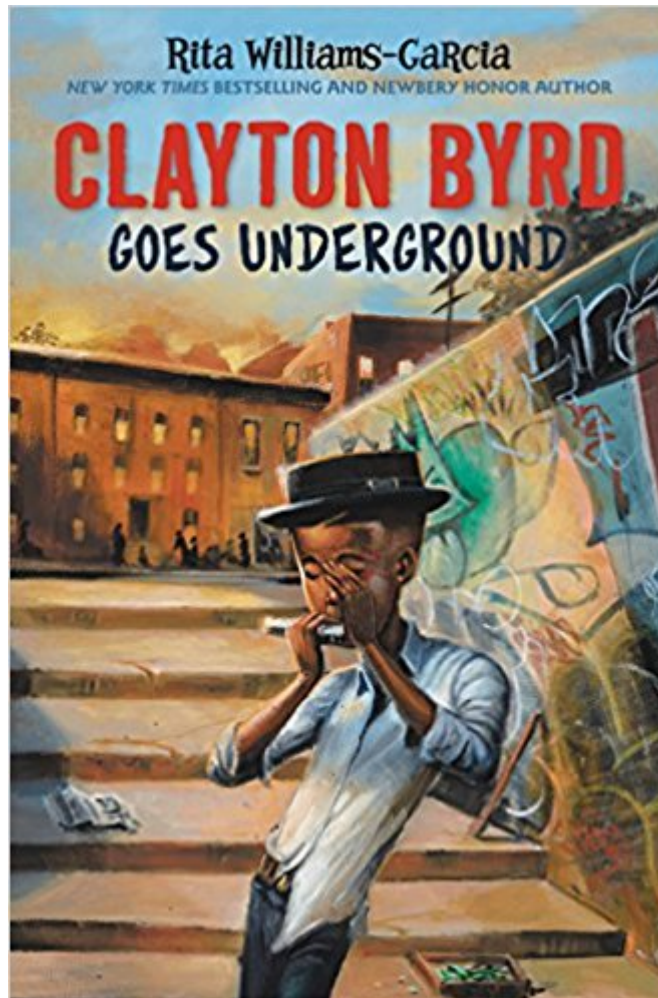




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Clayton Byrd Goes Underground



Synopsis

5 Starred Reviews!"This slim novel strikes a strong chord"âPublishers WeeklyÂ(starred review)"This complex tale of family and forgiveness has heart.ââSchool Library JournalÂ(starred review)"Strong characterizations and vivid musical scenes add layers to this warm family story.ââKirkus ReviewsÂ(starred review)"An appealing, realistic story with frequent elegant turns of phrase."âThe Horn BookÂ(starred review)"Garcia-Williams skillfully finds melody in words.ââBooklistÂ(starred review)From beloved Newbery Honor winner and three-time Coretta Scott King Award winner Rita Williams-Garcia comes a powerful and heartfelt novel about loss, family, and love that will appeal to fans of Jason Reynolds and Kwame Alexander. Clayton feels most alive when heâs with his grandfather, Cool Papa Byrd, and the band of Bluesmenâhe canât wait to join them, just as soon as he has a blues song of his own. But then the unthinkable happens. Cool Papa Byrd dies, and Claytonâs mother forbids Clayton from playing the blues. And Clayton knows thatâs no way to live.Armed with his grandfatherâs brown porkpie hat and his harmonica, he runs away from home in search of the Bluesmen, hoping he can join them on the road. But on the journey that takes him through the New York City subways and to Washington Square Park, Clayton learns some things that surprise him.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

