

The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man

James Weldon Johnson

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The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man is a novel by James Weldon Johnson, published in 1912. This fictional autobiography, originally issued anonymously in order to suggest authenticity, explores the intricacies of racial identity through the eventful life of its mixed-race (and unnamed) narrator. Born in Georgia, the unnamed narrator, the offspring of a black mother and white father, tells of his coming-of-age at the beginning of the 20th century. Light-skinned enough to pass for white but emotionally tied to his mother's heritage, he ends up a failure in his own eyes after he chooses to follow the easier path while witnessing a white mob set fire to a black man. Learning of his black heritage only by accident, the narrator experiences the first of several identity shifts that will eventually find him opting for membership in white society.



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