

**Directions:**

- You will have two periods to finish this exam (extra time people should plan on having four periods to finish, but need to check in with me about how)
- You may use any handwritten notes (or approved typed notes) you have taken during the reading process.
- You must answer **four** of the five questions. You must answer the first question and then three of the remaining questions.
- You will answer the questions on the computer and will submit the answers to turnitin.com.
- Each question will be worth 25 points for a total of 100 points.
- The grade will count for English class only.
- You should use at least one quoted, cited example in each answer.
- You may use examples from your history packet as long as these examples are not the only examples in any specific answer – in other words, you need one example in each answer from the book (and the inclusion of history packet examples is optional but can only work if you have already used a book example).
- When answering one question, **you must do your best at not overlapping the answer from another question.** A little overlap (the mentioning of a character or a setting in more than one answer) is fine, but the purposes of this exercise – to prove that you read and understand the entire book and to start working toward some of the main ideas you will research - are frustrated if there is too much overlap. Thus, your grade would be lowered accordingly.

1. Describe Ta-Nehisi Coates' feelings near the end of the book, especially his feelings about blacks and whites, suburbs and cities or history and present times. Why does he choose to end the book this way? What does he want his son to do with this information? Explain.

"There was a moment, a joyous moment, beyond the Dream – a moment imbued by a power more gorgeous than any voting rights bill. This power, this black power, originates in a view of the American galaxy taken from a dark and essential planet. Black power is the dungeon-side view of Monticello – which is to say, the view taken in struggle. And black power births a kind of understanding that illuminates all the galaxies in their truest colors. Even the Dreamers – lost in their great reverie – feel it, for it is Billie they reach for in sadness, and Mobb Deep is what they holler in boldness, and Isley they hum in love, and Dre they yell in revelry, and Aretha is the last sound they hear before dying. We have made something down here. We have taken the one-drop rules of Dreamers and flipped them. They made us into a race. We made ourselves into a people. Here at The Mecca, under pain of selection, we have made a home. As do black people on summer blocks marked with needles, vials and hopscotch squares. As do black people dancing it out at rent parties, as do black people at their family reunions where we are regarded like the survivors of catastrophe. As do black people toasting their cognac and German beers, passing their blunts and debating MCs. As do all of us who have voyaged through death, to life upon these shores.

That was the love power that drew Prince Jones. The power is not divinity but a deep knowledge of how fragile everything – even the Dream, especially the Dream – really is. Sitting in that car I thought of Dr. Jones' predictions of national doom. I had heard such predictions all my life from Malcolm and all his posthumous followers who hollered that the Dreamers must reap what they sow. I saw the same prediction in the words of Marcus Garvey who promised to return in a whirlwind of vengeful ancestors, an army of Middle Passage undead. No. I left The Mecca knowing that this was all too pat, knowing that should the Dreamers reap what they had sown, we would reap it right with them. Plunder has matured into habit and addiction; the people who could author the mechanized death of our ghettos, the mass rape of private prisons, then engineer their own forgetting, must inevitably plunder much more. This is not a belief in prophecy but in the seductiveness of cheap gasoline.

Once, the Dream's parameters were caged by technology and by the limits of horsepower and wind. But the Dreamers have improved themselves, and the damming of seas for voltage, the extraction of coal, the transmuting of oil into food, have enabled an expansion in plunder with no known precedent. And this revolution has freed the Dreamers to plunder not just the bodies of humans but the body of the Earth itself. The Earth is not our creation. It has no respect for us. It has no use for us. And its vengeance is not the fire in the cities but the fire in the sky. Something more fierce than Marcus Garvey is riding on the whirlwind. Something more awful than all our African ancestors is rising with the seas. The two phenomena are known to each other. It was the cotton that passed through our chained hands that inaugurated this age. It is the flight from us that sent them sprawling into the subdivided woods. And the methods of transport through these new subdivisions, across the sprawl, is the automobile, the noose around the neck of the earth, and ultimately, the Dreamers themselves.

I drove away from the house of Mable Jones thinking of all of this. I drove away, as always, thinking of you. I do not believe that we can stop them, Samori, because they must ultimately stop themselves. And still I urge you to struggle. Struggle for the memory of your ancestors. Struggle for wisdom. Struggle for the warmth of The Mecca. Struggle for your grandmother and grandfather, for your name. But do not struggle for The Dreamers. Hope for them. Pray for them, if you are so moved. But do not pin your struggle on their conversion. The Dreamers will have to learn to struggle themselves, to understand that the field for their Dream, the stage where they have painted themselves white is the deathbed of us all. The Dream is the same habit that sees our bodies stowed away in prisons and ghettos. I saw these ghettos driving back from Dr. Jones' home. They were the same ghettos I had seen in Chicago all those years ago, the same ghettos where my mother was raised, where my father was raised. Through the windshield I saw the mark of these ghettos – the abundance of beauty shops, churches, liquor stores, and crumbling housing – and I felt the old fear. Through the windshield I saw the rain coming down in sheets" (Coates 149-152).

2. Choose **two** of the following minor characters. Explain the importance of each character to the main arguments that Ta-Nehisi Coates is making in his book.
  - A) Prince Jones
  - B) Prince's Mother Dr. Mabel Jones
  - C) Coates' parents
  - D) Coates' wife

E) Treyvon Martin or Michael Brown

3. Choose **two** of the following settings and describe how each relates to the main arguments that Ta-Nehisi Coates is making in his book:
  - a. Seventh grade French Class
  - b. Paris
  - c. Baltimore
  - d. The Mecca
  - e. Dr. Mable Jones' House in Philadelphia
  - f. The place where Prince Jones was shot
4. Ta-Nehisi Coates writes, "I am sorry that I cannot make it okay. I am sorry that I cannot save you – but not that sorry. Part of me thinks that your very vulnerability brings you closer to the meaning of life, just as for others, the quest to believe oneself white divides them from it" (Coates 107). What does this quote mean? How is it symbolic of the meaning of the whole book? Specifically, how does this quote get at the ideas of fear or feeling powerless because of external forces, and how does this quote nonetheless argue for meaning in the struggle to cope with such experiences?
5. We have read several examples this year of characters who are outsiders and who are trying to succeed in America, such as *Autobiography of Ben Franklin*, *The Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass*; *The Yellow Wallpaper*; and *Passing*. To what extent is *Between the World and Me* related to any one (or more) of these texts? How? Why? To what extent is the history of the United States a history of outsiders?