



# Sources of Light

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It's 1962, a year after the death of Sam's father--he was a war hero--and Sam and her mother must move, along with their very liberal views, to Jackson, Mississippi, her father's conservative hometown. Needless to say, they don't quite fit in.

People like the McLemores fear that Sam, her mother, and her mother's artist friend, Perry, are in the South to "agitate" and to shake up the dividing lines between black and white and blur it all to grey. As racial injustices ensue--sit-ins and run-ins with secret white supremacists--Sam learns to focus with her camera lens to bring forth the social injustice out of the darkness and into the light.

## Sources of Light Details

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Author : Margaret McMullan

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# From Reader Review Sources of Light for online ebook

## Alexandra Carpenter says

While the writing itself wasn't anything special, I thought it had a really unique storyline for a YA novel. It reminded me of *The Help*, only from a teenage perspective and with photography as the vehicle through which the racist behavior was made public, not writing. The portions of the plot involving Stone seemed really predictable. There was also an overload of clichés in the writing, but still a good story overall.

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## Miriam says

I didn't like this book that much. It seemed as if there wasn't a plot. Also, it took more than half the book to get to the climax. The book was very vague. The author didn't use show don't tell, which made the book very boring, but it also made the book seem very fictional. The main character had many different personalities throughout the book, and the personality changes were very noticeable. It didn't flow and Stone was always changing his mind on integration. Overall, this book should be rewritten, because the story and the ideas are fine, but the way the author conveys it is horrible.

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## Colleen says

This book was so moving. I really have never grasped the nature and influence of the cruelty toward African-Americans. I never really knew that so close to present day, there was still such severe racism. I like how the character of Stone is so, well...broken. He knows what he wants to think, but he also sees the results and is afraid of them. He can see that Sam and her mother's point of view about racism is right. His family is on the other side and he is torn between. I really like how the author tied in the photography aspect. I really respect authors who can understand more to art than just the art of words. Seeing how powerful Sam's pictures ended up being, the close ties between characters, and also the opposite clashing relationships really made this book powerful.

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## Jan says

With exquisite prose the author tells the story of a 14 year old girl's awakening to the hate and prejudice that surround her in Jackson, Mississippi in 1962. It's the beginning of the civil rights movement and Samantha (Sam) observes firsthand the beatings and arrests of black and white students doing peaceful protests as they sit together at lunch counters or attempt to register black citizens to vote. She sees all this through the lens of the camera given to her by her mom's friend and fellow college teacher. He teaches her that pictures tell a story, that "A person can shoot from her head, and she can shoot from her heart. The best pictures are shot from both." Sam starts to document what she sees happening around her when the violence increases as people start standing up, taking a stand, and speaking out for civil rights. Her father who died in Vietnam told her that she should always do the right thing. When she asked him how she's supposed to know what the right thing to do is, he told her, "You'll just know." Sam knows that fighting for the rights of others is doing the right thing. Highly recommended.

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### Emily West says

I read sources of light because it had one of the word it had to have iun the title, which was "light." I picked this book from the others b...moreI read sources of light because it had one of the word it had to have iun the title, which was "light." I picked this book from the others because the description on the back intreged me!

I liked this book because the charector was sort of like me in ways. She loved to hang out with people, and she is very creative. I also liked how the book explained jeliousy, love anf hate.

I recomend this book to any teenager looking for a good novel. i was HOOKED on this book, i finished it in on and a half days. I hope you have elized that this book is a good read and you look into reading it too!

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### Raegan says

I was pleasantly surprised by this book. I loved the idea that a camera was your eye to the world. I also loved to get more knowledge on the racial injustice that took place in the past. I though that this book was well written and well worth the read.

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### Indigo Cat says

What I like about Sam is that she isn't one of those 'perfect' protagonists. All of us have felt peer pressure, to be like the popular kids, and Sam is affected just like any other human being. She finally realizes that it doesn't matter; there are people out there, mostly black, who don't have the same rights as everyone else, have to say "Miss" or "Ms." or "Mr." just because of their skin color. And, she captures the violence and the love between people with her camera. What she can't at the moment comprehend and allow herself to believe, she can perceive later with her photograph. "What the mind rejects as ugly it later perceives as beautiful once the underlying patterns have been recognized." (pg. 212) Sam finds that "pictures are a form of communication." (pg. 223) She fights the hate by capturing it, drawing it with light, and showing it to the world.

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### Amy says

Ugh. I wanted to like this. The tone and voice had an authentic feel and that made me think of "What I Saw and How I Lied," by Blundell, and I was hoping for an engrossing historical fiction to recommend to teens. It was not nearly as good as that though. It has some good moments, but I could not get past how instructional it was. Every time the horrors of the civil rights struggle in the deep south were described, the author had to tell us how and what to think about it. I might go as far to say that I felt like she was disrespecting the reader, especially since this is a YA book. Here's a particularly eye-rolling sentence, "If all those white men were this scared and angry over black people registering to vote, then voting must be a powerful, powerful weapon." Um, didactic much?

