

kick by walter dean myers

Kick by Walter Dean Myers is a compelling novel that delves into the complex world of adolescence, friendship, and the pursuit of dreams through the lens of soccer. Published in 2009, this engaging narrative intertwines the lives of two brothers, the challenges they face, and the profound impact of their shared passion for the game. Myers, a celebrated author known for his ability to capture the essence of youth and the diverse experiences of African American characters, uses "Kick" to explore themes of ambition, loyalty, and the trials of growing up in a challenging environment.

Overview of the Plot

"Kick" follows the story of two brothers, the older brother named "D" and the younger brother named "Derrick." Set against the backdrop of New York City, the novel captures their struggles as they navigate their lives, aspirations, and the pressures of their environment. Derrick, the protagonist, is a talented soccer player who dreams of becoming a professional athlete. However, the path to success is riddled with obstacles, including family dynamics, societal expectations, and personal insecurities.

The Brothers' Relationship

The relationship between D and Derrick is central to the narrative. Their bond is tested as they face various challenges:

- Support and Rivalry: D, once an aspiring soccer star himself, now works at a local convenience store and feels a sense of disappointment about his unfulfilled dreams. Derrick looks up to D, but he also feels the weight of his brother's expectations and past failures.
- Mentorship: D serves as both a mentor and a cautionary tale for Derrick. He encourages Derrick to chase his soccer dreams while simultaneously warning him about the harsh realities of pursuing a career in sports.
- Conflict: As the story progresses, tensions arise between the brothers. Derrick's determination to succeed sometimes leads him to make choices that D disapproves of, resulting in moments of conflict and misunderstanding.

Thematic Exploration

Myers skillfully weaves various themes throughout "Kick," enriching the story and providing deeper insight into the characters' lives.

The Pursuit of Dreams

At its core, "Kick" is about the pursuit of dreams. Derrick's journey illustrates the dedication and hard work required to achieve success in soccer. Several elements highlight this theme:

1. **Training and Discipline:** Derrick's commitment to honing his skills is evident as he trains rigorously. His passion for soccer drives him to push his limits, showcasing the importance of discipline in achieving one's goals.
2. **Sacrifices:** The novel emphasizes the sacrifices that come with pursuing a dream. Derrick navigates the challenges of balancing school, family responsibilities, and soccer practice, which often leads to difficult decisions.
3. **Setbacks and Resilience:** Derrick faces numerous setbacks, including injuries and competition, yet he learns to adapt and persevere. This resilience is a crucial aspect of his character development.

Family Dynamics and Support

Family plays a pivotal role in shaping the characters' lives in "Kick." The dynamics within Derrick's family add depth to the story:

- **Parental Influence:** Derrick's parents have high expectations for their children, which creates pressure. Their desire for Derrick to succeed is rooted in love but can sometimes feel overwhelming.
- **Community Support:** The novel highlights the importance of community and friendship in supporting one's dreams. Derrick finds solace and encouragement from his friends and teammates, who share his passion for soccer.

Identity and Self-Discovery

As Derrick navigates his teenage years, he embarks on a journey of self-discovery. The novel touches on:

- **Cultural Identity:** Myers incorporates elements of African American culture, providing readers with a glimpse into the characters' backgrounds and experiences. Derrick's identity as a young black man influences his interactions and challenges.
- **Personal Growth:** Throughout the story, Derrick learns valuable lessons about himself, his aspirations, and the importance of staying true to who he is amidst external pressures.

Character Development

Myers' characters are richly developed, each contributing to the overall narrative.

Derrick

Derrick is a relatable and dynamic character who embodies the struggles of adolescence. His journey reflects:

- Ambition: Derrick's drive to succeed in soccer is palpable, and readers witness his growth as he learns to navigate both triumphs and failures.
- Self-Reflection: Throughout the novel, Derrick engages in self-reflection, allowing him to understand his motivations and the impact of his choices.

D

D serves as a complex character whose past experiences shape his relationship with Derrick. His character reflects:

- Regret: D's unfulfilled dreams create a sense of regret that influences his interactions with Derrick. He grapples with his own choices while trying to guide his brother.
- Protectiveness: Despite their conflicts, D is fiercely protective of Derrick, wanting the best for him while struggling with his own disappointments.

Writing Style and Language

Walter Dean Myers' writing style in "Kick" is accessible yet evocative, making it appealing to young adult readers.

Engaging Narration

- First-Person Perspective: The story is told from Derrick's point of view, allowing readers to experience his thoughts, emotions, and struggles intimately.
- Vivid Descriptions: Myers employs vivid imagery to describe soccer matches, training sessions, and the vibrant streets of New York City, immersing readers in the setting.

Dialogue

- Authentic Voices: The dialogue is realistic and relatable, capturing the nuances of teenage communication and the dynamics between siblings and friends.
- Cultural Nuances: Myers incorporates cultural references and vernacular that resonate with the characters' backgrounds, enhancing their authenticity.

Conclusion

"Kick by Walter Dean Myers" is a powerful exploration of the complexities of adolescence, the pursuit of dreams, and the importance of family and friendship. Through the journey of Derrick and D, readers are exposed to the highs and lows of aspiring athletes, the impact of personal choices, and the struggles inherent in growing up. Myers' ability to create relatable characters and weave meaningful themes throughout the narrative makes "Kick" not only an engaging read but also a poignant reflection on the challenges of youth. The novel stands as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the unyielding pursuit of one's passions, leaving readers with a sense of hope and inspiration.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the central theme of 'Kick' by Walter Dean Myers?

The central theme of 'Kick' revolves around the struggles of youth, identity, and the pursuit of dreams, particularly through the lens of soccer and personal growth.

Who are the main characters in 'Kick'?

The main characters in 'Kick' include Drew, a talented young soccer player, and his friends who navigate challenges in their lives while pursuing their passion for soccer.

How does 'Kick' portray the importance of friendship?

In 'Kick', friendship is portrayed as a vital support system that helps the characters face personal challenges, showcasing how teamwork both on and off the field is essential for growth.

What role does soccer play in the development of the story in 'Kick'?

Soccer serves as a backdrop for the story, symbolizing ambition, teamwork, and the characters' determination to overcome obstacles, while also highlighting the cultural significance of the sport.

What challenges do the characters face in 'Kick'?

The characters face various challenges including family issues, peer pressure, and the pressures of competition, all of which contribute to their personal development and resilience.

What message does Walter Dean Myers convey through 'Kick'?

Walter Dean Myers conveys a message about perseverance, the importance of following one's dreams, and the impact of community and support in achieving success.

How does 'Kick' reflect real-life issues faced by teens?

'Kick' reflects real-life issues such as socio-economic struggles, identity crises, and the pressure to succeed, making it relatable for many young readers.

What writing style does Walter Dean Myers use in 'Kick'?

Walter Dean Myers uses a straightforward and engaging writing style in 'Kick', combining dialogue and narrative to create a dynamic and relatable story for young readers.

Are there any significant plot twists in 'Kick'?

Yes, 'Kick' includes several plot twists that challenge the characters' expectations and force them to make difficult choices, adding depth to the narrative.

What age group is 'Kick' targeted towards?

'Kick' is primarily targeted towards middle school and young adult readers, appealing to those interested in sports and coming-of-age stories.

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