



The Word: Black Writers Talk About the Transformative Power of Reading and Writing

Marita Golden

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Critically acclaimed Black writers reveal how books have shaped their personal lives—in often unexpected ways.

In these thirteen strikingly candid interviews, bestselling authors, winners of the Pulitzer Prize, and writers picked by Oprah's Book Club discuss how the acts of reading and writing have deeply affected their lives by expanding the conceptual borders of their communities and broadening their sense of self.

Edwidge Danticat movingly recounts the first time she encountered a Black character in a book and how this changed her worldview forever; Edward P. Jones speaks openly about being raised by an illiterate mother; J. California Cooper discusses the spiritual sources of her literary inspiration; Nathan McCall explains how reading saved his life while in prison; Pearl Cleage muses eloquently about how other people's stories help one make one's own way in the world; and world-renowned historian John Hope Franklin—in one of the last interviews he gave before his death—touchingly recalls his childhood in the segregated South and how reading opened his mind to life's greater possibilities.

The stories that emerge from these in-depth interviews not only provide an important record of the creative life of leading Black writers but also explore the vast cultural and spiritual benefits of reading and writing, and they support the growing initiative to encourage people to read as both a passion and a pastime.

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