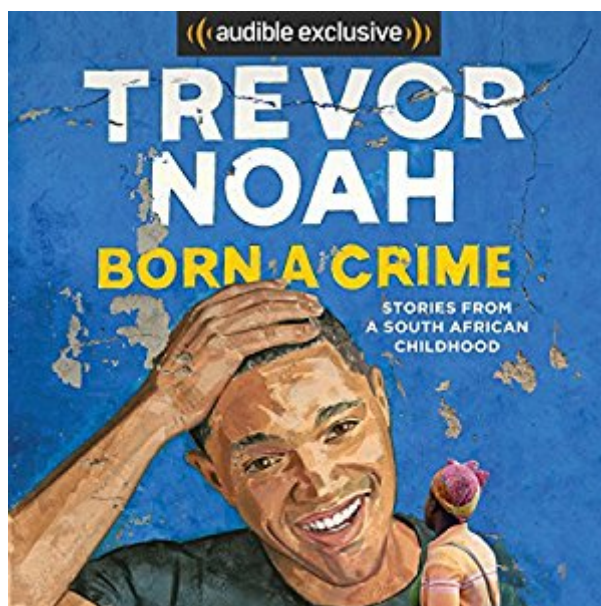


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Born A Crime: Stories From A South African Childhood



Synopsis

Highest-rated new book of 2016 by Audible customers Winner: Audible's Best of 2016 - Celebrity Memoirs Trevor Noah, one of the comedy world's fastest-rising stars and host of The Daily Show, tells his wild coming-of-age story during the twilight of apartheid in South Africa and the tumultuous days of freedom that followed. In this Audible Studios production, Noah provides something deeper than traditional memoirists: powerfully funny observations about how farcical political and social systems play out in our lives. "Nelson Mandela once said, 'If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.' He was so right. When you make the effort to speak someone else's language, even if it's just basic phrases here and there, you are saying to them, 'I understand that you have a culture and identity that exists beyond me. I see you as a human being.'" (Trevor Noah) Attuned to the power of language at a young age - as a means of acceptance and influence in a country divided, then subdivided, into groups at odds with one another - Noah's raw, personal journey becomes something extraordinary in audio: a true testament to the power of storytelling. With brutal honesty and piercing wit, he forgoes an ordinary reading and, instead, delivers something more intimate, sharing his story with the openness and candor of a close friend. His chameleon-like ability to mimic accents and dialects, to shift effortlessly between languages including English, Xhosa, and Zulu, and to embody characters throughout his childhood - his mother, his gran, his schoolmates, first crushes and infatuations - brings each memory to life in vivid detail. Hearing him directly, you're reminded of the gift inherent in telling one's story and having it heard; of connecting with another, and seeing them as a human being. The stories Noah tells are by turns hilarious, bizarre, tender, dark, and poignant - subsisting on caterpillars during months of extreme poverty, making comically pitiful attempts at teenage romance in a color-obsessed world, thrown into jail as the hapless fall guy for a crime he didn't commit, thrown by his mother from a speeding car driven by murderous gangsters, and more.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am generally a pretty critical reader, and it's almost embarrassing to write such a glowing review, but I can say without reservation that this book is a treasure. (And no, I am not a friend of the family. I haven't even watched him on The Daily Show, although I'll probably start to watch now.) Trevor Noah is a superb storyteller, and this memoir is his eloquent and touching account of growing up as the mixed race child of a single mother, living in poverty in deeply racist and sexist South Africa. He provides an inside look at a life very different from what almost anyone has experienced (due to his unusual ethnicity and upbringing), yet it is easy to relate to him and fascinating to read his stories. The book reads like a novel, but it is so much more affecting because it is true. Reminiscent of *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls, it is a superbly written story of a perceptive and resilient child thriving in very difficult circumstances, and it beautifully captures these circumstances seen through the eyes of a child. Trevor's mother taught him to use humor to help cope with life, and he learned that lesson well. Despite having good reasons for feeling self-pity and resentment, Trevor had a knack for finding the humor in even the most difficult circumstances. Not forced, jokey humor, but just a low-key appreciation for the weirdness of life. As I turned the last page, I smiled at the ending, which was perfect, but I also felt sad that the story ended. I want to know what happened next. I hope he will write a sequel.

My decision to request *Born a Crime* has nothing to do with star power or fandom. I have to admit I have never seen Trevor Noah on the Daily Show. I requested this book when I learned it was about Trevor Noah's childhood in Apartheid South Africa. I started reading my ebook galley as soon as I was approved. I have to love a guy who finds comedy in tragedy and who gleefully spins yarns about experiences that would keep most of us in therapy for a lifetime. There is a genius in comedy that allows us to encounter devastating truths through the protective lens of laughter. The heroine of the book is Noah's mother, a feisty lady with a solid rock faith, a gal who snubs her nose at things that don't make sense. She makes mistakes, but always out of love. She takes huge risks but somehow Jesus is always there to catch her mid-fall. Noah was "naughty as s***" and a challenge to raise, but never hateful or mean. He learned to navigate Apartheid society's complex system that divided

people in to three groups: black, white, and colored. How one was categorized was senseless. Japanese were put into the 'white' slot but Chinese into the 'colored'."The genius of Apartheid was convincing people who were the overwhelming majority to turn on each other. Apart hate, is what it was."Noah was 'colored' with a 'black' Xhosa African mother and a 'white' Swiss father, his very existence implicating his parent's crime. Had the police discovered them, his parents would be sent to jail and Noah sent to an orphanage. He spent much of his life hidden away, indoors. His parents could not be seen together with him, and his mother had to even pretend he was not her child.Noah was "colored by complexion but not by culture." He spoke multiple languages, Xhosa and Zulu and Afrikaans, and English, could fit into most groups, but felt affiliated to black culture.The book is a series of episodic tales, thoughtfully constructed, saving the climax of his family history until the end of the book, after we have come to know and understand them."I saw the futility of violence, the cycle that just repeats itself, the damage that's inflicted on people that they in turn inflict on others. I saw, more than anything, that relationships are not sustained by violence, but by love."The book is funny but is more than a diversive read, it enlarges our understanding of the world. Noah offers an understanding of South African history, colonialism, and Apartheid that is engaging and relevant. He shares the important things he learned and offers them to us. We should listen. We should learn.

Wow...I started this book yesterday and could not put it down. As a new mom myself, I read most of it on my Kindle while either nursing or holding my son, which was fitting as this is such a tribute to his mom. As a long time viewer of the Daily Show, I started watching as Trevor took over from Jon Stewart and while I've always thought he does a good job, I had no idea the depth of character and experiences that were below the surface of those cute dimples! As is fitting to the Daily Show atmosphere, Trevor discusses difficult topics like race often, but I don't think I will ever watch a segment the same way again after reading his descriptions of what it was like to grow up under and during the fall of apartheid. And I keep thinking back to some of his impassioned pieces prior to the election with a whole new appreciation.But this review shouldn't be about his celebrity on the Daily Show. It stands alone as a remarkable memoir and a completely engaging story that will appeal to anyone who's felt like an outsider. He is a wonderful story teller, finding the right balance between relaying his experiences, weaving in the social atmosphere around it and doing it in such a way that even as an American reader, I was able to visualize the communities he was describing in rich detail. Additionally, he was able to explain aspects of a post apartheid world that not only clarify the plight of South Africans today but also shed light on some of the challenges we are facing here in the US. He has a unique perspective and a wonderful voice that I hope to hear more of in the future.

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