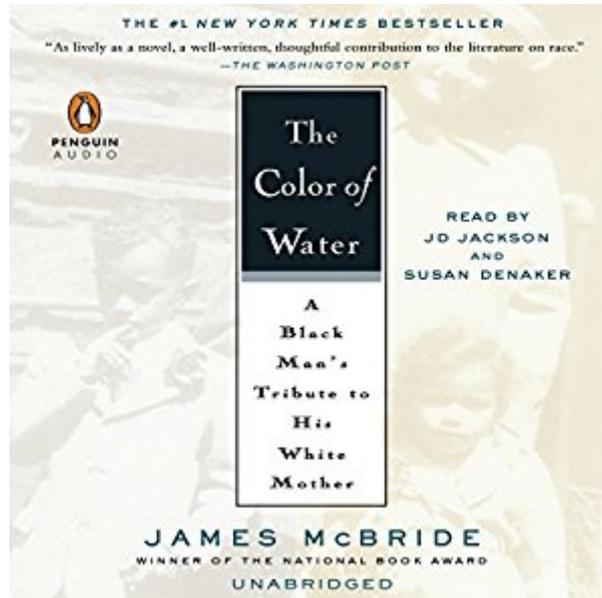


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# The Color Of Water



## Synopsis

The New York Times best-selling story from the author of *The Good Lord Bird*, winner of the 2013 National Book Award for Fiction. Who is Ruth McBride Jordan? A self-declared "light-skinned" woman evasive about her ethnicity, yet steadfast in her love for her 12 black children. James McBride, journalist, musician, and son, explores his mother's past, as well as his own upbringing and heritage, in a poignant and powerful debut, *The Color Of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*. The son of a black minister and a woman who would not admit she was white, James McBride grew up in "orchestrated chaos" with his 11 siblings in the poor, all-black projects of Red Hook, Brooklyn. In *The Color of Water*, McBride retraces his mother's footsteps and, through her searing and spirited voice, recreates her remarkable story. The daughter of a failed itinerant Orthodox rabbi, she was born Rachel Shilsky (actually Ruchel Dwara Zylska) in Poland on April 1, 1921. Fleeing pogroms, her family emigrated to America and ultimately settled in Suffolk, Virginia, a small town where anti-Semitism and racial tensions ran high. At 17, after fleeing Virginia and settling in New York City, Ruth married a black minister and founded the all-black New Brown Memorial Baptist Church in her Red Hook living room. "God is the color of water," Ruth McBride taught her children, firmly convinced that life's blessings and life's values transcend race. Interspersed throughout his mother's compelling narrative, McBride shares candid recollections of his own experiences as a mixed-race child of poverty, his flirtations with drugs and violence, and his eventual self-realization and professional success. *The Color of Water* touches listeners of all colors as a vivid portrait of growing up, a haunting meditation on race and identity, and a lyrical valentine to a mother from her son.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is, indeed, a tribute to the author's mother. In it, the author, a man whose mother was white and his father black, tells two stories: that of his mother and his own. Tautly written in spare, clear prose, it is a wonderful story of a bi-racial family who succeeded and achieved the American dream, despite the societal obstacles placed in its way. The author's mother was a Polish Orthodox Jew who migrated to America at the age of two with her family during the early nineteen twenties. They ultimately settled down in Virginia, where she led an isolated and lonely life; shunned by whites because she was Jewish and shunned by blacks because she was white. She was raised in a predominantly black neighborhood, where her father, a despicable and harsh man who brutalized his handicapped wife, ran a local grocery store, where he priced gouged his black clientele. She left home and moved to New York when she was nineteen and never looked back. She met and married the author's father, a black man, when mixed race marriages were still frowned upon by both whites and blacks. Still, she always felt more comfortable around blacks than around whites. When he died sixteen years later, she married another black man who nurtured her eight children by the author's father and proceeded to give her four more children. The author tells of his childhood, of his family, and of the issue of race that ultimately colored his life while growing up in predominantly black neighborhoods, where his mother stood out like a sore thumb because of the color of her skin. It was always an issue his mother avoided discussing with him, as for her it was not an issue. It was not until the author wrote this book that his mother discussed the issue of race within the context of her own life.

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