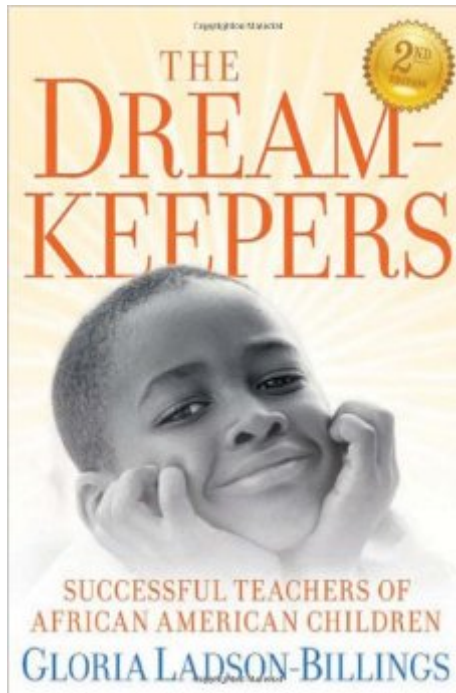


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The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers Of African American Children



Synopsis

In the second edition of her critically acclaimed book *The Dreamkeepers*, Gloria Ladson-Billings revisits the eight teachers who were profiled in the first edition and introduces us to new teachers who are current exemplars of good teaching. She shows that culturally relevant teaching is not a matter of race, gender, or teaching style. What matters most is a teacher's efforts to work with the unique strengths a child brings to the classroom. A brilliant mixture of scholarship and storytelling, *The Dreamkeepers* challenges us to envision intellectually rigorous and culturally relevant classrooms that have the power to improve the lives of not just African American students, but all children. This new edition also includes questions for reflection

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

All too often, African American students are blamed as the ultimate cause of their own academic failure. Proposed reasons can span from ethnic or racial inferiority, to home neglect, to simple lack of motivation, or the notion that some students are just better than others. I refuse to accept that the reasons offered above have everything to do with the disproportionate numbers of students of African heritage who consistently perform below the national averages on standardized tests and measures. I refuse these notions because I look to my brothers and sisters and I see intelligence, I see beauty, and I see wisdom. In *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* by Gloria Ladson-Billings, the author explores the issue of successful teaching of African American students. The text is based upon extensive research of eight excellent teachers of African

American students. Ladson-Billings provides a colorful "snapshot" of each teacher. Through extensive qualitative research, she draws forth the common ideologies subscribed to by these teachers. These ideals are encompassed under the umbrella notion of "Culturally Relevant Teaching." This important piece is thoroughly explored in the text. Helpful comparative tables are interwoven throughout the book, which contrast Culturally Relevant Ideologies with the traditional Assimilationist Methods. This book is a valuable resource to all teachers, and can serve as a helpful model for qualitative researchers. Despite the unnecessary summaries which conclude each chapter, the text is very readable. I was impressed with the sincerity in the author's voice. Ladson-Billings acknowledges her own subjectivity in the Preface.

The author of *Dreamkeepers* makes the argument that African American children can be successful in school if changes are made by the education community. Gloria Ladson-Billings advocates for "culturally relevant teaching" which she believes will allow children to achieve academic success while maintaining a positive African American identity. By examining historical inequalities and the poor state of current education and achievement of African American children, the future may appear bleak or even destined for failure. Ladson-Billings offers examples of teachers, teaching methods, and ideas to keep the dream of education and success alive for African American children today. The focus of the book is the roles teachers have in helping children find success and examples of how teachers of African American children have been successful in this role. The way children should be taught is also discussed because she claims that the way children are taught is often more important than what they are taught. Ladson-Billings believes that these ideas could be used to get teachers, parents, and community members to redesign schools to better meet the needs of African American children, and after considering her reasons and evidence provided I am inclined to agree with these ideas. The study was done in a predominantly low income African American community. To find successful teachers of African American children, Ladson-Billings asked parents and community members and then principals. When she had gathered a list of possible names, she chose only the names that had appeared from both groups. Ladson-Billings notes a distinction between excellent teaching and teachers because she does not want the examples to be dismissed as a cult of personality.

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