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## Aaron says

It's 1962, and Samantha is settling into her new home in Mississippi. She and her mom moved there shortly after the death of her father in heroic action while serving in Vietnam. Their new home was chosen for two reasons. First, it is close to Sam's father's hometown, which will allow them an opportunity to reconnect with family. The other reason is that Sam's mom has taken a position at a local college teaching art history.

Sam quickly finds herself feeling out of place. She does well in school, but she definitely doesn't understand the mindset of the community, which still celebrates the Civil War. Fortunately, she can turn to her mother for support, but she also has a growing bond with the family's African American maid. It is this relationship that starts to open her eyes to the horrible disparity between the races that is evident.

It isn't just the racial divisions that are highlighted in the book, though. Sam's mom is quickly viewed as being an outsider and an agitator. Besides working full time, Sam's mom is less concerned about making sure her hair, clothes and makeup are just right. Instead, she opts for an easy-to-maintain cropped hairdo, slacks whenever possible, and a clear avoidance of gloves unless they are needed to keep warm. To make matters even worse, she goes out of her way to give talks about art at the nearby African American school.

Their relationship hits a minor bump in the road as Sam's mom starts to see a Perry Walker, who has come to town because of his career as a photojournalist and teacher at the same college as Sam's mother. He and Sam quickly build a connections around his camera as he teaches her how to make use of it. It is through the lens of the camera he gives her, that she gets to see the differences between the black and white residents of her new community.

Perry isn't the only new man in Sam's life, though. She starts building a relationship with Stone, the older brother of one of her classmates. Stone's family is the richest in the town, and they have about everything. Of course, this causes them to look down on Sam and her mom because they are different, but also on the African Americans in the community for simply being lesser beings.

McMullan has done an incredible job of capturing a sense of the time. Readers are drawn into Sam's world. While this results in some shocking moments as people such as Sam's teacher, Mrs. Jenkins, make statements that are horribly bigoted, but they are definitely representative of the time and the place in which the book is set.

The author concludes the book with an interesting Author's Note that highlights that the book really constructs much of the content from real events that either she or those she knows experienced during the town. This only makes some of the horrifying events in the book more real for the reader. This is crucial as today's kids are looking at this time period as being that of their grandparent's youth.

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## Tara Chevreton says

This has been a great read and I highly recommend it for young adults everywhere. It's a story about Mississippi in the 1960s and the fight for segregation and how hate and racism affects all relationships, working, family, friendships, and community.

Samantha is 14 going on 15 and her after her dad dies in Vietnam, her mother accepts a teaching position in Mississippi. Samantha and her mom have different ideas about race, class, and segregation than the rest of Mississippi in 1962 tho and Samantha is about to find that out the hard way. After her mom goes to an African American college and gives a lecture, people begin attacking her mom in the papers, throwing stuff in their windows, and applying hateful graffiti to their front door. Samantha even witnesses the depths of southern hate right there in her local drug store while angry white men pour ketchup and drinks over the head of a young African American woman sitting at a counter. Samantha's school assignment is to do a report on the state of Mississippi and as she attempts to capture the state from behind a hand me down camera, racism and hate is all she sees.

On top of the race riots that seem to be going on right in her backyard, Samantha is also dealing with her first crush.. to a boy that may possibly be one of those angry white men. Will her personal beliefs take precedence over young love? She must also deal with a budding relationship between her mother and a young photographer.

Great novel. I only grew bored during one part. When Samantha visits her grandparents for Christmas... it really doesn't have much bearing on the rest of the tale... felt out of place. Otherwise, good tale and should be placed on children's summer reading lists this year.

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### **Lauren Elise says**

Around three years ago I pulled this off the library shelf expecting some sort of bad, sloppy, contemporary novel (keep in mind I had not done any research on this book previously), and was pleasantly surprised with what was really in the book- Conservative South, 1960s. People whom are human rights activists & feminists alike will absolutely fall in love with our protagonist, 14 year Sam Thompson, a liberal raised girl who's lost her father, and soon, finds comfort in photography, which is encouraged by her mother's new found friend, Perry. Through photography, Sam learns ironically enough that the world does see the world in shades of grey, but in black and white. If you liked *The Help*, you will fall in love with this. 5 stars

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### **Mrs. Cubby Culbertson says**

Almost abandoned this one. But when it gripped, it gripped! So many informational books to tie into! I think I see a book display in our future to promote the book as a SCJBA & to promote this time in our history.

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### **Diane Eskridge says**

Superbly written. Wonderful perspective. Greatly developed characters. This is a moving story, a mix of fiction and non-fiction, which incorporates photography into the story of love, hate, and the brutal history of racism in Mississippi. I really, really enjoyed this book.

