



Dark Sons

Nikki Grimes

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Sam can't believe it when his father leaves the family to marry another woman--and a white woman, at that. The betrayal cuts deep--Sam had been so close to his dad, he idolized him. Now who can he turn to, who can he trust? Even God seems to have ditched him.

Ishmael is his father's first son, the heir, his favorite. But when his father is visited by mysterious strangers who claim that Abraham's wife, Sarah, will finally give birth to a legitimate son, Ishmael is worried. And when baby Isaac arrives, Ishmael becomes more isolated from his father. Could Abraham's God, who had spoken to Ishmael's mother, to whom he has made countless sacrifices, now betray him in favor of this new son?

Dark Sons Details

Date : Published April 1st 2007 by Jump At The Sun (first published September 15th 2005)

ISBN : 9781423102519

Author : Nikki Grimes

Format : Paperback 224 pages

Genre : Poetry, Young Adult, Historical, Historical Fiction, Cultural, African American, Realistic Fiction, Fiction, Teen, Religion, Biblical

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From Reader Review Dark Sons for online ebook

Maureen Shea says

Dark Sons, by Nikki Grimes

Maureen Judith Shea

(2005). Dark Sons. (p. 216). New York: Hyperion Books for Children

Genre: Poetry

Awards

Coretta Scott King Author Honor Book

CNN.com Best Books for Kids 2005

NCTE Notable Book in the Language Arts

New York Public Library's Books for the TeenAge

TAYSHAS High School Reading List 2006/07

YALSA Best Book for Young Adults

“Nikki Grimes – The Poetry Zone

Retrieved from <http://www.nikkigrimes.com/books/bkda...>

Format: print

Selection process: Reviewed in textbook Literature for Today's Young Adult by Allsen P. Nelsen .

Found "Dark Sons" available in the Yong Adult section of the library.

Review:

Ishmael and Sam are two teenage boys who are centuries and worlds apart, but face very similar struggles. Ishmael is the son of Abraham and Hagar of the Old Testament. Sam is a young man living with his divorced mother in the city in modern times. Both boys struggle with sharing their father's affections with a second woman and her child. They love their fathers, but must come to terms that they are no longer the "apple of their father's eye". Conflict of who they are and how they "fit" in their parental family triangle is timeless as it was in the days of the Old Testament as it is now. Both boys wonder if the God who claims they love them, really does. In fact, they wonder if God is even listening. The poetry line reveals that through their struggles 1, they come to know themselves and their worth . Love proves to be a very strong component.

Highly Recommend

Grimes, N. (2005). Dark Sons. (p.216)New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

(2013). In A. P. Nilsen, B. James, K. L. Donelson, & N. D. F., Literature for Today's Young Adults (p. 482). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Lola H says

This Book is written in a very interesting way. It is written like a poem and I really enjoyed reading it. The

Book tells a story about two boys. One who lives in the present time in America and the other who is Abraham's son Ishmael and lives in the past. The book tells a story about both boys who both have issues with their fathers. Their religion and belief in god helps both boys to face their issues with their fathers. I thought the book was really good and I definitely recommend reading it.

Lesley says

This is the story of two boys told in poetic verse.

Sierra Wishard says

Copyright: 2007

Genre: Poetry

Comment: A book about two sons from different worlds who are suffering from similar situations, their relationship with their father. How will they handle the situation and who will help guide them?

Used: Great recommendation for a student who might be going through the same issues Ishmael and Sam went through. This might lead the student into putting his faith into God to help him through this rough patch and change in his life.

Andrea Greene says

Perfect stories to be told in verse. I had never considered the biblical story of Ishmael as a contemporary one so I appreciate the opportunity to remember that the people we read about in the Bible are so much more than the few verses or chapters of their lives summarized in the Bible. I also appreciate another reminder that artists can find inspiration everywhere. Good job, Nikki Grimes.

Jamie says

Written in the same style as A Girl Named Mister, Nikki Grimes' Dark Sons follows the same pattern of a Biblical voice and modern day teenager. Dealing with different themes of longing and desire to be loved, Dark Sons is another quick read for fans of lyrical and poetic writing.

I have to admit, this one was a bit more sad for me than the last one. I couldn't help but think of all the Sams I know (or have known) who are dealt hard blows and, while it's a hard road, come out stronger for it. I thought Grimes did an excellent job with the emotions of each character in the short journal like entries.

