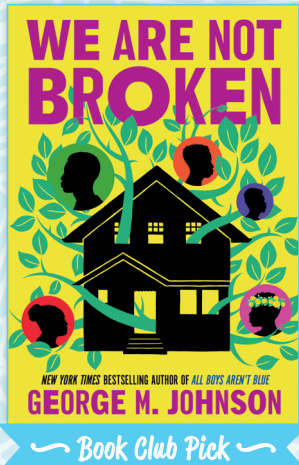


WE ARE NOT BROKEN

GEORGE M. JOHNSON



ABOUT THE BOOK:

This is the vibrant story of George, Garrett, Rall, and Rasul—four children raised by Nanny, their fiercely devoted grandmother. The boys hold one another close through early brushes with racism, memorable experiences at the family barbershop, and first loves and losses. And with Nanny at their center, they are never broken.

George M. Johnson captures the unique experience of growing up as a Black boy in America, and their rich family stories—exploring themes of vulnerability, sacrifice, and culture—are interspersed with touching letters from the grandchildren to their beloved matriarch. By turns heartwarming and heartbreaking, this personal account is destined to become a modern classic of emerging adulthood.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *We Are Not Broken* opens with the Malcolm X quote: “The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman.” How do the women in George’s life support and care for them and their brothers? How, in turn, do George and their brothers uplift the Black women in their lives?
2. Each chapter is titled after a Nannyism, one of George’s grandmother’s pearls of wisdom. Which of these sayings resonated with you the most? Why? What sayings have been passed down through your own family?
3. Garrett, Rall, George, and Rasul consider themselves brothers. How is this closeness reflected in their family dynamic? What makes these cousins as close as brothers?
4. How does everyone in George’s family benefit from intergenerational relationships? How do members of the different generations care for one another? How do these relationships change over time?
5. Why is childhood important? In what ways does society force Black children to grow up too soon?
6. Throughout this book and *All Boys Aren’t Blue*, George talks about the way boys are taught to behave. How does that gendered conditioning impact George’s navigation of their gender identity? How do models of “traditional” masculinity affect young boys?
7. What does each boy’s letter to Nanny reveal about their individual relationship with her? Did you respond strongly to one letter in particular? Why?
8. What role do faith and spirituality play in George’s life? In Nanny’s? How are their relationships with religion shaped by their identities?
9. Nanny is a singular presence in the lives of these four boys. What do you learn about Nanny through her relationships with her grandchildren? How does she exert her role as matriarch?
10. George repeatedly singles out the importance of Black joy. How is joy expressed in each of these stories? Why is joy so important to celebrate?