

From #1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author

ANGIE THOMAS



**NIC BLAKE
AND THE
REMARKABLES**

THE MANIFESTOR PROPHECY

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



ABOUT THE BOOK

Nic Blake doesn't want much for her twelfth birthday. To see her favorite author with her best friend, to get an adorable hellhound puppy, and to finally be allowed to learn to use the Gift. Her dad, a powerful Manifestor, worries that Nic will treat the Gift as a convenience to solve her problems. But before Nic can convince him otherwise, some major problems show up. Secrets come to light all at once that throw Nic's entire life into question and very quickly into jeopardy, as Nic and her friends must now race to find a mysterious and powerful weapon to clear her father's name—no small feat given that he appears to be guilty. With Remarkables and Unremarkables alike trying to stop them, there are few the trio can trust besides each other, but with each new twist and turn and terrifying revelation, Nic isn't even sure she can trust herself.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Angie Thomas is the author of the award-winning, #1 *New York Times* bestselling novels *The Hate U Give*, *On the Come Up*, and *Concrete Rose* as well as *Find Your Voice: A Guided Journal for Writing Your Truth*. She is also a coauthor of the bestselling collaborative novels *Blackout* and *Whiteout*. Angie divides her time between her native Jackson, Mississippi and Atlanta, Georgia. You can find her online at www.angiethomas.com.



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A NOTE FROM ANGIE THOMAS

This is the scariest book I've ever written.

No, it's not a horror novel. This novel is scary because it's unlike anything I've published so far: a middle-grade fantasy novel.

Thing is, though, this age category and genre have always held a special place in my heart. I still remember the first time I traveled to Narnia, the first time I met Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which, the first time I rode a broom with the boy with the lightning scar. Fantastical adventures like these made me fall in love with books and gave me a much-needed escape. I could easily ignore the gunshots in my neighborhood if I was immersed in a magical world.

Unfortunately, these magical worlds rarely included people who looked like me. None of them highlighted my culture. It led me to believe that books in general weren't for kids like me. Now as an adult, I strive to make sure no kid ever feels that way. My YA novels have provided mirrors for so many young people, and in reflecting their world, I've expanded the world for countless others. It's a blessing. But I also recognize that there are times when young people need a world to escape into. And who doesn't need an escape these days?

I sure did, which is what led me to write this novel. However, this book is also just as much a response to the injustices of the world as any of my other novels. I specifically remember during the summer of 2020, in the aftermath of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, there were lots of discussions about what the world would look like if there were fewer police and more community resources and social services. What it would mean if Black people were no longer dehumanized. What it would look like if there were no prisons. For so many, these concepts are hard to grasp; it sounds like a fantasy world.

A fantasy world.

That's the world I decided to create in this book: Uhuru, the city of freedom. It's not a utopia. In fact, injustice manages to rear its ugly head even in this world, but my hope is that this story of a young girl who decides to face that injustice head-on inspires young people to do the same. Don't get me wrong, there are spells and curses, folktale characters and prophecies, rougarous and fairies. There may even be a dragon. But like my other novels, this is a story about finding the power within; the power just happens to be magical this time.

I hope you leave Nic Blake's world wanting to make ours resemble it a bit more. And just like Nic, you simply have to realize you already have the magic you need to do it.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. During their homeschool lesson, Nic's dad says "Nothing about Black people started with slavery" [p. 10]. Explain his reasons for saying this in your own words. Why is it important not to limit Black history to the history of slavery?
2. Discuss the different ways that the city of Uhuru represents freedom to the Remarkables. Think about its meaning in Swahili but also how Zoe and Alex describe its lack of anti-Black violence [p. 84, p. 200] and enormity of Gift-related resources. What does it mean for people to be exiled from Uhuru? Are they cut off from freedom or free in a different way? Use the text to support your thinking.
3. What do you think about the Remarkables revering Unremarkable Seers like Harriet Tubman and the old man Toby, while also refusing to even spend time with Unremarkables today?
4. JP says "nobody has to live up to your expectations" [p. 186]. Describe what this means in your own words. How do Alex and Nic each fail to meet each other's expectations? How do the Remarkables fail to meet Nic's expectations?
5. We see many different Remarkables and particularly Manifestors with explanations of their different powers. What do you make of Nic's power—both the way she draws the Gift from others and the new power she wields against Uncle Ty?
6. When Nic pleads with Uncle Ty to let her live, he accuses her of emotionally manipulating him just like Roho. In turn, Nic accuses Ty of being like Roho for attacking a child because he's decided to believe that she is a threat. What do you think of this? How can they both be like Roho? What does Roho represent to each of them and within the larger story?
7. In many ways, this novel is a story about stories, and it turns out to be fortunate that Nic and JP are so committed to their Stevie fandom. Where do Nic and JP use their story knowledge to help them in their quest with Alex for the Msaidizi? Where does the trio break away from what's been written and write the story for themselves instead?
8. When Nic gets the G-pen message from the Apprentice, she decides not to tell and worry her mom. What do you think of her choice? What other secrets are kept throughout the book in order to protect people? Do you think it works? Do characters' keeping secrets and withholding information keep other characters safe in the story? Use the text to support your thinking.
9. What do you think family means to Nic? Who does she feel is her family at the start of the story? At the end? How are Nic's ideas of family similar and different from her brother's? Based on all this, how would you define "family" in this story?
10. Hairy Man Junior talks about using therapy to "break generational traumas" [p. 154]. What does he mean by "generational traumas?" Look up the phrase if you're not familiar with it. What other examples of generational trauma do you see in the story? If there are generational traumas, are there also generational strengths or gifts? Where do you see these in the story?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

THE PEOPLE SURELY COULD

Nic and the Remarkables: The Manifestor Prophecy draws some essential worldbuilding from a well-loved book called *The People Could Fly* by Virginia Hamilton. This book, in turn, is based on a Gullah Geechee tale that tells of a shipful of enslaved Africans who all jump overboard together and take flight into the sky. Have students read *The People Could Fly* as a class or individually. Then in groups, have students draw a map of the picture book's main story elements and their connections to Nic's story and what readers learn about the Remarkables.

ADOPT A HELLHOUND

There's so much to love (and fear) about hellhounds. Have students write an ad for a hellhound that's available for adoption. They should include all the hellhound's wonderful attributes, reasons why someone might want to adopt a hellhound, any special needs for potential owners to keep in mind, and of course a picture. Students can use the descriptions of Cleo and Cocoa and their abilities in the text to help create their ad or imagine a new hellhound all their own.

ONCE UPON A TALE

In the story, readers find out that several figures from Black folktales are actually Remarkables being aided by the Msaidizi. Have students choose one of two options: 1) research a Black folktale not mentioned in the novel (ask your school or public librarian for help if needed) and retell the story with the Msaidizi, or 2) write a story about yourself using the Msaidizi—remember to describe the form it takes and what you need it to help you do.

THE FUTURE IS NOW!

Calling all Visionaries and Prophets! Now is their chance to share your insights into the future. With this story ending on a cliffhanger and so many questions left unanswered, what are students' predictions for the next book? They should think about the Apprentice's message to Nic, about Nic's destiny as the Manowari and Uncle Ty's escape, about Ms. Lena's vision in the final chapter, and more. Students can write their predictions as a prophecy or perhaps as a news report. For those more visually inclined, drawing, painting, or digital artwork are great options to capture their predictions for the next story to come.



This guide was prepared by Anastasia Collins, MA, MLIS, librarian, youth literature scholar, anti-oppression educator. Follow her at @DarkLiterata.

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