



## Ghetto Kidz

*Todd Strasser , Morton Rhue*

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Teufelskreis Großstadtghetto: Der Afroamerikaner Kalon wird in eine Welt der sozialen Armut und Kriminalität hineingeboren. Unweigerlich gerät er in einen grausamen Bandenkrieg.

## **Ghetto Kidz Details**

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Author : Todd Strasser , Morton Rhue

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## From Reader Review Ghetto Kidz for online ebook

### Roseline says

IF I GROW UP is by Todd Strasser, who has many awards-winning novels, including BOOT CAMP, CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE, and GIVE A BOY A GUN. He decided to write IF I GROW UP after visiting several inner city schools and reading about the growing problem of gangs.

This book about a kid named Deshwan, who lives in the Frederick Douglas Project where people shoot each other almost every day, and almost everyone is in a gang. But deshwan is smart enough to know that gang members always end up either in jail or dead. His family is very poor, and gangbangers seem to have everything they need. His family depends on an old grandma who can barely work, to help Deshwan's family survive. Is he going to join the gang or will he go to school and have a better education.

IF I GROW UP is a good story for everyone to read. It has some very good lessons people can learn from. This is a good book for middle schoolers, high schoolers, and adult because the author is very clear on what he want the read to understand. A story about gangs is something that everyone should know about be aware of.

If people knew a lot about gangs, and how to avoid them then maybe there wouldn't be so many crimes. To understand what life is like being a gang members, and what are the consequences.

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### Meaghan says

I loved almost all of this book. Strasser paints a very realistic picture of a good boy, a smart kid with potential, sliding down into perdition largely because of forces beyond his control. DeShawn tries different ways to get out of what seems like destiny for every black man in the projects, but his route is always blocked. A teacher advises him to apply to go to a magnet high school, but because of the bad education he got earlier, DeShawn's aptitude test scores aren't high enough. He tries to stay away from the local gangs as much as possible, but living among them, he can't help but get caught in their mess. His father is never mentioned, his mother is dead, his grandmother is on welfare and his sister has two kids by the time she's sixteen. And so, bit by bit, DeShawn disappears into the shadow of gangs and drugs and violence.

I was impressed that Strasser was able to keep profanity and graphic violence out of the story, given its setting. This book would be suitable for 12- to 13-year-olds and up.

I would have given it four stars, maybe five, but I hated the ending of the story. Not the fact that DeShawn ended up in prison -- that was quite a realistic outcome -- but the utter preachiness of the last chapter, where DeShawn quotes statistics and speculates about the future of the ghetto youth. This is Todd Strasser speaking, not DeShawn, and it left a bad taste in my mouth. It's a pity, because the rest of the book was so good.

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### Skip says

If I Grow Up is one of the books written by Todd Strasser, a well known teen book writer who has published several novels for teenagers. Todd was motivated by going to an inner-city school and reading about what

gangs do and how life was like living in the Doughless apartments in the projects. This book is about a boy named Deshawn who grew up in the inner-city and he was a good kid until he was really hungry and didn't have any money for food. But he found a girlfriend that they loved each other so much that they only went to school to see each other.

The book takes place in an area in the Doughless projects. The book talks about what goes on in a life living in the ghetto with gangers and having no money to afford food. But Deshawn had one thing in him and it was trust. The only person who trusted him the most was Marcus, Marcus was the head gang leader and he trusted Deshawn with a lot of money to test him if he would take it but he didn't. Marcus was like the father or the big brother that Deshawn never had, He always cared about Deshawn and gave him money for what he needed. Then one day Marcus brought Deshawn to a job and Deshawn saw something bad happen to Marcus. If Deshawn told anyone about what he saw, Marcus's gang the Disciples would kill him and know one would know what happened to Marcus.

If I Grow up is one of an action-filling book that was written by Todd Strasser. The message in the book was very clear at the end of the book. When every thing feels like it's going down hill everything turns the other way and it's a great feeling to feel for a person that grows up in a horrible like to a boss of the projects. When you've read the last line you'll want to read more stories from Todd Strasser.

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### **Lisa says**

This story is about a young boy, DeShawn, growing up in the projects in NYC. He has some good influences in his life (such as a grandma that holds the family together) and tries to resist the gang life that surrounds him. Ultimately, though, poverty and lack of perceived choices test that resolve.

I didn't really like the book because it's not the kind of story I normally would read. That said, the characters were interesting. Strasser portrays them as multidimensional - they are not all strictly "bad" or "good". And it was an interesting portrayal of life in the projects and what environments/obstacles these kids have to deal with. Strasser puts some interesting twists into the end of the story. Hopefully readers will take away the message he intended.

