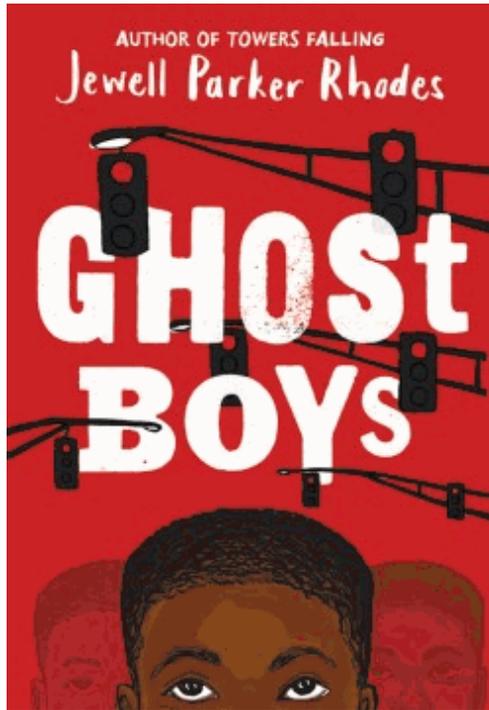


# GHOST BOYS



## Summary of Concerns:

This book contains inflammatory racial commentary; explicit violence; and derogatory terms.

*Juvenile*

**By Jewell Parker Rhodes**

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**2**/**5**

**Teen Guidance**  
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
23	"It's man's will- it's a policeman acting a fool. Murdering my boy."
24	"No sense why my boy's dead and those white men are walking around alive. Free." "Emmett. Just like Emmett Till," says Grandma.
25	"Tamir Rice, then," shouts Pop. "2014. He died in Cleveland. Another boy shot just because he's black."
25	"No justice. No peace," says Pop. "Since slavery, white men been killing blacks."
50	"...Whether officer Moore should be charged with murder." Seems lame to me. I'm dead, aren't I?
50	"Sir?" The officer looks at the slim man. "Were you in fear for your life?" "Yes, yes. He had a gun." "Were you surprised later when it turned out to be a toy?" "Yes. It looked real. He was threatening me." I shake my head. I never pointed a gun at the policeman. I walk closer to the officer. Why's he telling lies?
52	"Black lives matter!" someone hollers.
63	Not knowing how, I find the girl's house. It's not a mansion but it's nicer than my family's apartment. There's a front and backyard. A porch. A basement and two floors. Windows everywhere.
64	Her bedroom is three times the size of mine. Decorated with a bookshelf, framed pictures, a pink striped comforter, a TV, and a computer. I bet she doesn't even hear gunshots in her neighborhood.
65	"He shot me." "My dad protects and serves. That's what policemen do." "He didn't protect me. Everybody in my neighborhood knows cops do whatever they want."
69	"I love Dad more than anything. But seeing you, I wonder how he could've-" "Shot me?" "Yes. Maybe someone might shoot me?" "Naw, you're a girl. And white." "Is that it? Is that true?" I shrug my shoulders. How many times had I heard: "Be careful of police"; "Be careful of white people..." Everybody in the neighborhood knew it. Pop told me as soon as I could read.
85	"Are you prejudiced?" "No." "Liar," someone shouts.
85	"Have you heard of racial bias?" "No." "Heard prejudice can affect your thoughts, actions? Whether consciously. Knowing. Or unconsciously?" "I'm not racist."

