**Dark Sky Rising: Reconstruction and the Dawn of Jim Crow**  
by Henry Louis Gates Jr. with Tonya Bolden  
   
“The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery.”   
W.E.B. Du Bois  
  
This Scholastic book needs to be read in all families with older children. We cannot use the labels black families and white families anymore. That is too simplistic and doesn’t respect all the beautiful shades of skin and experiences of people.  
  
That being said:  
·       Families who have a “white” experience and history need to read this together. Parents, I guarantee you that you will learn new history along with your children. We were not taught many details of the history of black people beyond slaves picked cotton, the presence of Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. and saw photos of separate water fountains. I venture to guess that anything else learned was done by one’s own initiative.  
·       To every other family: this book is so well-written that I know it will encourage new and important conversations.  
  
Henry Louis Gates Jr. shares stories of both former slaves and their descendants. The sheer will and determination to not only survive after the Civil War and Emancipation but to thrive for the benefit of their own communities and the whole country is truly remarkable. Some of this history is difficult to take in, which is why it is important to read this with your children. That is exactly why we need to read it. The oppressive laws, the beatings, and the lynching are **our** history – all Americans.  
  
Stories of racism by white people are also included. They are told in an age appropriate way but will still trouble the reader; as they should. If we are to learn from our history and move forward as a nation, everyone’s stories need to be told and heard.  
  
A review from School Library Journal says: “The complexity of the subject and sophisticated language will be readable for high school students but is on the more challenging end of the spectrum.”  
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Finally, I want to include the first verse of **Lift Every Voice and Sing**, many times called the national black anthem. Read the words through the lens of both oppression and hope. They are words and dreams for all of us.  
~ Pam  
  
Lift every voice and sing  
            Till earth and Heaven ring,  
            Ring with the harmonies of liberty;  
            Let our rejoicing rise  
            High as the listening skies,  
            Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
            Sing a song of the faith that the dark past has taught us,  
            Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us,  
            Facing the rising sun of our new day begun  
            Let us march on till victory is won.  
  
James Weldon Johnson