I liked that it was from a viewpoint of Ishmael. I often find it easy to forget that these big names of the Bible were people just like me. With hurts, longings and desires. I thought Grimes did an excellent job exploring what it would have been like for Abraham's son.

This is my second book from Nikki Grimes and I look forward to more! Who have you recently read multiple books of?

(Thank you to BlinkYA for a copy of the book. All views expressed are my own.)

Originally posted at [http://booksandbeverages.org/2017/03/...](http://booksandbeverages.org/2017/03/)

Brianna Marie says

Not much really happened in this book. The whole novel was told in verse, but it seemed to me that only served to take up space. The two stories were interesting, but I felt as though the comparisons were a little too easy. It was way too quick of a read and I felt like I didn't really get a chance to experience anything.

However, I did enjoy Sam's story, David definitely got to me, although the lack of substance was a major bother. The theme and mood of the whole thing was a little boring, and I really do wish she would have gone with a traditional style instead of the verses.

Not terrible for an English festival book, but still left a lot to be desired.

Megan says

So I was pretty impressed by this book. I found the poetry (I'm not sure the correct word) by difficult almost because it was so simplistic. I'm guessing this a middle grade book, so I find no actual fault in that fact. I am much older than middle grade so the book isn't meant for me.

What I loved was the story line. This book of poetry pairs Ishmael from the Bible with a young man named Sam. The parallels of their stories are exact- the oldest non favored son of a patriarch. It helped me see the character of Ishmael in a way I never had before and honestly I was stunned with how I've shaped his story in my own mind. That is the power of story and narrative. This book was incredibly challenging in that respect. I don't doubt that it'll be a book that stays with me for many years as will forever affect at least a small aspect of my spiritual insight. Well worth the read. It's easily accessible and very comprehensible.

Heather says

I thought this was a really creative premise. Grimes tells the story of two boys - modern day Sam and ancient history Ishmael, from the book of Genesis. I love her behind-the-scenes imagining of Ishmael's situation and what he might have been thinking and feeling. I love how she draws parallels to a modern-day situation, bringing this ancient story new life. For me, the most interesting part is how each boy navigates his relationship with God after his father betrays him. I was also fascinated with how each boy handles his conflicting emotions in his relationship with his two families. This is written in free verse, and it's a quick read, but very well worth it.

Alyson Stone says

Book: Dark Sons

Author: Nikki Grimes

Rating: 3 Out of 5 Stars

I would like to thank the publisher and Netgalley for providing me with this galley.

Dark Sons gives the reader a look at two boys from two completely different time periods. Both boys have issues with their fathers. Sam lives in the modern world and has to deal with his father leaving his family. Ishmael is the son of Abraham and Hagar, who finds himself being pushed aside for his younger brother Isaac. Both of them feel as if their fathers have disappointed and are trying to overcome this great disappointment. This part I actually liked. To me, it was so realistic and I could just feel the pain of the two boys coming right off the page.

This book is written in verse, which is fine in some cases. However, I do really feel like I could have connected more with this story had it been written in traditional format. The usage of verse just made the entire book seem overly simplified. The subject matter of this book is not really simple, but the verse format makes it seem so. It just takes away from the beauty that this one could have had. It just leaves us with a very basic picture of the boys and we have to guess everything else. The book just needed to be a little bit longer in order for the verse format to work.

Like I have already pointed out, the writing is rather sparse, but it is full of emotion. I did feel a lot of pull toward the boys and they did deal with something that so many kids do have to deal with. I do like how Nikki used the two different stories as a mirror for each other. You could just feel everything.

This is a quick, easy read, but it was just lacking something for me. It is a solid three star rating that doesn't deserve anything higher or lower. I would say that most middle scholars would probably like it, especially those who want something simple.

Andrew says

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

I'll be honest and say I did not know what I was getting myself into when I picked up Dark Sons. I knew I had read things by Nikki Grimes before (and am embarrassed to say I could not remember what those things were) and that it looked like kind of interesting. I was pleasantly surprised both by the format and content of the book.