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## Star says

Sam is a good kid and when she and her mom move to Jackson - close to where her dad grew up - she tries hard to fit in with the "popular crowd". However, she soon realizes something is way more important. She lives in the time of the civil rights movement and its resistance, especially in the deep South. Sam uses the camera her mother's friend gives to her to capture the heart of Jackson - unvarnished and raw - showing the light and darkness within.

This book was heartbreakingly beautiful and a snapshot of 1962 which was eerily accurate. It was so hard to read this at times, just the descriptions of the anger and hatred toward blacks and the ferocity of the Klan and just the "common" white person's ignorance. It upsets me that in this day and age, where we have a president of 'color' in office (regardless of your feelings about his politics), that people are still persecuted, assaulted, shamed, and intimidated for just being different. We should be proud of our differences, because without them, we wouldn't have the beauty we do in this world.

We are all people, regardless of race, creed, nationality, religion, gender expression, or sexual orientation. We can't let fear and hate drive us - you can't believe everything you think. People aren't born hating others...they're taught to hate. Martin Luther King, Jr. said it best with his epic speech, "I have a dream..." This is a poignant and gripping novel of that dream.

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## Rosa says

As seems to be the case with many of my book reviews, Goodreads recommended *Sources of Light* to me. Due to the subject of the book I assumed it would be thicker and have smaller words. When I went to pick up the book from the library, I have to admit I was a bit disappointed. My immediate thoughts were along the lines of "how can a book tackle an issue like social injustice in 240 pages?" Well, I learnt that a book doesn't have to have millions of eloquent words to have a potent, long-lasting effect or to possess an inspiring message, because even in a few short sentences this book seemed to convey meaning. I read this book because it is about the subject social injustice, and also because it is told from a teenage girl's point of view. Although the ideas were not spelled out using masses of words, each line seemed to carry significance. The text was economical yet it seemed as if every word was chosen for a reason, and the main character's innocence was refreshing.

The category this book completes is "a book about the subject we have studied in the first half of the year" - in this case social inequality. *Sources of Light* is set in the 1960s in the then racist province of Mississippi. It is a time of great inequality between black and white people - either there is anger and abuse, or white people pretend the black people do not exist. This is a revealing story of a girl who uses her camera to show the truth about racism and it is a powerful comment on the way people can act during a time of such high racial tension. Sam's photos of riots and protests reveal how ordinary people who would usually act in an ordinary way are thrown into frenzy during rioting about racial discrimination. Shocking secrets about families are exposed - for example, (view spoiler) The book highlights the warped sense of righteousness held by many in a time of racial tension and also exposed some shameful things that can happen. It was shocking but captivating, and also a caution never to let this occur again. It certainly held some similarities to our film study *The Freedom Writers*.

**"Sit on the truth too long and you mash the life right out of it."**

This was my favourite quote because it really expresses how imperative it is to make yourself heard. If you “sit on the truth for too long” you forget, lose interest and give up. In modern society this is increasingly important because although we like to think we have overcome problems such as racism, we haven’t. It is very easy to distance ourselves from the truth about racism however it is still there. People need to stand up for their beliefs and not let them evaporate into nothing while they wait for a time to do something about it. This quote makes us all consider this.

I didn’t have a favourite character as such within this book, however I thought the character of Willa-Mae was intriguing. Willa-Mae is Sam’s families’ maid however they treat her more like part of the family. She helps Sam’s mother with the housework; she doesn’t do it for her. There is an interesting comparison of Sam’s families’ liberal views compared to that of Stone’s family, where the maids are treated like dirt. The reason this character was so interesting is the way she seemed to have given up. You would think that a person in that situation would be angry, but Willa-Mae seemed to simply accept her situation. It was as if she had succumbed to racism, and this is a powerful message as it shows how it completely disempowers racism is.

I think I learned a lot of things from this book, but especially that making yourself heard about issues like racism doesn’t have to be done in a big or flashy way. All Sam did was take pictures, which was in itself an act of controversy-for example when the policeman asked her to wipe her camera of images of a riot. Sam showed her photos to her class, her friends, to anyone who would listen. Many people wouldn’t listen and no, Sam does not end racism in her community. However, she took a stand and the people she leaves behind at the end of the novel will have learnt something from her legacy.

While some could comment that the end of this book was rather anti-climatic, I would argue the opposite. I found the last few chapters particularly powerful. (view spoiler) This goes to show that people try to distance themselves from the issue at hand and cannot see what is right in front of them. It also shows that some people don’t care, and some will never care. Although the students tried to act as if they didn’t care, it was obvious that Sam had opened their eyes to the racially prejudiced ways. While she didn’t get the A she was hoping for, she left a lasting impression on the students. The fact they were too afraid to admit it made it all the more potent.

Overall this was a book filled with thought and insight. It was a revealingly simple look at social injustice during the 1960s, through the eyes of a teenage girl who wanted to make a difference.

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