I think this book appeals to several subgroups - reluctant readers, urban and/or male readers - that may not relate to your typical middle class, suburban (often female lead) storyline. There is definitely a lot to discuss in this book, making it a good choice for a book club or book report.

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### **Angela Bynum says**

If I grow up was a book that talks about kids growing up in rough parts of a city like Chicago. A family of four living with their grandma, lives where all the gang members work. It is very dangerous when they start to shoot because it's near. As the grandmother protects them, they stay in side the house and are not allowed to leave. As David, one of the four children, asks the go out side because his friends has something for him, he begged his grandma to go until she said yes. He goes out side and his friends take him to were all the gang members go. The brake in and hide in parts inside the wall so they won't get caught or else get killed until unfortunately one of the gang members come home and starts looking around for a gun. Both the friend and

the boy are terrified and do not move until he leaves. They run out the house and David goes back home.

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### **Karen & Gerard says**

Through the fictional characters of DeShawn, his best friend, Terrell, and the gang leaders in If I Grow Up, Todd Strasser gives the reader a vivid picture of the pressures people face living in poverty with gang members ruling the neighborhood in the inner-city. I really liked this book because it followed DeShawn and Terrell as they grew up in the projects and let me see a world I am totally unfamiliar with; on the other hand, it is disturbing that people in America are actually living like this in some places.

Although DeShawn and Terrell were best friends, they had different goals. At age 12, Terrell looked forward to getting into a gang while DeShawn wanted to stay out of it. DeShawn was generally a kid who just wanted to help out his family, stay alive to see another day, do the right thing and stay out of trouble. Had he made some different choices, he may have succeeded. Strange how things turned out. You trust the wrong person, and boom—you're dead.

If I Grow Up story kept my interest all the way through, right from page 1. It's well written and has clean language. I recommend it to anyone who enjoys reading about teenagers.

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### **Cody Armendariz says**

The book was good. It made me think about my own life.  
I would recommend it to anyone who likes drama and a bit of mystery

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### **Rebecca McNutt says**

DeShawn, a teenager living in the Projects, wants to not just get by, but get *out*. He wants what a lot of kids in his situation have given up on, and that's a good education, but his family is nearly out of money and the only way to get good money if you're a Projects kid is to sell drugs and join dangerous gangs, two things he knows are wrong.

This book gives readers insight into a dilemma that many kids sadly have to face in reality, having to give up school and safety in order to take care of their families. It's really well-written and it talks about an issue often overlooked.

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### **Jeremiah says**

This book was an incredible read and it is about this kid named Deshawn and he lived in a really tough neighborhood in Chicago and the name of this place is called Fredrick Douglas Projects and it was definitely really tough living there. The author of this book is named Todd Strasser. Mike strasser has also made other books related to this book such as Give a Boy a Gun and Fallout.

It starts off as a boy named Darnell getting thrown off of a building from the Douglas Disciples rival gang the Gentry Gangstas. The leader of the Disciples goes by the name of Marcus and the leader of the Gangstas was a guy named Rance. Then from there it just keeps going downhill from there especially when Deshawn decides to join the Disciples as well. Deshawn started off as a really good kid, he was actually one of the smartest kids in his school and his teachers wanted him to go to a better school than where he was at so he could have more of a challenge. Deshawn was really on a good path but the deeper and deeper he got into the gang the worse he got. Everyone thought he was going to be a kid to go down the right path and do the right thing but he just let all the money and perks get to him. Deshawn also ends up having a kid as well but you have to read the book on that point of the story.

I really didn't think that Deshawn would be the one to go down this path because he was actually smart and he actually had the ability to do something with his life. I feel like the author was really trying to get to people by showing what going down a bad path could do to people and how dangerous it really is to be in a gang and not realizing your consequences if you get caught up. There is a lot of plot changes in this story and I really believe it is a great book and think everyone should at least try reading the book because it really shows how your life could turn out if you take the wrong path. I feel like the book is written really well because every time you think about just setting down the book you just keep on reading because there is always something good that is going on in every moment of the book. It really was kind of an easy read as well.

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### **Evan Bautch says**

this book was great. its about a young boy that lives in new york and is very poor. he lives with his grandma and his aunt in a little apartment in the ghetto. he meets this girl in his school. he likes her a lot but the only problem is that she lives on the other side of town where the rivle gang is and her brothers are part of it. one day when there at her house her brother comes in and he aims a gun at him and questions him and threatens to kill him if he ever sees him on that side of town again. they stop seeing each other for a while but eventually get back together. when he can't stand being poor anymore he goes to the gang leader and he gets in, since the leader knows him and he trusted him with his bail money he doesn't have to get beaten up or hurt in any way. the money he makes is fantastic until one day when they have to go pick up guns from the dealer. it was a set-up and he got shot in the back of the head. he doesn't tell anyone except his friend who then kills the man who did it which was the new leader at that time and after that he ran away to a safe place. after that he runs this gang and has a plan to join the two sides, at this time he is now 16 and was running the biggest gang in new york. then he says that he is in jail writing about his life and how he got there.