One thing to know (and again something I should have but didn't know before I read the book) is that it is a collection of poems that tell the story of two sons dealing with a changing relationship with their father. The first is Ishmael and his relationship with his father Abraham (from Old Testament fame) and the second is a more modern distancing about a teenager named Sam. Through the course of the book the similarities and differences of these two interpretations are brought to the forefront through alternating sections of poetic

cycles.

As someone who grew up in a fairly religious household (and as a result when I stopped being particularly interested in faith for religious reasons and more for academic ones), I really enjoyed the Ishmael side of the book. He has always been a fascinating character to me and the role he plays is one that I feel like is ripe for a lot of different interpretations. I felt like this interpretation of what his emotions and feelings must have been were incredibly well done and were interesting when compared to the Christian response in terms of how Sam was able to deal with his father's new family in the modern part of the book. It set up an interesting parallel of having God take care of these people while still not making a great life for them or seeming to always have their best interest at heart.

I thought the portrayal of Sam was also incredibly well done. It felt incredibly real and is one of the few reasons I would potentially recommend this book to a student. The way that the character processes emotions and was able to separate his feelings for his father and his new wife from those for his step-brother was quite interesting and something I feel like most people have had to do even if not with this particular situation.

I do not think I would ever assign this book primarily because I think that religion is a bit too explicitly central. That said, I have several students that I am already thinking of who could relate and benefit immensely from this. I also think that there are students like me who might see the comparison of Ishmael as almost a "patron saint" of someone abandoned by their father to be compelling even without the religious overtones it produces. Overall, it was a good, quick read and the format was something different that I found quite refreshing (although, this should not be super surprising coming from me since my favorite format for books are short story cycles).

Also posted on Purple People Readers.

Diamond Jones says

When I received this book I didn't know what to expect. I had times when I just needed to step away and read something else. Dark Son's take you on a journey of two boys with issues about their father.

Overall, the story line was good but I felt the book had parts that were drawn out to make the book longer.

David says

I am really torn with how I feel about this book. On one hand the poetry is very authentic and feels quite real- more "real" overall than "Bronx Masquerade" (a book with amazing, outstanding poetry combined with prose that was a mixed bag). I also admire the execution of such a creative idea- telling two stories about boys disappointed by their fathers. One story is about a modern-day teenage boy named Sam, and the other is about the biblical figure Ishmael- yes, that Ishmael, son of Abraham and Hagar. Also, a first child majorly screwed over by the birth of Isaac, son of Abraham and Sarah.

On the other hand...I really, really want to distance myself from the religious views presented in the book. The point seems to be that even though Ishmael and Sam were both treated as disposable by their fathers in the end, at least they have their "Heavenly Father", and that makes everything all better. I've kind of

simplified the handling of religion here, but essentially, Nikki Grimes is saying that 21st century American Jesus (the deity that Sam and his family choose to worship) is the same all-powerful being that Ishmael followed. It's been several years since I've believed in the Judeo-Christian God, and so this simplification of the boys' very real problems makes me uncomfortable.

That being said, I choose to give "Dark Sons" a 4-star rating because the poetry really is that strong. It is compelling, the feelings expressed by both boys feels real, and the "Biblical times" details are fascinating. (Sarah, Abrahams' wife, is portrayed in a particularly unflattering light. I have a lot of respect for that!)

This is certainly a polarizing book. But my aversion to the religious dogma the book plays with doesn't change the fact that it is full of strong poetry and impressive insight into the hearts of boys dealing with being crushed by their fathers.

Missy says

The biblical story of Ishmael and the story of a contemporary young man dealing with his father's remarriage and birth of a half brother are told in alternating poems. The themes, such as father son relationships, betrayal, and faith are well presented in their universality and their specificity for each boy. The faith of each young man makes this a particularly unique story as struggles with faith or the embrace of faith aren't often portrayed in literature in such a realistic way. Their faith is an important part of their life without being their only, defining trait, or something each young man needs to break free of. However, some slang makes the story dated, as does the contemporary Sam's job at a video store. This one is worth keeping around for young adults interested in themes of faith, biblical history, or fans of Kwame Alexander looking for more novels in verse.

Natasha says

Two stories weave together, one reflecting and inspiring the other: the Biblical tale of Ishmael, the oldest son of Abraham, pushed aside by a younger, legitimate son and heir, and Sam, dealing with his father's abandonment, remarriage, and new family.

Beautiful, heart-wrenching, and ultimately hopeful.