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	"Probably you were responding to unconscious stereotypes of black men as large, threatening, dangerous?"
94	"Is Peter white? He's white, isn't he?" I ask, insistent, furious.
95	"These are your...our people." Sarah gasps. I punch the wall. Nothing happens. No crackling or paint peeling. "Black boys," Sarah whispers, then clamps her hand over her mouth. "This is messed up." "These are kids killed like Jerome? Killed like you?" asks Sarah. Ghost boy nods. I turn from him and Sarah. I look down. Hundreds and hundreds of shadow boys. A heart-wrenching crew. Army strong. No, zombie apocalypse strong. Standing on lawns, in the streets, their faces raised to me. All children, except one, grow up.
97	"Naw, naw. That's sick. Her dad kills me and I'm supposed to help? Who are you anyway?" "Emmett. Emmett Till."
106	"No justice, no peace!" They carry signs: JUSTICE FOR JEROME; BLACK CHILDREN'S LIVES MATTER; STAY WOKE; IS MY SON NEXT?
107	"I think a white man killed him, too."
111	"You were the operator that answered the nine-one-one call?" "Yes. Yes, I did." The 9-1-1 operator looks like a college student. Red hair, black-rimmed glasses. Nervous, she twists her hands. "Did the caller identify themselves?" "No." "What did the caller say?" "A boy, no, a man was in the park with a gun." "The transcript says 'toy gun'." "Yes, toy gun." "Did you tell the reporting officers that?" "No."
112	I wish she could hear me murmuring "Sorry." Her saying "toy" wouldn't have made any difference.
113	Sarah's school is much better than mine. I mean, much better than my old school. Her school has trees and a track, basketball gym, and football field. My school has a chain-link fence and concrete where I ran and played hoops. Her school is mainly white. Mine was mainly black and Hispanic. Her school has a library with computers. Mine doesn't even have a librarian.
120	Another ghost walks ahead. Dipping side to side, swaying. He's graceful. Fly, hip. Wearing a gray hoodie. "Who's that?" I ask. "Killed six years ago. In Florida." "Hey, kid," I yell. "Hey!" He keeps walking. Be-bopping ahead of me.

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121	<p>The prosecutor moves close, face-to-face with Officer Moore. "Did you announce yourself? 'Police'?"</p> <p>"No."</p> <p>"Did you order Jerome Rogers to put down the gun?"</p> <p>"No."</p> <p>"To raise his hands?"</p> <p>"No."</p> <p>"Did you fire from the police cruiser before it had come to a complete stop?"</p> <p>"I don't know."</p> <p>"Yes or no?"</p> <p>"I guess so." Officer Moore looks down, like an answer is written on his hands.</p> <p>Yes. No.</p> <p>"Yes," he says, looking straight at the lawyer. "He was waving his gun. A police car is a coffin. I had to react."</p> <p>"Did you react when Jerome Rogers lay wounded on the ground? Did you render aid?"</p> <p>"No."</p>
130	<p>Then, turn back to the stand, says loudly, seriously, "Why was the child shot in the back?"</p>
131	<p>The video shows me shot in the back.</p>
138	<p>"...justice is tempered by the fact that a police officer's job is incredibly hard and complicated."</p> <p>"An emergency nine-one-one call, a young man with a realistic-looking gun, a concern for public safety, and an officer's fear for his life are all facts I've considered."</p> <p>"In the opinion of this court, there is not enough evidence to charge Officer Moore with excessive force, manslaughter, or murder."</p>
146	<p>Ghost boys haunt. One by one they appear. Several boys wearing hoodies, sports T-shirts. Overalls. There's a kid who looks like he's eight. Another kid- Tamir?- with a toy gun.</p>
147	<p>Was he the first black boy to be killed? Naw. I don't believe that. Slavery was awful. Afterwards, Pop said the KKK began lynching.</p> <p>Ghost boys nod, step back, high-five. Emmett's the leader. The leader of our crew. An unnatural alliance- young, but dead.</p> <p>Ghost boys.</p>
149	<p>But why did cops fear me?</p>
153	<p>"Say 'yes, ma'am,' 'no, sir' to white people. Don't look anybody white in the eyes.'</p>
153	<p>"Sidestep if white people are walking on the same street. Step into the road if you have to. Let whites pass first."</p> <p>Emmett wipes sweat from his forehead, muttering, "Not afraid of white people."</p>
157	<p>"What mattered was what they- white people- thought I had done. I gets worse. See."</p> <p>I stare into his eyes.</p> <p>Past midnight, the house is cloaked in darkness. Two white men burst into the shack, guns pulled, flashlights startling, searching faces. Everyone's howling,</p>

