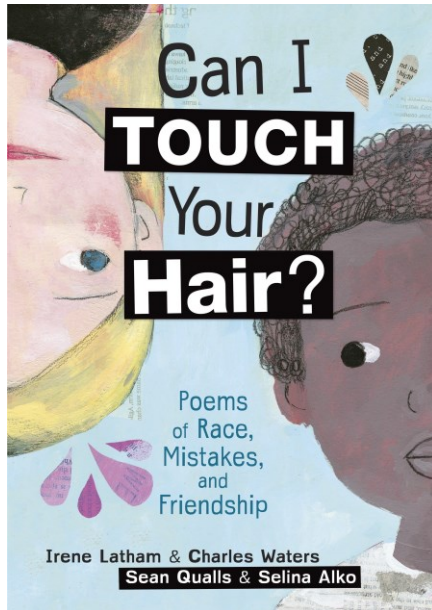


# CAN I TOUCH YOUR HAIR



*Easy Reader*

**By Irene Latham and Charles Waters**

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## **Book Summary:**

Discussions of racial biases and assumptions made by and toward two young children by their classmates and how they overcome them.

## **Summary of Concerns:**

This book contains controversial racial commentary.

## **Mitigating Factors:**

Positive narrative regarding overcoming harmful stereotypes of race and gender.

**1**  
/5

**Child Guidance**  
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
6	Mrs. Vandenberg holds up her hand. Write about anything! It's not black and white. But it is. Charles is black, and I'm white.
7	Now I'm stuck with Iren? She hardly says anything. Plus she's white.
12	At church everyone is white.
13	Everyone's brown arms raised in devotion, except mine. If it says that Jesus had hair like wool, eyes that were a flame of fire, and feet like brass as if they burned in a furnace, then why is everyone praising the straight-haired, blue-eyed white man I see looking down over all of us?
14	I'm confused: why do people who want to look like me hate me so much?
18	...the spot by the fence where the black girls play freeze dance. I watch for a few minutes, hoping Shonda will invite me to join them instead of me having to ask, can I play? I smile when Shonda comes over, but she doesn't smile back. You've got the whole rest of the playground, she says, Can't we at least have this corner?
19	When I walk over, J.R. says, "C'mon, man, stay away from us." Nicholas breaks in, "Your mouth is like a race car that never stops to refuel." The group shakes with laughter. I can't believe my "friends" would play me dirty like that.
20	He goes by the name Ghost, at least that's what his new friends, all the same color, call him. I introduce myself, "Hey, Ghost, my name's Charles." His pasty skin heats up faster than a summer's day. "My name's Paul," he says, leaving my outstretched hand to dangle. I realize I'm a few shades too dark to be allowed to call him by his nickname.
21	Why do we call this region the black belt? ...Because black people live there. ...I learn when it comes to black and white, sometimes it's best to press my lips closed and not say anything at all.
24	It's him; yes, him, the one who once asked me, "Why you do always try to act like one of us?" All because I earn my A+ report card, pushing through homework instead of playing video games, not saying, "You ain't," or "You is," or "I'm doing good."
25	When Shonda presents her family tree to the class, I see all the top branches are draped in chains. Because my ancestors were slaves, she says. I swallow, I want to say I'm sorry, but those words are too small for something so big.
26	When I watch the news, I can't believe when I see people who could pass as my family being choked, pummeled, shot, killed by police officers. Yet, when the police officers on TV are pale as a cloud, just like Officer Brassard, it makes my heart twist without any hope of being disentangled.
27	Only then does he tell me about Trayvon, about Ferguson, Missouri. What happened and why.

Page	Content
30	<p>I want to go to my cousin Ronnie's sleepover tonight, so I ask Mom and Dad. "No can do, kiddo," Dad says. "That's a rough neighborhood, especially in the evening."</p> <p>"But, Dad," I say, "I hang out there after school at least once a week."</p> <p>"Baby, that's during the day," Mom says.</p> <p>"Why didn't anyone ever tell me this before?" I ask.</p> <p>"Because sometimes in life," Mom says, "There are thins you aren't supposed to know until it's necessay."</p>
31	<p>...sky black streets black faces black fear white</p>
32	<p>The rapper then punches out a word that makes her do a double-take. "Did he just drop the N-bomb?" she asks. "Yes," I say. "But it had an A at the end of it, not an E-R, so it's okay."</p>