... Clayton's love of his grandfather and his music is wonderfully drawn, as is his grief when he loses them.... Strong characterizations and vivid musical scenes add layers to this warm family story. • (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) ... With the precision of a surgeon, Williams-Garcia lifts and examines layers of Clayton's hurt and anger: the loss, but also the inability of his dismissive mother to understand... The book's through line, though, is the music, and Garcia-Williams skillfully finds melody in words. • (Booklist (starred review)) ... This slim novel strikes a strong chord... [A] holistic portrait of a family in pain, a realistic portrait of grief and reconciliation, and a reminder that sadness and loss are wrapped up in the blues. • (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) ... An appealing, realistic story with frequent elegant turns of phrase. The third-person voice helps to keep Clayton's story from becoming self-absorbed, as he learns to navigate the literal and figurative underworld and then find his way back to the everyday world of family, friends, and school. • (Horn Book (starred review)) ... Williams-Garcia packs a lot of story in this slim book... This complex tale of family and forgiveness has heart. • (School Library Journal (starred review)) Like a classic blues riff, Clayton Byrd Goes Underground is deceptively simple yet profoundly deep. It wails, rattles, and roars in unexpectedly heartfelt and joyous ways. • (G. Neri, Coretta Scott King Honor-winning author of Yummy and Tru & Nelle) Set to the low-down howl of the blues and cool thump of hip-hop, this story is so full of heart and soul it boogies right off the page. Read it right now! • (Daniel José Older, author of Shapeshifter) Williams-Garcia writes with keen sympathy about a boy who lost the key adult figure in his life and his rage at his mother's making the loss worse. • (Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books) In Clayton Byrd Goes Underground, three-time Coretta Scott King Medal winner Rita Williams-Garcia has crafted an endearing family drama with all the wit, wisdom and resonance of the best blues songs. • (BookPage) Fans of Jason Reynolds and Kwame Alexander will find comfort in the portrayal of Clayton and his struggle to become a young man... Williams-Garcia shows us once again that the only answer is to lean into [our] burdens, name them, and bend them into our own score. • (Meg Medina, writing in the New York Times Book Review) This lovely novel, poignant as a blues song, explores a child's experience of profound grief, and how lonely that can be when adults don't comprehend the enormity of the loss. • (Buffalo News)

Rita Williams-Garcia's Newbery Honor-winning novel, *One Crazy Summer*, was a winner of the Coretta Scott King Award, a National Book Award finalist, the recipient of the Scott O'Dell Award for

Historical Fiction, and a New York Times bestseller. The sequel, *P.S. Be Eleven*, was also a Coretta Scott King Award winner and an ALA Notable Children's Book for Middle Readers. She is also the author of six distinguished novels for young adults: *Jumped*, a National Book Award finalist; *No Laughter Here*, *Every Time a Rainbow Dies* (a Publishers Weekly Best Children's Book), and *Fast Talk on a Slow Track* (all ALA Best Books for Young Adults); *Blue Tights*; and *Like Sisters on the Homefront*, a Coretta Scott King Honor Book. Rita Williams-Garcia lives in Jamaica, New York, is on the faculty at the Vermont College of Fine Arts in the Writing for Children & Young Adults Program, and has two adult daughters, Stephanie and Michelle, and a son-in-law, Adam. Frank Morrison is the award-winning illustrator of many books for young readers, including *Jazzy Miz Mozetta* by Brenda C. Roberts, winner of the Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award for New Talent; Katheryn Russell-Brown's *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone*, a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor book; and Gene Barretta's *Muhammad Ali*. Before becoming a children's book illustrator and fine artist, Morrison toured the globe as a break-dancer. He lives in Georgia with his family. You can visit him online at www.morrisongraphics.com.

Newbery-Honor winner Williams-Garcia returns with another book that is filled with love, loss and family. Clayton loves playing the blue with his grandfather, Cool Papa Byrd, in the park. It's something they do together when his mother works double shifts, since she doesn't approve of the blues or his grandfather. Clayton knows he is ready for a solo on his blues harp, but Cool Papa wants him to wait a bit longer. Then one night, Cool Papa doesn't wake up and Clayton is left with his mother's anger at her father and his own deep loss. School becomes almost impossible for Clayton as he struggles with his grief and when his teacher makes him read the same book that Cool Papa had been reading aloud to him, it is too much. Clayton decides to hit the road, find the blues men that his grandfather played with and join them on their travels. But it's not that simple and Clayton soon finds himself on an unexpected journey on the New York subway. This book is simply incredible. Williams-Garcia writes with an ease that welcomes readers deep into the story. She manages in well under 200 pages to tell a deep and rich story that resonates. It's a story of the power of music to connect generations, of grandfathers who teach and lead, of subways and busking, of urban landscapes and neighborhoods. It's a story of loss and grief, of self discovery too. It is a multilayered book that will inspire discussion and connection. Clayton is a wonderful main character with his grandfather's porkpie hat on his head and his harmonica in his pocket or in his hands making music. He is clearly a gifted musician and it is a treat to have a young character playing music like the blues and then mixing it with hip

hop. Clayton is an individual and proud of it, yet he loses one of his main anchors in life and has to find a way forward once again. Deep and resonating, this novel is a demonstration of real skill and the power of books and music. Appropriate for ages 9-12.

This book will break your heart in the first few chapters. The rest of the book will repair it and make you whole again. Rita Williams-Garcia has done it again. This book is amazing.

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