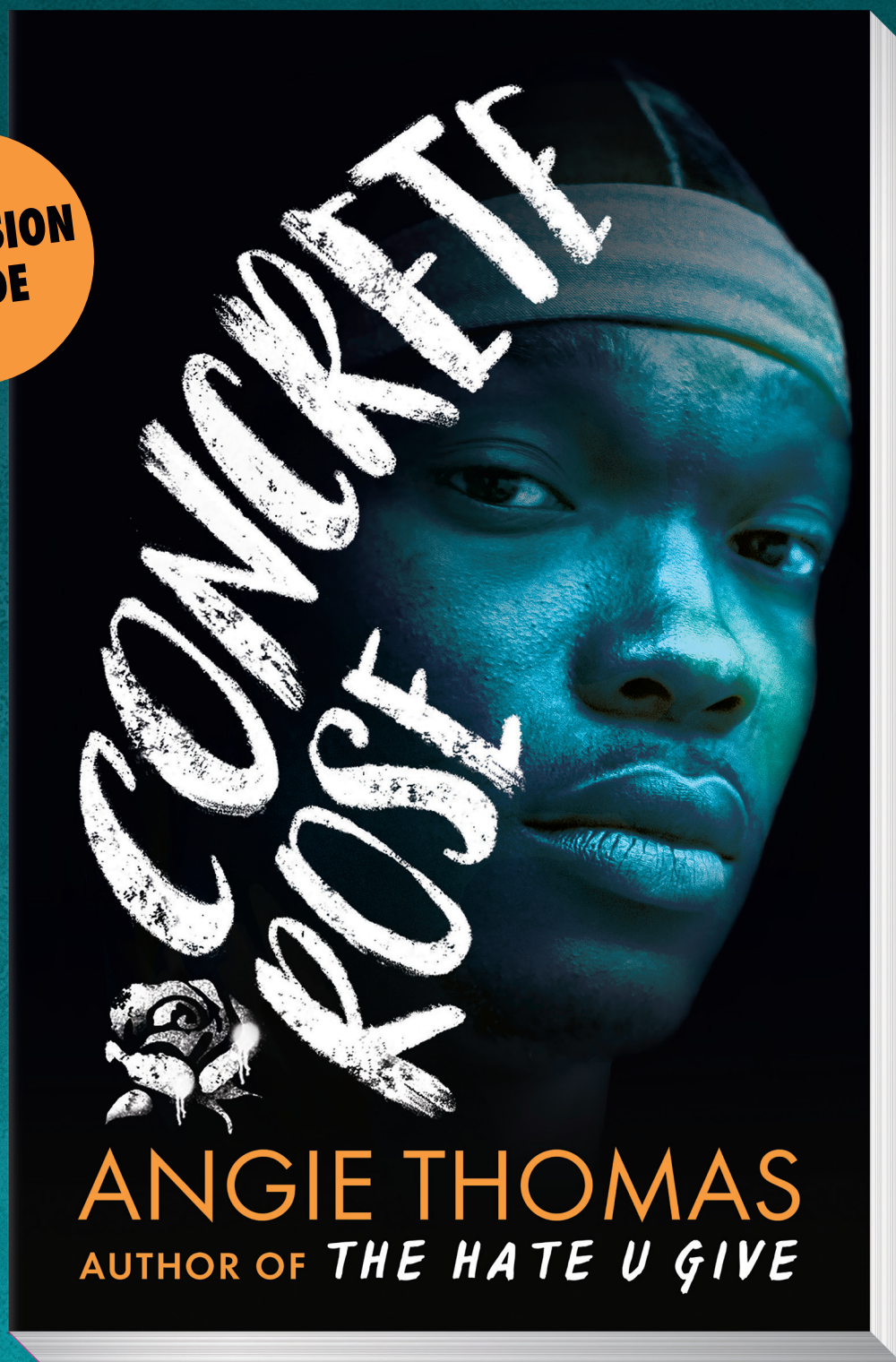


A SEARING EXPLORATION OF BLACK MANHOOD  
SET SEVENTEEN YEARS BEFORE THE EVENTS OF  
**THE HATE U GIVE**

**DISCUSSION  
GUIDE**



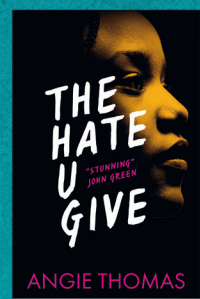
**"THOMAS HAS GIVEN  
A VOICE TO HER GENERATION."  
STYLIST**

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# CONCRETE ROSE ANGIE THOMAS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR WALKER BOOKS

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Maverick Carter is the son of a King Lord, but at seventeen-years-old is he ready to be a father himself? With new responsibilities and loyalties split between family, friends and the drug-dealing gang culture he was born into, Maverick must discover what it is to make choices, and to live by those decisions. This searing exploration of Black manhood and fatherhood, set seventeen years before the events of *The Hate U Give*, brings into sharp relief the realities of Starr's father, and further speaks to the stories of Black youth in modern America, rarely found in literature.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Angie Thomas is the author of the hugely critically acclaimed and bestselling *The Hate U Give*. She was born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi. A former teen rapper, she is the recipient of a Walter Dean Myers Grant, awarded by the We Need Diverse Books campaign.