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### **Nicole Roach says**

We often read stories of people escaping their childhood and creating something of their lives. This book shows that it is very hard to escape your culture and make something different of your life. "Three times more black men live in jail cells than in college dorms." Education equals power and freedom. This would make a great read aloud in a junior high or high school classroom.

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## **K-C says**

Case Marino  
D period English  
12/21/17  
Ms. Vandenburg  
If I grow up

Imagine a book that follows the cities and slums no one talks about. Not the ones where you can live the American dream but the projects where dreams go to die.

If I grow up is a novel about a boy in the projects named DeShawn. DeShawn grows up in a poor, urban city with his sister and grandmother. The style of the writing very smooth and choppy at the same time. The book skips long periods of time because it only tells a snippet of the story at a time. About every forty-five pages the setting is moved to another year in DeShawn's life. He starts out as a smart 12-year-old child with an offer to go to a better school out of the hood. With subtle but noticeable changes in DeShawn's life such as the murder of his stepbrother LaRue.

DeShawn tries his best to fight the temptation of the promise of big bucks and a flashy lifestyle due to gang life. Early in his life, he was promised a better life by Marcus, the leader of the disciples, more money to provide for his family.

At 13 years DeShawn meets the love of his life, Tanisha. DeShawn wants to take Tanisha on a date but he doesn't have the money for it. He explains his problem to Marcus and he gives him \$50 for the date.

The temptation and declining goes on for a few more years until DeShawn cracks. The sight of his stepbrother being shot in the head by his rival gang broke him. He knew that his sister having to raise two twin kids without a father and being responsible for taking care of her grandmother who can no longer work because an illness wouldn't work for him. That night we went to the top floor of his apartment and asked Marcus for a job.

This was the turning point in the book for DeShawn. At this point, DeShawn turned from a good smart boy into a thug. Although this transformation seems out of the blue, it was expected from the start when Marcus and the Disciples were first mentioned.

The book has an overall depressing and hopeless theme to it. Although there are bits of hope, they are quickly overshadowed by the events that happen to DeShawn. At times the novel focuses on other parts of DeShawn's life instead. A whole section focuses on his friends and the antics he gets himself into. For example at 14 Lightbulb got a dog and named it Snoop. But even with the focus on Lightbulb and Snoop the gang life is still present.

Overall I enjoyed reading this book. I would rate it 8/10. The early stages of the book is fairly boring but the later stages are action-packed. After finishing the book the early pages seem irrelevant to the end story. I will read more of Todd Strasser's work if I'm put in a situation where I have to read a realistic fiction book for school.

Recommended age 12+  
Author: Todd Strasser  
Goodreads rating: 4.1/5

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## **kelly says**

No no no...I didn't like this book at all.

This book is the story of DeShawn, a kid growing up in a housing project in an large, unnamed American city (many details in the setting, however, seem to suggest that the book takes place in Chicago). When the story begins he is a wide-eyed 12-year-old, living in poverty with his grandmother and watching the violence and gang warfare around him. It ends 5 years later with the main character at 17, now a hardened gang leader and participating the same violence he once feared.

This is a quick read aimed at lower-level young adult readers. While I can understand the simplicity of it to certain degree, for me it was way too simple. There were far too many stereotypes here to be of any teachable use, i.e., a kid living in the hood, watching people die, no money to eat, hates school, learns how to hustle, joins a gang, etc. It's too predictable--nothing we or his youth audience haven't already read before or know by heart from a song by their favorite rapper. The language is also dreadfully out of touch for the lifestyle the author's describing, even by 2009's standards. Girls are "shorties," crackheads are "hypes," and if you act up, you'll get your "butt" kicked. LOL urban teenagers don't talk that way. Just sayin.'

There are sections throughout the book and at the end in which the author uses stats to make political arguments about inequity, crime, education, etc. These blurbs don't belong here. It's as if the author doesn't trust his own story to make his point and let the reader get it.

In the back of this book, the author says that he wrote this because he was shocked by what he found in speaking to impoverished urban teens. White suburban ignorance is exactly why this book is one of the reasons why I feel diverse literature BY diverse authors is so important. While I am not saying that white authors cannot write about black people, his lack of true understanding on the culture of Black poverty is apparent. Giving statistics on drop out and incarceration rates to a young and presumably black audience does not necessarily inspire them to stay in their failing schools or away from the gangs that feed their families, particularly if they are from the very doomed neighborhoods he's writing about. What you get here is a tone of pity and not empathy, which is the opposite of what was probably intended.

