

TITLE: Born A Crime (stories from a South African childhood)

AUTHOR: Trevor Noah

TYPE: Autobiography

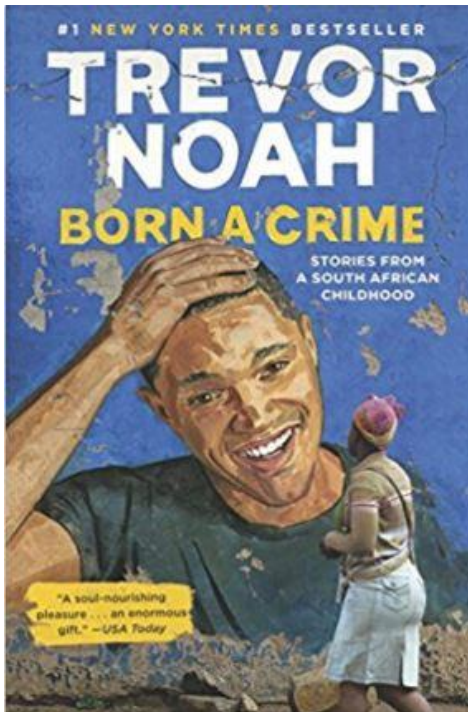
RATING: 5 STARS (*****)



REVIEWER: Bettie Waddy-Smith

General Comments: I purchased the book and began **READING**. A friend of mine had also begun to **LISTEN** to the same book. She encouraged me to take a listen to her audio edition. After listening for five minutes I was convinced that listening to this book would be more enjoyable than reading. The book is read by the author which gives it a more personal/authentic quality. It also provides the correct pronunciation of the Xhosa words sprinkled throughout the text.

The first character introduced in the book is Trevor's mother. While reading about her I became very curious about how she looked. I flipped through the pages to see if there were pictures. Disappointed to find there were no pictures included I googled images and found many pictures of family members.



REVIEW: "Born a Crime" Using a combination of humor, honesty, irony and historical facts Trevor Noah unveils what it was like growing up under apartheid and post-apartheid in South Africa in the 1990s. Trevor uses an unconventional way of telling his unconventional life story. Listening to the book is like engaging in a conversation with Trevor and all the other characters in the various stories and events of his life. The reader learns about Trevor's life as he shares, in conversational style, one event after the other but not always presented in chronological order. Some of my favorite events were "The Running", the "Shitting" and "Hitler".

As each story is shared you learn about his mother, the role of women, the impact and the role that religion had, the educational system, the "Hood", the influence that American music had on the South African teenagers, the importance of speaking English, what he did to survive when he was considered different....

"I didn't have any friends. I didn't know any kids besides my cousins. I wasn't a lonely kid-I was good at being alone. I'd read books, play with the toy that I had, make up imaginary worlds. I lived inside my head. To this day you can leave me alone for hours and I'm perfectly happy entertaining myself I have

to remember to be with people."

The first character the reader meets is Trevor's mother. She is one of 14 children born Soweto. She is a fiercely independent, religious smart woman determined not to be restricted by apartheid. She leaves home at an early age to live in the city. She learns how to survive and made many friends. When she decides she wants to defy the apartheid system by having a mixed baby, she convinces a friend who is Swiss/German to be the father of her child. Trevor is the result of that bargain; thus, *being born a crime*. Throughout the book we see the strong bond between Trevor and his mother. We see how his mother's determination for him to be free; to become whoever he wanted shaped who he is today, the host of "The Daily Show", and a stand-up comedian. Many of the stories in the book have become part of his stand-up routine.

At the end of the book you realize you have met many interesting characters, shared many laugh-out-loud moments, and learned much about life and survival during apartheid South Africa. I highly recommend this book as a source of information, for entertainment, and for gaining a simple historical understanding of how apartheid came to exist in South African.

Discussion Questions for "Born a Crime"

1. What is your general impression of the style of the autobiography
2. What character did you find interesting?
3. What was your favorite "event"?