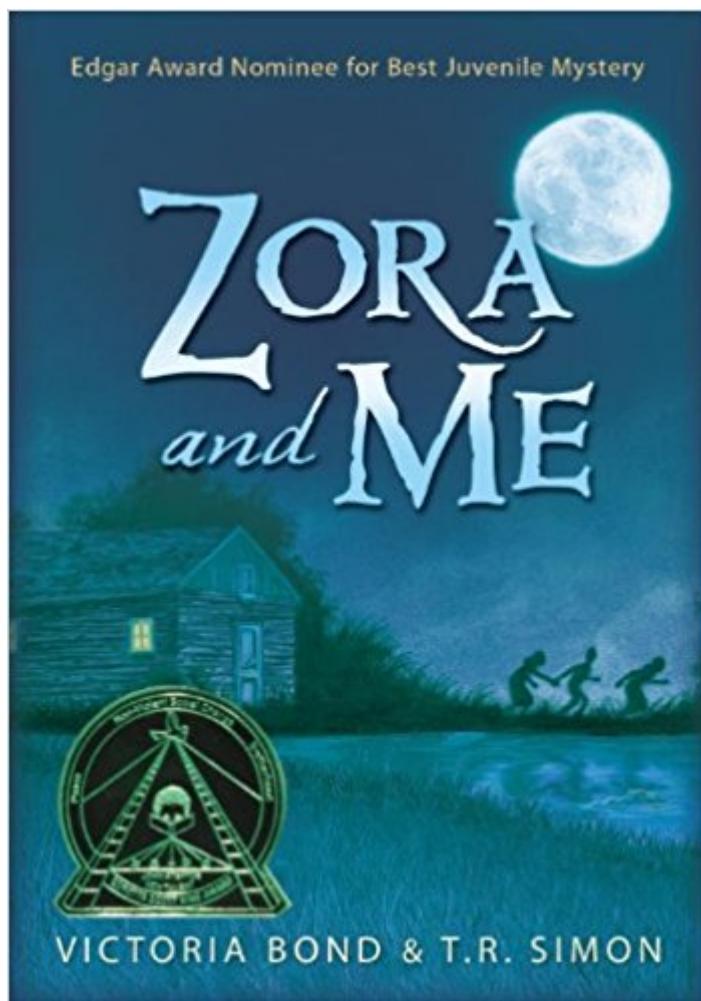


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## Zora And Me



## Synopsis

Winner of the 2011 John Steptoe New Talent (Author) Award! Racial duplicity threatens an idyllic African American community in the turn-of-the-century South in a dazzling debut inspired by the early life of Zora Neale Hurston. Whether she's telling the truth or stretching it, Zora Neale Hurston is a riveting storyteller. Her latest creation is a shape-shifting gator man who lurks in the marshes, waiting to steal human souls. But when boastful Sonny Wrapped loses a wrestling match with an elusive alligator named Ghost — and a man is found murdered by the railroad tracks soon after — young Zora's tales of a mythical evil creature take on an ominous and far more complicated complexion, jeopardizing the peace and security of an entire town and forcing three children to come to terms with the dual-edged power of pretending. Zora's best friend, Carrie, narrates this coming-of-age story set in the Eden-like town of Eatonville, Florida, where justice isn't merely an exercise in retribution, but a testimony to the power of community, love, and pride. A fictionalization of the early years of a literary giant, this astonishing novel is the first project ever to be endorsed by the Zora Neale Hurston Trust that was not authored by Hurston herself.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 4-7 A spirit of gentleness pervades this story, along with an air of mystery and natural magic. The novel is set in Eatonville, FL, and imagines Zora Neale Hurston's life from about fourth to sixth grade. The narrator, Carrie Brown, is probably based on the Carrie Roberts in Hurston's

autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942). Other major players such as Zora's family, Joe Clarke, and the kindly white man who bestowed Zora with the nickname Sniglets, are also drawn from *Dust Tracks*, and the history of Eatonville. With its combination of adventure, history, and introspection, *Zora and Me* will work best in classrooms—perhaps where an enticing read-aloud is needed but the audience is somewhat captive—*for the times when the narrator sounds more like an adult than an 11-year-old, commenting about how "stories guard the pictures of the selves," memory can be one-sided, and "good things alone don't make up a person who's real."* The authors have taken great care with historical accuracy, and the book is endorsed by the Zora Neale Hurston Trust. Zora's reputation for tall tales and her urge to see the world are directly tied to the real Hurston's natural storytelling ability and desire to travel. A brief biography, time line, and annotated bibliography are included.

