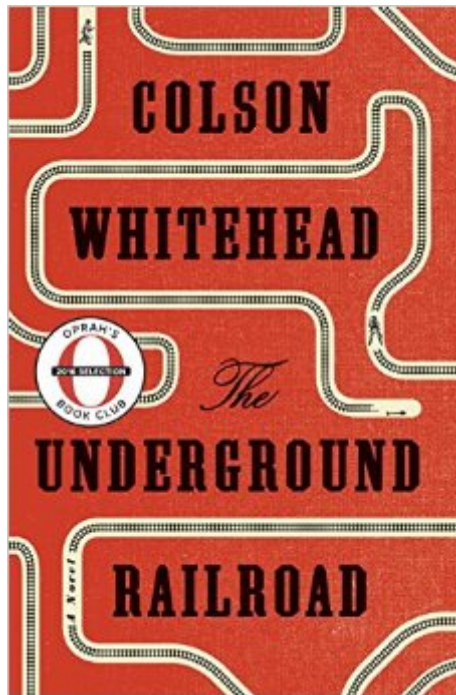


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The Underground Railroad (Oprah's Book Club): A Novel



Synopsis

Oprah's Book Club 2016 Selection #1 New York Times Bestseller • From prize-winning, bestselling author Colson Whitehead, a magnificent tour de force chronicling a young slave's adventures as she makes a desperate bid for freedom in the antebellum South. Cora is a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. Life is hell for all the slaves, but especially bad for Cora; an outcast even among her fellow Africans, she is coming into womanhood—where even greater pain awaits. When Caesar, a recent arrival from Virginia, tells her about the Underground Railroad, they decide to take a terrifying risk and escape. Matters do not go as planned—Cora kills a young white boy who tries to capture her. Though they manage to find a station and head north, they are being hunted. • • • In Whitehead's ingenious conception, the Underground Railroad is no mere metaphor—engineers and conductors operate a secret network of tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil. Cora and Caesar's first stop is South Carolina, in a city that initially seems like a haven. But the city's placid surface masks an insidious scheme designed for its black denizens. And even worse: Ridgeway, the relentless slave catcher, is close on their heels. Forced to flee again, Cora embarks on a harrowing flight, state by state, seeking true freedom. • • • Like the protagonist of *Gulliver's Travels*, Cora encounters different worlds at each stage of her journey—hers is an odyssey through time as well as space. As Whitehead brilliantly re-creates the unique terrors for black people in the pre-Civil War era, his narrative seamlessly weaves the saga of America from the brutal importation of Africans to the unfulfilled promises of the present day. • The Underground Railroad is at once a kinetic adventure tale of one woman's ferocious will to escape the horrors of bondage and a shattering, powerful meditation on the history we all share.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am so glad to have a chance to read a book of this power and importance. Whitehead is an amazing writer. The story of Cora, the young runaway slave from Georgia, is really a lot like Gulliver's Travels, which he references in the story. It is a tale of constantly reinventing yourself and adapting to ever changing realities as you move further and further away from your beginnings and what was an essential truth once, often morphs into something new, different, sometimes good but sometimes bad, too. It is all about change and those willing to do anything to accomplish those goals. It is also the story of those willing to help create the opportunities for change by doing anything in their power to help others no matter the personal cost. I think there is a lot to think about after reading the tale of Cora. In many ways it is an allegory for our world today where prejudice unfortunately still exists and a world like Valentine can only be dreamed about. Violence, racism, prejudice, chaos, evil all still abound, often hidden and disguised but are still there. Every time an event like Newtown or Columbine or even 9/11 happens, we can see what this book is trying to say about trying to find a better way to live. It is a very powerful message. We still have slavery all around the world: sexual slavery, forced labor, child labor to name a few. Sometimes we give it different names or a different spin but still human beings are forced to work and live in a manner that they would not choose at someone else's insistence. For some of those in power, their riches will never be enough and the ends justify whatever the cost in human lives, suffering and dignity. Slavery didn't end with the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of the Civil War; it just changed its name.

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