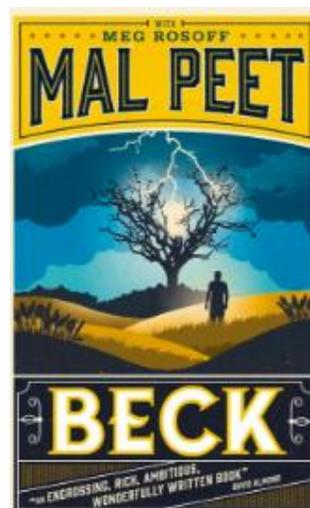


2017 Carnegie Medal shortlist Talking Points

Title: **Beck**

Author: **Mal Peet and Meg Roscoff**

Publisher: **Walker**



TIME AND PLACE

The book is set in a place you probably don't know, and a time you certainly never lived in – how well do you feel these are recreated for a reader today?

Are there details of the way lives at the time are portrayed in the book that you remember helping to make it come to life for you? (There's some of the authors' historical research behind all this, of course.)

The characters have very different dialects or voices – what do we learn about people from the way they speak?

BECK

Despite all the adversity, Beck keeps fighting to survive, keeps escaping each difficult new situation – what drives him to keep going?

Beck is described as having for a long time “misered the cold coins of disappointment close to his heart.” What do you think that means?

What does he learn about himself, over the course of the story, over the course of his travels?

RACE

How does the fact that Beck is mixed-race define the way he is treated by different characters along the way?

What about the other characters? Are there other characters whose experience of the world is at least partly determined by their racial heritage? (Or for that matter, are there any characters whose experience is *not*?)



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This story is set in a post-slavery country; are there still relics of a working society that used to be based on slaves in the way that certain people behave towards one another?

THE BEST AND THE WORST

The book shows us some of the best and worst of human nature; whom do you see at the extremes? Who are the cruellest, the kindest?

Some of the cruelty can make for hard reading, and will shock some readers; how do you think this is handled in the telling of the story? Is it effective? Is it necessary?

Among other things, this is a book about inequality and injustice – is some kind of balanced restored, eventually, some kind of justice done?

LOVE AND HOPE

Despite the dark times Beck goes through, are there also positive, inspiring messages to be learned from his experiences, about kindness, generosity, strength, love, trust?

Things are better for him towards the end of the book – what is it that makes things better?

Who are the characters who embody the more positive side of the book?

Much of the book is about his attempt to find a place for himself in the world – by the end, has he found somewhere?

AND FINALLY...

How do you feel about the ending – a satisfactory resolution?

The book could be described as historical, episodic, picaresque, coming-of-age, misery, drama, romance, etc... How would you characterise it?

The book was begun by one writer and completed by another. Can you tell which bits were written by whom – and actually, does it matter?

AND FINALLY...

Does this Carnegie-shortlisted book deserve to win? Why, or why not?



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