

Race: A History Beyond Black and White

Marc Aronson / Author . S&S/Atheneum \$18.99 (322p) ISBN 978-0-689-86554-1



Conducting a brisk run from early Western civilization to the present, Aronson (*Witch Hunt*) gathers historical accounts, literature and artifacts to explore how and why the idea of “race” was invented. He keeps the pace fast and the meaning clear as he leads readers from one paradox to another, trying to understand what drives one group of human beings to oppress another. Aronson also experiments with a variety of ways to connect with the past; for example, he mixes real and “invented” anecdotes into the text. Drawing on personal experience, he discloses prejudices he carries and recalls injustices he has observed, demonstrating both candor and respect for his readers. The stories he invents, however, seem more like contrivances, as in a comparison of the motives of a contemporary anorexic with those of early Christians. His references to existing YA novels provide more thought-provoking links between the past and the present. While some of Aronson's assumptions and interpretations could bear more scrutiny (among them, the limits of his white male perspective), his book models the message it sends, about questioning all claims and challenging private biases. It could easily spark debates among teens—in class, among friends and with themselves. Ages 12-up. (Nov.)