eloquent perspectives on white people and "whiteness" as a "system of terror." In one of her essays, bell hooks observes that whites "imagine that they are invisible to black people" and describes how disconcerted her white students are to discover that black people "watch white people with a critical 'ethnographic' gaze." But that has always been the case, as such writers as W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin ("the greatest expert on white consciousness in the twentieth century United States," according to Roediger), and Toni Morrison prove in their commentary. Roediger has chosen the selections well, including works that examine everything from issues of gender and race to aesthetics and the myth that to be American is to be white. Donna Seaman