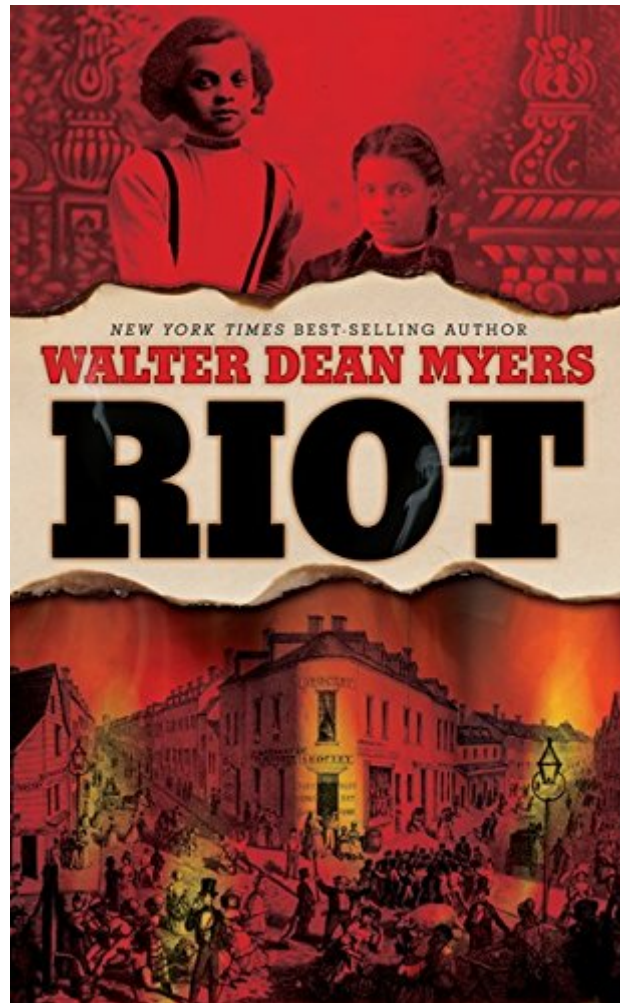




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## Riot (Fiction - Young Adult)



## Synopsis

As the Civil War rages, another battle breaks out behind the lines. During a long hot July in 1863, the worst race riots the United States has ever seen erupt in New York City. Earlier that year, desperate for more Union soldiers, President Abraham Lincoln instituted a draft—a draft that would allow the wealthy to escape serving in the army by paying a \$300 waiver, more than a year's income for the recent immigrant Irish. And on July 11, as the first drawing takes place in Lower Manhattan, the city of New York explodes in rage and fire. Stores are looted; buildings, including the Colored Foundling Home, are burned down; and black Americans are attacked, beaten, and murdered. The police cannot hold out against the rioters, and finally, battle-hardened soldiers are ordered back from the fields of Gettysburg to put down the insurrection, which they do brutally. Fifteen-year-old Claire, the beloved daughter of a black father and Irish mother, finds herself torn between the two warring sides. Faced with the breakdown of the city—the home she has loved, Claire must discover the strength and resilience to address the new world in which she finds herself, and to begin the hard journey of remaking herself and her identity. Addressing such issues as race, bigotry, and class head-on, Walter Dean Myers has written another stirring and exciting novel that will shake up assumptions, and lift the spirit.

## Book Information

File Size: 5075 KB

Print Length: 176 pages

Publisher: Carolrhoda Lab TM; Reprint edition (April 26, 2011)

Publication Date: August 1, 2016

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01IPSGR7I

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #328,996 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #13

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Teen & Young Adult > Historical Fiction > United States >

Civil War Period (1850-1877) #35 in [Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > Civil War Period](#) #40 in [Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Children's eBooks > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Violence](#)

## Customer Reviews

Okay. So maybe I'm a "little young" but I had too. My teachers made me rush this book and if I could've read more in depth... But still this book blind sighted me! I loved it only 4 stars cuz', well I explained that...

This book shed light on a new part of American history I didn't know existed! I had read about various race riots that occurred much later than this story but had no clue that there was a draft during the Civil War, not to mention a riot in response to a desire not to fight. This is a great read for anyone!

Great buy!!!

My 7th graders love this book!

I chose this book because it was on my 10 year old son wish list. I will recommend it to other kids.

Riot is the story of a young girl who struggles not only with the harsh environment of race riots but also with her racial identity as a child of mixed backgrounds. This is a well written piece of multicultural literature that can be used as a springboard for many different discussions and learning experiences in the classroom and beyond.

