
1. How well does Moore describe the culture of the streets, where young boys grow up believing that violence transforms them into men? Talk about the street culture—its violence, drug dealing, disdain for education. What creates that ethos and why do so many young men find it attractive?

2. In writing about the Wes Moore who is in prison, Wes Moore the author says, “The chilling truth is that his life could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have been his.” What do you make of that statement? Do you think Moore is correct?

3. Oprah Winfrey has said that “when you hear this story, it’s going to turn the way you think about free will and fate upside down.” So, which is it...freedom or determinism? If determinism, what kind of determinism—God, cosmic fate, environment, biology, psychology? Or if freedom, to what degree are we free to choose and create our own destiny?

4. The overriding question of this book is what critical factors in the lives of these two men, who were similar in many ways, created such a vast difference in their destinies?

5. Talk about the role of family—and especially the present or absence of fathers—in the lives of children. Consider the role of the two mothers, Joy and Mary, as well as the care of the author’s grandparents in this book.

6. Why did young Wes, who ran away from military school five times, finally decide to stay put?

7. Why was the author haunted by the story of his namesake? What was the reason he insisted on meeting him in prison? Talk about the awkwardness of the two Weses’ first meeting and their gradual openness and sharing with one another.

8. From prison, the other Wes responded to the author’s initial letter with his own letter, in which he said, “When you’re in here, you think people don’t even know you’re alive anymore.” Talk about the power of hope versus hopelessness for those imprisoned. What difference can it make to a prisoner to know that he or she is remembered?

9. The author Wes asked the prisoner Wes, “when did you first know you were a man?” Talk about the significance of that question...and how each man responded.

10. Has this book left you with any ideas for ameliorating the conditions that led to the imprisonment of the other Wes Moore? What can be done to ensure a more productive life for the many young men who grow up on the streets?

Source: www.LitLovers.com

Discussion Questions

“An absorbing narrative that makes clear the critical roles that choices, family support and luck play in young people’s lives.”

— *Kirkus Reviews*

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THE OTHER WES MOORE

ONE NAME, TWO FATES

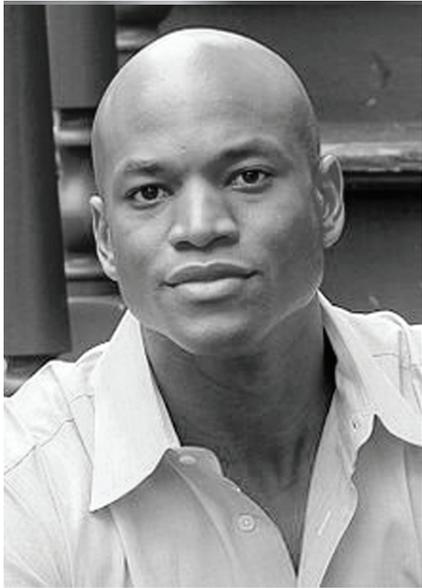
The chilling truth is that his story
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WES MOORE



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Wes Moore is a Rhodes Scholar and a combat veteran of Afghanistan. As a White House Fellow, he worked as a special assistant to Secretary Condoleezza Rice at the State Department. He was a featured speaker at the 2008 Democratic National Convention, was named one of *Ebony* magazine's Top 30 Leaders Under 30 (2007), and, most recently, was dubbed one of the top young business leaders in New York by *Crain's New York Business*. He works in New York City. (From the publisher.)

Wes Moore is a youth advocate, Army combat veteran, promising business leader and author.

Wes graduated Phi Theta Kappa as a commissioned officer from Valley Forge Military College in 1998 and Phi Beta Kappa from Johns Hopkins University in 2001 with a bachelor's degree in International Relations. At Johns Hopkins he was honored by the Maryland College Football Hall of Fame. He completed an M Litt in International Relations from Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar in 2004. Wes was a para-trooper and Captain in the United States Army, serving a combat tour of duty in Afghanistan with the elite 1st Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division in 2005–2006.

Wes Moore was born in 1978 and was three years old when his father, a respected radio and television host, died in front of him. His mother, hoping for a better future for her family, made great sacrifices to send Wes and his sisters to private school. Caught between two worlds—the affluence of his classmates and the struggles of his neighbors—Wes began to act out, succumbing to bad grades, suspensions, and delinquencies. Desperate to reverse his behavior, his mother sent him to military school in Pennsylvania. After trying to escape five times, Wes finally decided to stop railing against the system and become accountable for his actions. By graduation six years later, Moore was company commander overseeing 125 cadets. (From the author's website.)

Book Summary

Two kids with the same name were born blocks apart in the same decaying city within a year of each other. One grew up to be a Rhodes Scholar, army officer, White House Fellow, and business leader. The other is serving a life sentence in prison. Here is the story of two boys and the journey of a generation.

In December of 2000, the *Baltimore Sun* ran a small piece about Wes Moore, a local student who had just received a Rhodes Scholarship. The same paper ran a huge story about four young men who had killed a police officer in a spectacularly botched armed robbery. The police were still hunting for two of the suspects who had gone on the lam, a pair of brothers. One of their names was Wes Moore.

Wes Moore, the Rhodes Scholar, became obsessed with the story of this man he'd never met but who shared much more than space in the same newspaper. Both had grown up in similar neighborhoods and had had difficult childhoods. After following the story of the robbery, the manhunt, and the trial to its conclusion, he finally he wrote a letter to the other Wes, now a convicted murderer serving a life sentence without possibility of parole. His letter tentatively asked the questions that had been haunting Wes: Who are you? Where did it go wrong for you? How did this happen?

That letter led to a correspondence and deepening relationship that has lasted for several years. Over dozens of letters and prison visits, Wes discovered that the other Wes had had a life not unlike his own: they were both fatherless, were both in and out of school; they'd hung out on similar corners with similar crews, and had run into trouble with the police. And they had both felt a desire for something better for themselves and their families—and the sense that something better was always just out of reach. At each stage of their young lives, they came across similar moments of decision that would alter their fates.

Told in alternating dramatic narratives that take readers from heartwrenching losses to moments of surprising redemption, *The Other Wes Moore* tells the story of a generation of boys trying to find their way in a hostile world. (From the publisher.)