



Between the World and Me is written as a letter to the author's teenaged son about the feelings, symbolism, and realities associated with being black in the United States. Coates recapitulates the American history and explains to his son the "racist violence that has been woven into American culture." Coates draws from an abridged, autobiographical account of his youth in Baltimore, detailing the ways in which institutions like the school, the police, and even "the streets" discipline, endanger, and threaten to disembody black men

and women. The work takes inspiration from James Baldwin's 1963 *The Fire Next Time*. Unlike Baldwin, Coates sees white supremacy as an indestructible force, one that black Americans will never evade or erase, but will always struggle against.