“I just wanted to be a human being. I just wanted to be whoever I saw in the mirror, without a race or a place in life.” I wanted to like this book/play about the Civil War race riots in New York City. Maybe because it was written for Young Adults it was too simplistic for me. It's also acted out like a movie, with screen shots and camera angles which takes away a lot of your imagination in a book. I don't like being told what to look at, and who is important. I would rather find my own way. I also found it hard to believe that a young woman, half black/half white, had never encountered racial bigotry before the riots. I would imagine that would be a day to day thing in those days, after all even the most ardent Abolitionists thought the negroes should be sent back to Africa, even though the

majority had been born on American soil. That said, I do believe this is an important story that needs to be told. The riots occurred because the poorer Irish had to sign up for the draft while the richer people could pay \$300 and hire a substitute. The Irish also feared the freed slaves would take their jobs and cut wages as they were told they would work for next to nothing once freed. These were real fears that no one had addressed. I certainly could never condone the actions of the rioters but I can understand the fears that cause people to act that way. I do recommend this book to anyone that wants to learn what life was like in New York City during the Civil War and why such riots occurred.

In the summer of 1863 the civil war was well underway, and the congress made the first conscription act in the United States. The conscription act allowed men, to be drafted into the Union army and get payed 300 dollars, which is about a years pay for an average citizen. But the upper class men had an option of paying off the 300 dollars and have someone else fight in their place. This caused an outburst in New York City, working class men flooded the streets and started riots around the city. Which led to fires, buildings and stores being looted and raided, and brutal attacks on other citizens. The mobs targeted their attacks on African American citizens. This was because a predominate amount of the rioters were Irish immigrants, and most of the Irish immigrants faced poverty, and with the newly freed African American slaves, the Irish resented them because they were afraid of the freed slaves cutting their wages. Therefore several deaths occurred, and the riots forced some of the Union army to come down from Gettysburg and put down the riots, this led to even countless more deaths, on both sides. In the mix of these incidents, are a group of fictional characters. The main group of characters are Claire, a biracial middle class 15 year old girl, John and Ellen (Claire's parents), and the owner of the Peacock Inn/restaurant, Liam an employee at the Peacock Inn, Maeve Liam's fiancée, and Priscilla, Claire's best friend. In the book there are some characters that are introduced, but in my opinion that's the main group of characters. In the book Claire, who appears Caucasian, but is biracial, is conflicted about her racial identity when the riots are happening. An example of this is on page 66, when Claire's talking to her mother, she says this "Maybe it's me who should be out the trying to find myself. Trying to discover who I am, instead of hiding behind this door wondering what they will call me. I'm not afraid that they will hurt, I'm afraid they'll discover who I am before I do". This is why mid way in the book Claire defines herself as black to people she's close with. Maeve is quite rude to Claire and Priscilla for most of the book. This is because Maeve thinks less of African Americans and Priscilla's black and even though Claire appears Caucasian, once Maeve found out that Claire was biracial she acted the same way

to Claire, and because Meave is Liam's fiancée she's jealous of Claire. An example of Meave being mean to Claire is on page 81, when Claire was rounding the corner of a building, she is spun around by Meave, and pushed to the ground. Then Meave starts teasing Claire and slaps her, but Claire is able to run away. Liam is more of a respectable character than Meave, even though he does join the riots. Priscilla is Claire's best friend, and is not safe on the streets of New York City, but during the riots she went on the streets to help keep the African American children safe from the mobs that want to destroy the orphan asylum. In the process she tries to find her aunt with Claire to make sure she's alright. In my opinion I would give *Riot* by Walter Dean Myers a 3.5 out of 5 stars. I would give it this rating because it wasn't a book that I was glued to, but it kept me interested in the topic. A downside to the book for me was how it was written in screen play format. The screenplay format made it difficult to get into the book for the first several pages. What it also impacted was fully connecting with the characters. For example, because of the way it was structured the pages were limited to character actions, dialogue, and different camera angles. But for me that was the only downside to the book. The characters were believable with how they interacted with each other and the reasoning behind it. Although it was a very concise book, it gave a fairly accurate example of the New York City draft riots. The plot was fast paced, and discusses economic principles, such as competitiveness for jobs, and racial discrimination. Also the political, and social tensions that arose because of this. Overall *Riot* is a historical fiction novel, that brings the New York City draft riots alive. It has a fast paced plot, and would be good for readers that are new to the topic of violence and racial problems.

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