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The Forbidden Word

James Henry Harris

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The Forbidden Word

James Henry Harris

The Forbidden Word James Henry Harris
This book is about a Black man's reading of Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn for the first time while in graduate school. The story captures his emotional experience with Twain's use of the racial epithet "nigger" more than 211 times throughout the book. The visceral response to hearing the word verbalized by whites with Twain's permission, regardless of irony or satire, is a central theme of this personal history/memoir. The situation is a seminar in Richmond, Virginia, the former capital of the Confederacy, where the Civil War is still being fought on many levels. The story is the complication of race as a topic of public discussion and the role the word nigger plays in postmodern society especially among Blacks and Hip-Hop music. The use of the word is a sign of evil both historically and culturally and cannot be flipped in a way that erases its history and meaning. It is also a reflection on language and culture.

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