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	<p>frightened. Aunt Elizabeth runs toward the back bedroom. They follow her. Emmett’s face is caught in the flashlight’s glow.  “Get up, get dressed.”  Petrified, Emmett wets himself. He pulls his overalls over his pajamas.  “He’s a child. Not from here,” his uncle pleads, begs. “He didn’t know.” A man with black curls and a short-sleeved white shirt slams him against the wall. “How old are you?”  “Sixty-four.”  “You make any trouble and you’ll never live to be sixty-five.”  Simeon grabs hold of Emmett’s leg, trying to keep the men from dragging him away. The second man kicks him. Simeon wails, clutches his stomach. Wheeler holds his brother.  Emmett screams, “Mama. Mama!”  His uncle and cousins are shouting, begging, pleading on the porch.  Emmett’s pushed into a truck’s cab. He’s caught between two men. One drives; one keeps punching Emmett.  “Teach you. I’m going to teach you.” Bam. “You talked sass.” Bam. “Nobody disrespects my wife.” Bam, bam.  Emmett’s face swells.</p>
158	<p>The Tallahatchie River glows silver. Lightening bugs blink; fish splash, leaping for moths, flies. Emmett is dragged from the truck.  “Mama.”  “Mother isn’t going to help you, boy.”  His fist falls like a hammer. Emmett drops to his knees.  The dark-haired man grabs his legs, pulls. “You whistled at my wife.” He chokes Emmett. Emmett’s squirming, trying to beat the hands away. His feet lift off the ground. “Who do you think you are?”  Eyes bulge- blood flows from his mouth. He’s thrown to the ground.</p>
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159	<p>The husband fires the gun, sparks fly.  Emmett’s spirit rises.  With barbed wire, the men lash Emmett’s body to a large wheel. They drag, shove the wheel into the river. Watch it sink.  Blood stains the riverbank. Emmett’s hat rests. Amazingly, it’s clean. Off to the side, brim up.</p>
160	<p>Ghost boys reappear, hovering, studying Emmett’s face. And mine.  “For all of us,” says Emmett, wavering his had outward. “We’re all sorry for each</p>

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	other. Somebody decided they didn't like us...We were a threat, a danger. A menace."
160	Then, I feel an urge. Deep inside me. A recognition. Injustice, Tragedy.
163	The streets are dangerous. Gangs. Bullies. Drive-bys. Police with guns.
178	"I'm making a website. 'End Racism, Injustice.' Did you know black people are shot by cops tow and a half times more than white people? But they're only about thirteen percent of the population. "In 2015, over one thousand unarmed black people were killed. It's awful." It is.
179	"No, I don't hate your dad. You shouldn't either." "He killed you." "He made a mistake." "He's racist." "He made a mistake. A bad one." Real bad.
179	Mournful, I say, "It's wrong to be bullied for no reason. It's worse when someone has a reason. Like prejudice. How'd your dad get that? Who taught him? You're not prejudiced. He reacted to me without knowing me. "He's a bully." "It's not that simple," I say, weary. Mike, Eddie, Snap only had words, fists. Policemen have guns.
180	"Can you help him not to be afraid of black boys?"
183	Emmett told me that the men who killed him never believed they did wrong. An all-white jury found them innocent. The judge said there wasn't enough evidence to charge Officer Moore with a crime. But he's not celebrating. Is that progress?
184	I want to say more- but I don't. Sarah's going to be fine. She's a white girl but she's not- "white girl." She's Sarah. Me and all other boys on her computer screen have names. Jerome Rogers. Tamir Rice. Laquan McDonald. Trayvon Martin. Michael Brown. Jordan Edwards. We're people. Black kids. Color shouldn't make anybody scared. Is it because slavery happened? Is that why some whites are afraid of black people? I don't know. Wake up, people, I want to tell everyone. Fear, stereotypes about black boys don't make the world better.
185	"Others, too, who died because of mistakes. Prejudice."
205	During my lifetime, Emmett Till and countless other teens and young men have died because of conscious or unconscious racism. However, Tamir Rice's death at twelve, like Emmett Till's death at fourteen, unnerved me, because their deaths criminalized black boys as children. It is tragic when adults, who are meant to protect children, instead betray a child's innocence.
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Page	Content
210	13. On page 183, Jerome notes that Emmett’s attackers were found innocent, just like Officer Moore. What is the significance of this?
211	Why haven’t the ghost boys said goodbye?
213	Rethinking Schools “Making Black Lives Matter in Our Schools”: <a href="http://rethinkingschools.org/articles/making-black-lives-matter-in-our-schools">rethinkingschools.org/articles/making-black-lives-matter-in-our-schools</a>