Maggie Knapp, Trinity Valley School, Fort Worth, TX

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**\*Starred Review\*** Told in the immediate first-person voice of 10-year-old Carrie, Zora Neale Hurston's best childhood friend, this first novel is both thrilling and heartbreaking. Each chapter is a story that evokes the famous African American writer's early years in turn-of-the-last-century Eatonville, Florida, and the sharp, wry vignettes build to a climax, as Carrie and Zora eavesdrop on adults and discover secrets. Family is front and center, but true to Hurston's work, there is no reverential message: Carrie mourns for her dad, who went to Orlando for work and never came back; Zora's father is home, but he rejects her for being educated and "acting white," unlike her favored sister. Racism is part of the story, with occasional use of the n-word in the colloquial narrative. Like Hurston, who celebrated her rich roots but was also a wanderer at heart, this novel of lies and revelations will reach a wide audience, and some strong readers will want to follow up with Hurston's writings, including *Their Eyes Are Watching God* (1937). The novel's back matter includes a short biography of Hurston, an annotated bibliography of her groundbreaking work, and an endorsement by the Zora Neale Hurston Trust. Grades 5-8. --Hazel Rochman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is delightful. The voice of the narrator will draw the audience into the world of the small, all black, community of Eatonville, Florida and Zora Neale Hurston's friends and family. We get a

glimpse of how Zora's creative imagination keeps everyone trying to figure out if her stories are truth, lies, or just the way she makes sense of the world. We do learn that early on, Zora is confident of her ability to tell stories and entertain others with them. This book was written to be read aloud, in true folklore/tall-tale fashion. It has great instructional possibility. The language is rich, the historical facts are compelling, and the dialogue creates humor and suspense. The female leads are strong, and well developed for the books 180 pages. Zora's curiosity, and imagination are central to the movement of the story. The book also contains a biography of Zora Neale Hurston, and a timeline of her life. The book does have a few sobering moments, as it opens with man being killed by an alligator. Subsequently, we learn that the main characters father left town to find work, and never returned, a traveling man the children meet and befriend is found murdered with his head missing, and then a strange, quiet man who is the subject of Zora's tall-tales dies in his sleep. All of this misfortune concerning the men of Eatonville however, lends itself to many discussion and instruction possibilities, not the least of which is Zora's "coming of age" and learning the truth about life. These truths, include one characters decision to "pass" for white which is the source of both confusion and tragedy. Zora wades through it all within her circle of family, friends and support and does so with audacious determination and curiosity.

There is so much to admire in *Zora and Me* by Bond and Simon. The authors have created a believable and heartfelt story...up to a point. The language, sense of place, and a peek at a fictionalized version of the early days of a formidable writer, and all of this for children is indeed an admirable accomplishment. Writing historical fiction for this age group (10 and up) is challenging but nevertheless, a challenge worth taking up. How does an author tell a rich and compelling story, especially one that addresses issue of race as set in Jim Crow south in an age appropriate manner? The story in *Zora and Me* falls just short of keeping its contract with children as it enters the complex world of racial conflict and issues of identity. The dark subject matter that descends in the last third of the book may be more appropriate for an older, YA reader. Susan Austin, author of *The Bamboo Garden*[...]

This is just and FYI as I didn't read this but I am from Orlando and read some of ZNH'S work in college. So I got this for my son who is in 4th grade. It goes use the N word which caught me off guard. So I just explained that it was appropriate for the setting of the book. He said it was a good book and was interesting.

This story takes place in Eatonville, Florida; the first incorporated all black township in the United States. Zora, one of the main characters, believes that she has seen one of their neighbors as half man half gator, but the other children in town do not believe her. When people in town start to get hurt or killed, she believes it is the gatorman that is responsible. She sets out with her best friends to prove she is right. This is a mystery book loosely based on the life of Zora Neale Hurston. Zora was a young girl with a wild imagination. She grew up to write many stories of African-American folklore. This book was a very interesting read. I couldn't wait to find out how things ended. It is rated for ages 10 and up. I would recommend this book for any age group. There is mystery, murder and intrigue happening. It is told from the first person perspective which helps you to connect with the characters.

I enjoyed reading this book because of the poetic quality that was much like that of Zora. It does not equal the folksy eloquence of "Their Eyes Were Watching God", but a fun read anyway. I recommend the book for upper grade elementary school students but all ages who want something light to read would like the book. Especially if they are a Zora Neale Hurston fan, like me.

Is was a good book to me I say most people should like it to this is just my opeyon

The authors did a great job encompassing the famous writer Zora Neale Hurston's spirit into the story.

Enjoyed the story as well as the notes about Zora Neale Hurston at the end of the book. This is a great choice for our battle of the books competition this year.

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