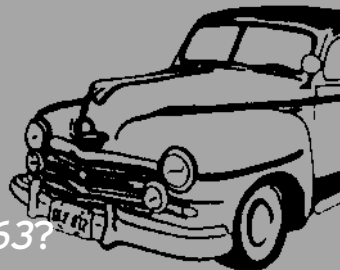


Opinion: What Have Other People Thought About *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*?



It's a winner!

The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963 was named a Newbery Honor Book in 1996. The Newbery Medal is one of the highest achievements in children's literature; Newbery honors are given to books that are also deemed worthy of special attention. Both are given annually by the American Library Association. The book was also named a Coretta Scott King Honor Book that same year. The Coretta Scott King Award is presented annually by the Coretta Scott King Task Force of the American Library Association's Social Responsibilities Round Table. It is given to authors and illustrators of African descent whose distinguished books promote an understanding and appreciation of the "American Dream."

Most people agree that Curtis is an excellent writer. One book reviewer from *The Horn Book* praised Curtis's ability to realistically describe Byron and Kenny's sibling relationship, as well as to weave together fictional characters and a real-life setting. The reviewer wrote, "Curtis's control of his material is superb as he unconventionally shifts tone and mood, as he depicts the changing relationship between the two brothers, and as he incorporates a fictional story." According to a starred

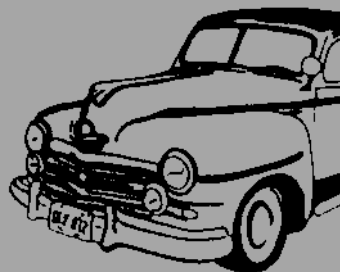
review in *School Library Journal*, Curtis’s “totally believable child’s view of the world will make this book an instant hit.”

However, judging literature is a very personal endeavor. People have different, individual tastes and like different things. While there has been very little negative criticism of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*, there has been some. For example, one reviewer noted that the time spent on the bombing scene and its aftereffects was too short: “. . . in two pages with a brief description the church is bombed. Then in two more days it’s back to normal.”

**Thinking about what others think about
*The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963***

- Do you think that *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* seems like an award-winning book? What other Newbery Medal-winning or Newbery Honor books have you read? Did you like *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*? Why or why not?
- Did you find the Watson family and their relationships with one another to be realistic?
- Do you agree that there should have been more time spent on the bombing and its aftereffects? Were there other parts of the book that you felt were either too short or too long?

Glossary



Here are some words that may have been new to you or used in new ways in *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*.

boycott to refuse to buy something or to take part in something as a way of making a protest

bravo well done!

cockeyed or **lazy-eyed** cross-eyed or having an eye that squints or slants

cracker an offensive term used to describe a class of poor white people in parts of the southeastern United States

discrimination prejudice or unjust behavior to others based on differences in age, race, or gender

egghead a smart person

emulate to follow or imitate

generate to produce or create something

grapevine If you hear information through the grapevine, you hear it unofficially or as a rumor.

hillbilly a negative term used for a person from a backwoods area, especially from the mountains or from the southern United States

imitate to copy or mimic someone or something

jabber to talk in a fast, confused, or foolish way that is hard to understand

jacked up beat up

pan to criticize someone or something harshly

peon a person who does hard or boring work for little or nothing in return

pervasive extending throughout

punctual on time

quest a long search in order to find something

segregate to separate or keep people or things apart

seniority the state of being older or higher in standing

sonic boom the loud noise produced by a vehicle, usually an aircraft, when it travels faster than the speed of sound and breaks the sound barrier

thug a rough, violent person

trespass to enter someone's private property without permission