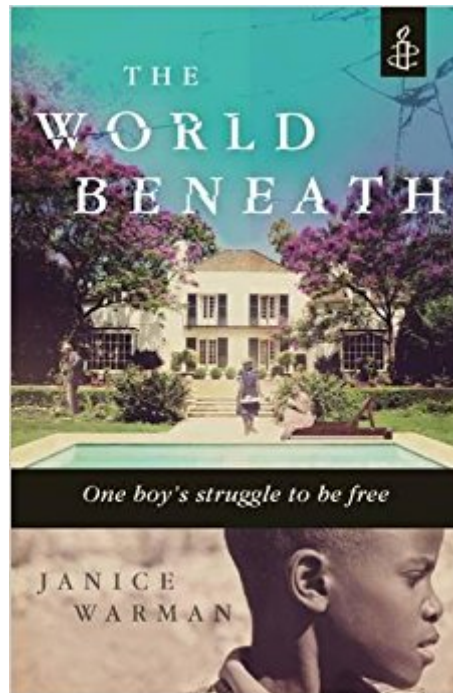




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The World Beneath



Synopsis

One boy's struggle for freedom during South Africa's anti-apartheid movement. 1970s South Africa. Eleven-year-old Joshua lives with his mother, who works as a maid for the Malherbes in a white middle-class area in Cape Town. We see this enclosed world through Joshua's eyes as we share his longing for his family and his past life in the rural Ciskei. When a boy enters the garden one night, Joshua offers him refuge. The stranger turns out to be a freedom fighter on the run. As riots sweep the country Joshua becomes more and more aware of the political situation around him and is determined to help bring about change for himself, his family and ultimately his country.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 6-9-Set in 1970s South Africa, this tale is about Joshua, a young boy struggling to survive the racial legacy of apartheid. Joshua's mother works as a maid at the estate of a wealthy white family where they live. He works hard to go unnoticed, until he unintentionally stumbles across a black man trying to evade capture by police. Joshua decides to hide this man without truly understanding the dangers involved. Through this narrative, Joshua witnesses the unravelling of his society and dabbles on the edge of his own morals when pushed to respond to the oppression. The sequence of events often moves too quickly, and characters lack depth, detaching readers from potentially emotional plot points. Joshua's perspective introduces kids to South African history, but without guidance or a previous understanding of apartheid, much of the content's nuances may be missed. Still, the work serves to address a critical aspect of world history and can be a valuable addition to school libraries. VERDICT This book is recommended for use in the classroom as well as for

libraries with larger collections and where historical fiction is popular. -Paige Rowse, Needham High School Library, MA
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A powerful and beautifully descriptive novel that brilliantly portrays apartheid in 1970s South Africa. . This clever and insightful novel is an incredibly potent retelling through the eyes of a child * Books for Keeps * Warman turns her journalistic talents to historical fiction in her debut novel about the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa and how it shapes a young boy's life. [...] Each chapter feels thoroughly researched, with details about Joshua's life at a training camp and his return to Cape Town. [...] A good complement to nonfiction about apartheid South Africa, a little-explored place and period in children's literature. * Kirkus * ...the work serves to address a critical aspect of world history and can be a valuable addition to school libraries. This book is recommended for use in the classroom as well as for libraries with larger collections and where historical fiction is popular. * School Library Journal * Middle-schoolers who are intrigued by Joshua's situation should have little difficulty finding material to make sense of this gripping drama. * Galleys *

This novel was thin and was a fast read. I picked it up on a whim as the cover had been calling to me for weeks. There was something about the covers design and colors that attracted my attention. I wish I could give this novel glowing reviews since it has perked my attention for so long but unfortunately I thought the novel was just touching on the surface of a much deeper issue. I also was craving more information about the characters and their lives, why couldn't the author elaborate more? The novel showcased the inequality that was occurring in the 1970s in Africa as seen through the eyes of young Joshua. His mother was a maid trying to earn enough money to provide for her other children who live with her parents. Separated from his siblings, Joshua tries to stay out of the eyes of the wealthy owners as he tends to a few chores around the quarters. It's his inquisitive mind and his childlike ways that spin this story off into another direction as Joshua runs an errand for the lady of the house and he finds himself distracted while trying to stay invisible. Joshua soon realizes that the world is a bigger place with problems that he never knew existed. It's about rights and who is entitled to them and for young Joshua this is a new concept and one that he didn't understand. I wished the author would have given more history and explanation of the time period and the characters as I thought parts of the novel were confusing and not as well addressed as they could have been. I did like the character of Joshua, his inquiring mind and his attitude brought the

novel together.

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