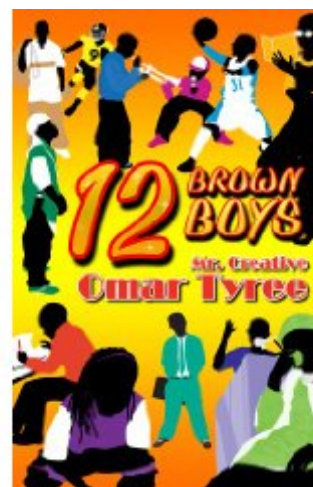


# Teacher's Guide

*12 Brown Boys*

By Omar Tyree

Published by Just Us Books



## Book Description:

*12 Brown Boys*, by Omar Tyree, is a collection of short stories that focuses on the lives of Black pre-teen boys. Readers will connect with Tyree's engaging characters. There is Red-Head Mike, who hates his nickname, but hates his red hair even more; Chestnut, who is sent to live with relatives down South to keep him out of trouble in his Brooklyn neighborhood; William, the Santa Monica super kid whose status as a scholar and entrepreneur has even his best friends hating him and Wayne, who resents his role as the oldest child until a tragedy strikes the family. Tyree has assembled a wide range of characters that reflect the diversity of experiences of Black boys - characters that are funny, serious, edgy, street-wise, studious and all unforgettable.

**Target Ages:** 9-12

**Themes:** brotherhood, community, family life, fathers and sons, friendship, self esteem, leadership, black boys

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## Pre-Reading Questions:

What message(s) does the cover illustration convey?

Are there any characters on the cover with whom you identify--even without knowing their story? What makes you connect with them?

Which images reflect aspects of boys and young men you know? What others would you add?

## Discussion Questions:

### 1. Cool Dave

Why did Michael admire Cool Dave? How did his feelings about Cool Dave change when he discovered how Dave made his money? Why did Michael decide to write his essay about his

dad? What does Michael think would help Cool Dave? Do you think that would change Dave? Why or Why not?

## **2. Red-Head Mike**

Why did Michael McDaniels hate the nickname, Red-Head Mike? How did his conversation with his Uncle Raymond help change the way he felt and help him gain confidence? Mike's Uncle Raymond said, "If you have something that works to your advantage, then learn to use it. Think about special qualities you have. How can you use them to benefit yourself and others?"

## **3. Reading Class**

How did Antwan feel when he was called to read? Why? What was his biggest fear? Why did his teacher, Miss Palmer, say it's important to learn to "read and speak with confidence"? How did Antwan's dad help him? How do you feel about reading?

## **4. Jamaica Boys**

What do Stevie and his friends do for fun? How does good-natured competition play into their friendship? What do the friends like best about Stevie? What do you like best about your friends?

## **5. It Takes Time**

Why did Brandon stay inside when the other campers went out to play? How did Brandon inspire Demetrius? Why is it important to take your time when learning new things?

## **6. It Was a Sunday**

How did Wayne feel about being the oldest? How did Wayne feel when his dad was hurt in the accident? How did it change him? How do you feel about being the youngest, oldest, middle child or only child? What do you like best about your position in the family?

## **7. Born Leader**

Why is Alfred so driven to succeed? How did he display leadership? Why did his teacher want him to meet Mrs. Aminah Dali? Why was he excited about the rites of passage program? How does he hope to help others in the future?

## **8. Black, Like Me**

How did Jamal feel when Dean asked him about his choice of superhero? Why did Dean think Jamal was racist? How did Dean's mom help him see things differently? Who are your heroes?

## **9. Summer Down South**

What did Chestnut think of the South? Why did he get into a confrontation with Jim-Jim's friend, Donald? How did he feel when Jim-Jim and the others went to the movies and bowling without him? Do you think Chestnut will change? Why?

### **10. I Ain't No Sissy**

Why did T.C. wish he had older brothers instead of older sisters? Why do he and his mother have trouble getting along? Why was T.C. sent to stay with his uncle? What did he learn there?

### **11. Young Scholar**

How did William help his peers? Why did he want to give back to his classmates and the community? How did he feel when his friend Walter started calling him The Superkid? What did William's mother and father tell him about friendship? Why is it important to choose your friends carefully?

### **12. Big Dreams**

Why did Taylor keep his dream of making movies to himself? Why did Damion and Taylor stop speaking to each other? What was Taylor's great idea that could help him and Damion? The word "pitch" has two definitions in the story. How do they play into Damion's and Taylor's dreams? What did the friends discover is needed to make your dreams come true? What are your dreams? How can you make them reality?

## **WRITING/LANGUAGE ARTS**

*12 Brown Boys* explores friendship and family relationships. Write about an experience with a friend or relative that changed you in some way.

What's your favorite short story in *12 Brown Boys*? Why?

Write about a male role model you admire. What makes him special?

Pretend you were recruited by an editor to write a 13th story for this book. Who would be the main character(s)? What would be the plot? How would you make your first paragraph or page exciting to capture readers right away?

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

The Great Debate. Do you think celebrities are role models? Should they be? Stage a debate about this topic with members of the class/group taking opposing views.

The author of *12 Brown Boys* wrote the book because he thinks there is a need for more books that reflect the experiences of pre-teen and teen African-American boys. Do you agree? What makes you want to read certain books? What makes you not want to read certain books? Is there anything missing from some of the books you read? What's a common factor among the books

you enjoy the most? Make a check list of the things you love to read about in books and use the Internet or school library to find more books that feature those things.

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### **About the Author**

Omar Tyree is the winner of a 2001 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work and a 2006 Phillis Wheatley Literary Award. His 18 published books have sold nearly two million copies worldwide. *12 Brown Boys* is Tyree's first book for young readers.



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