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This novel is a companion to *The Hate U Give*, and Angie Thomas's third title set within the world of Garden Heights. It is not essential to have read *The Hate U Give*, or *On the Come Up*, but many will have done so. It may be worth considering the level of shared understanding of this world before beginning, or at least contextualising the conversation to ensure all group members appreciate that reference will be made to the other titles. Furthermore, the book may well evoke strong emotions and resonate with the personal experiences of members of the group. Accordingly, steps should be taken to ensure all members feel safe and confident that they can discuss the text and any issues arising from that discussion. Alongside many questions, relevant quotations are provided to support discussion, but group members should be encouraged to find other examples from the text to illustrate their thoughts.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### Getting started

Before considering specific questions, ask the group who has read or seen *The Hate U Give*, and who has read *On the Come Up*. It is important that *Concrete Rose* can be discussed in its own terms, and so a brief discussion on these other titles early on should be aimed at ensuring everyone knows the extent of each other's understanding of the world of the book. It may be worth considering what the group is comfortable with regarding plot details or spoilers relating to books set in a later time.

Begin the discussion of *Concrete Rose* by asking what the group thought of the book. How did it make them feel? Did they enjoy it? What prompted those feelings?

#### 1. Narrative style

Much like Thomas's other novels, *Concrete Rose* is a first person, dialect narrative, in the present tense, yet the events take place over a long period of time. Discuss the way in which the story is told. What is Thomas's aim in writing in this style? What impact does it have on the reader, to hear the story in Maverick's own voice? How significant is it for the novel to be written in a voice that has rarely been given the status of being 'literary'?

#### 2. 'Reality' vs 'fiction'

'It's like Lisa see this version of me that nobody else do.' p.299



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Compare the world seen through Maverick's eyes with the portrayal of real-life neighbourhoods and communities like Garden Heights via the news, or other media or narratives. Discuss which is a truer reflection of those communities, then consider the impact that these different portrayals have on the communities they represent.

### 3. Black manhood

"Son, one of the biggest lies ever told is that Black men don't feel emotions." p.151

"Don't grow up too fast. You'll miss being a kid." p.181

Explore the representation of Black manhood throughout *Concrete Rose*. How does this compare to other representations of Black manhood? Consider the importance of these two quotations, and what they mean for Maverick. How does the pressure of 'being a man' impact his life, the way he is perceived and the decisions he makes?

### 4. Unhappy balance

'Mr. Wyatt know we claim King Lords. It's pretty normal around here, messed up as that is.' p.60

How does Thomas create tension throughout the narrative, reflecting the uneasy balance between the community's tolerance of gang culture and the varying levels of involvement that characters have within that world?

### 5. Consider the rose

"Roses can bloom in the hardest conditions." p.308

"They could easily survive without any help. We want them to thrive." p.96

The novel is divided into three parts: 'Germination', 'Growth', and 'Dormancy'. Discuss the meaning of the analogy of roses throughout the book – what or who does the rose represent? Consider the relationship within the analogy between gardening, parenthood and Maverick's own development. What does the word, 'Dormancy', imply? What does it suggest comes next?

### 6. What is in a name?

"You know what your name mean," he said. "Bet her name don't mean shit."

The significance of names is a recurring theme in Thomas's novels. Why do you think this is? What importance and significance do the characters' names have on the development of the story, or the actions they take? Was King destined to want the 'crown'? Does Maverick's name help him make independent choices? Compare the significance of characters' names in other works of fiction, or using real-life examples or personal experience.

### 7. Loyalty

'The Garden take somebody from everybody, and we still go hard for it. I guess it's 'cause it's all we know.' p.140

'At Friday night football games, it don't matter if you rep gray or green. Only the school colors matter.' p.152

Loyalty is a key theme within Thomas's novel: loyalty to family and friends, gang-affiliation, the neighbourhood, reputation, even schools. Often these loyalties are conflicting, transitory, or hierarchical. Discuss Maverick and the community's various loyalties, and how these influence the narrative. Compare this to other examples, or to personal experience of conflicting loyalties.

### 8. Microcosms and universality

Thomas's novel is explicitly American in its portrayal of Garden Heights, but the book explores far more universal and wide-reaching themes. Compare the experiences of the characters or key moments within the text with examples from the UK, such as teenage pregnancy, community spirit, gang culture, perceptions of young Black men or earning a living. Consider how the setting of the book allows Thomas to explore aspects of the human condition that speak far beyond the limits of Garden Heights.

