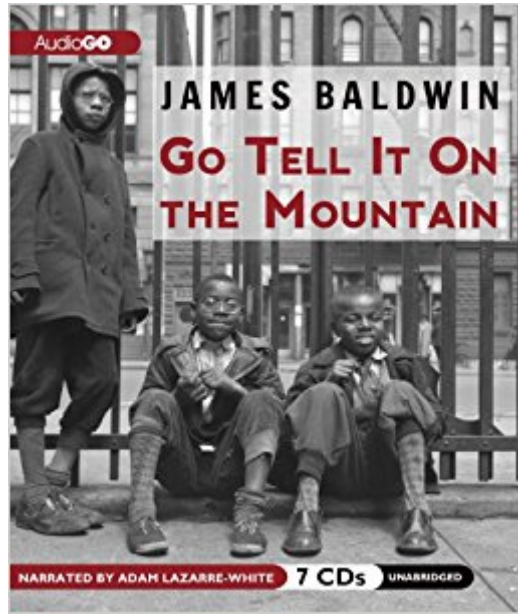




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# Go Tell It On The Mountain



## Synopsis

James Baldwin's stunning first novel is now an American classic. With startling realism that brings Harlem and the black experience vividly to life, this is a work that touches the heart with emotion while it stimulates the mind with its narrative style, symbolism, and excoriating vision of racism in America. Moving through time from the rural South to the northern ghetto, Baldwin chronicles a fourteen-year-old boy's discovery of the terms of his identity as the stepson of the minister of a storefront Pentecostal church in Harlem one Saturday in March of 1935. *Go Tell It on the Mountain* is an unsurpassed portrayal of human beings caught up in a dramatic struggle and of a society confronting inevitable change.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

First published in 1953 when James Baldwin was nearly 30, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* is a young man's novel, as tightly coiled as a new spring, yet tempered by a maturing man's confidence and empathy. It's not a long book, and its action spans but a single day--yet the author packs in enough emotion, detail, and intimate revelation to make his story feel like a mid-20th-century epic. Using as a frame the spiritual and moral awakening of 14-year-old John Grimes during a Saturday night service in a Harlem storefront church, Baldwin lays bare the secrets of a tormented black family during the depression. John's parents, praying beside him, both wrestle with the ghosts of their sinful pasts--Gabriel, a preacher of towering hypocrisy, fathered an illegitimate child during his first marriage down South and refused to recognize his doomed bastard son; Elizabeth fell in love with a charming, free-spirited young man, followed him to New York, became pregnant with his son, and

lost him before she could reveal her condition. Baldwin lays down the terrible symmetries of these two blighted lives as the ironic context for John's dark night of the soul. When day dawns, John believes himself saved, but his creator makes it clear that this salvation arises as much from blindness as revelation: "He was filled with a joy, a joy unspeakable, whose roots, though he would not trace them on this new day of his life, were nourished by the wellspring of a despair not yet discovered." Though it was hailed at publication for its groundbreaking use of black idiom, what is most striking about *Go Tell It on the Mountain* today is its structure and its scope. In peeling back the layers of these damaged lives, Baldwin dramatizes the story of the great black migration from rural South to urban North. "Behind them was the darkness," Baldwin writes of Gabriel and Elizabeth's lost generation, "nothing but the darkness, and all around them destruction, and before them nothing but the fire--a bastard people, far from God, singing and crying in the wilderness!" This is Baldwin's music--a music in which rhapsody is rooted anguish--and there is none finer in American literature. --David Laskin --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

• With vivid imagery, with lavish attention to details, Mr. Baldwin has told his feverish story. •  
• "The New York Times" • Brutal, objective and compassionate. • • "San Francisco Chronicle" • It is written with poetic intensity and great narrative skill. •  
• "Harper's" • Strong and powerful. • • "Commonweal" • A sense of reality and vitality that is truly extraordinary. . . . He knows Harlem, his people, and the language they use. •  
• "Chicago Sun-Times" • This is a distinctive book, both realistic and brutal, but a novel of extraordinary sensitivity and poetry. • • "Chicago Sunday Tribune" --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Chose this book for our book club. We unanimously agreed this work deserves its place amongst the best books written in the 20th century. Poetic and gritty, it is a journey through Baldwin's interpretation of his youth- haunting memories, frenzied worship and unforgettable, sympathetic characters. Highly recommend.

This is a fantastic book, and a wonderful read about both Black life in the early part of the century, as well as being a coming of age tale for the main protagonist, John Grimes, who struggles with his call to spirituality and his realizations that he is homosexual. A look into a very powerful mirror, and to top that the book takes place in a single day of John's life.

It took years for me to finally delve into this most celebrated Baldwin writing but it was worth the delay. His descriptions and imagery are mesmerising and bring the characters to life in ways previously unimaginable. He was indeed a genius, and this is a masterpiece.

I can only recommend that you read it. It is a book for you to discover all on your own, without any hints or indications from anyone else. Immensely powerful, beautifully written, moving, heart-rending...add any superlatives you like. A true classic, i.e. a book which will continue to be read throughout the ages.

Excellent read. Took me awhile to get into - but found that once I was ready, I couldn't put this book down. I picked this up because I wanted to get to know more about who James Baldwin was -- and thought there to be no better place to start than his first book which borrows many experiences from the early years of his life. Look forward to reading more -- and

Why?? Because they're written by either pseudo-erudites whose biggest complaint is that the vocabulary is not challenging enough or a 10th grade student who finds non-linear writing "too confusing". Wow. If that's the major complaint of Baldwin's style, don't even attempt to read Joyce, Faulkner, Hesse, or any other great author for that matter. Stick to Rolling Stone articles and F.Scott Fitzgerald. Regardless, here's my review of Baldwin's classic. Baldwin's prose is truly a gift of American English. The language is very fluid and while it does flashback numerous times, keeping track of the story is not overly difficult. His interpretation of familial conflict merges with racial inequity in a salient and thought provoking manner. The real beauty of Baldwin's work, however, is that the author does not coerce the reader into feeling guilty about the subject matter; rather, he presents the social status quo and challenges the reader to grasp its power. In all, the book sparks conversation about the African-American experience, albeit many of the themes transcend more than just that. Thank for reading. -Akshay B Roy

Enjoyable!

Nothing but the spirit. I enjoyed reading this benevolent of a book by Brotha Baldwin. He truly had a knack of discernment.

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