Don't read this book.

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### **Kevin Sheng says**

After reading "If I grow up", what I feel the most is that our current lives are really blessed. People in the book don't really have choices, even they are smart enough to have a better life such as the main character. DeShawn tries different ways to get out of what seems like destiny for every black man in the projects, but his route is always blocked. However the book don't really have a good ending, it is predictable. Because i picked the book randomly, the plot is not what i thought, so it made me a little bit disappointed. Overall, the book describe a sad story but shows how people fight for living.

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### **Sarah BT says**

This was a short read and it read very quickly. DeShawn lives in the projects and the novel starts out with him at age 12. He wants to get out and do something with his life, but living in a place where gangs rule, he grows up and soon finds he has no choice. I thought the story was very well done and while it was sad and infuriating and DeShawn often left me annoyed at his choices, I understood why he made them. I also felt the author really did his research and wrote a story that felt real. I just wish there would have been more

explanation at the end about those who got out of the projects-I wanted to know how. What did they do? What choices did they make? I do think it's a book that needs to be read.

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### **Sarah Donovan says**

For upper middle and high schoolers. It's about gang life in the projects, family, hopelessness, poverty, and growing up. but it is really about surviving. Strasser did his research to imagine DeShawn's life from 12 to 28, but I was always aware of the author's voice rather than getting lost in the narrator's telling. There was a didacticism to the story that felt more like the author's project than the narrator reflecting on lessons learned. That said, I do see this book as a powerful book group text for students mature enough (or experienced enough) to make sense of the graphic details and be a little critical of the book's representation of gang life and the projects. I'd also encourage readers to do further inquiry into the facts that begin each chapter regarding the history of housing projects. This book will start an important social justice conversation.

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### **Andrew R says**

this was an awesome book i liked the action that was in the book also i liked that when he had no choice to join he had to take care of his family too.

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### **Heather Munao says**

Powerful little book. The main character DeShawn wants to resist gangs but is drawn into them slowly because of peer influence. The most interesting character was Marcus, the leader of the Disciples, whom the author made very human and all the more magnetic to both us and DeShawn because of that. The author included little non-fiction snippets of info about incarceration, poverty, and black men in between chapters. I think the intensity of the story would speak to kids, who could also learn from the info along the way.

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### **Hser Moo says**

IF I GROW UP by Todd Strasser is a realistic fiction Set in New York. This book is about teenagers who live in the hood they were poor no one want to go nearby because is danger is full of gangster. But they only allowed peoples live there if they know them. Kids or teenagers who live in this place call Frederick Douglass project will never have good education or become good person.

DeShawn was the main character lives with his gramma and sister no parent. He the only good kid in Frederick Douglass he has so many friends also he went to school not as many as teacher was except but is fine least he went. This book told by third person. There is lot of character get evolve because of the gang and drug(Larue,Lightbulb,Marcus,Darnell,Laqueta,Jamar,Terrell and more..). Marcus was the leader in Frederick Douglass his has lot of disciples to service him. Gun was fired almost every 30 min. DeShawn

knows all the people in Frederick Douglass matter fact he know the gang leader too. There two gangster team Marcus team and other one is DeShawn girlfriend brother team. They don't like each other they were enemy. But DeShawn don't want to be enemy with them because he data Tanisha. One day DeShawn and his friend Terrell get in to trouble because they steal something and they are tie up.

Marcus got kill by his own gang member because they don't like what he doing. He always takes easy never go to war with other gang and his disciples get kill most of time. DeShawn know who kill Marcus he start to tell his friend and disciples some of them believed him some of them don't. After they found out it was Jamar His kill Marcus because he wants to take over Marcus place and make a war.

Later on they are fight each other and get spread out some of them went to jail and some of them choose new life to live. DeShawn became father his has one child. This book is actually great book they are so many things to learn from. How life be like live in the place that is full of gangster. I recommend to you guys please read this book. It has much interest stuff you can't believe after you read you will know how is like to be a gang member.

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### **Natalie says**

This is a MUST read. This is a book about a young African American boy living in the projects. Faced with his mothers death, drive bys, a selfish sister, and battling gangs, DeShawn struggles with things kids shouldn't have to even think about. He is thrown in to the gang world for reasons that are out of his control. Falling in love for the first time is a beautiful roller coaster. But when the one you love is the sister of a rival gang member things can get pretty dangerous. DeShawn wants more for himself. He knows there's more to life than drugs, violence, and hate. The problem is, for him, becoming a member of the Fredrick Douglass "family" is the easiest way to provide for his family. I talked outloud to DeShawn on several occasions. Your anticipation, worry, and disbelief will propel you through this book.

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