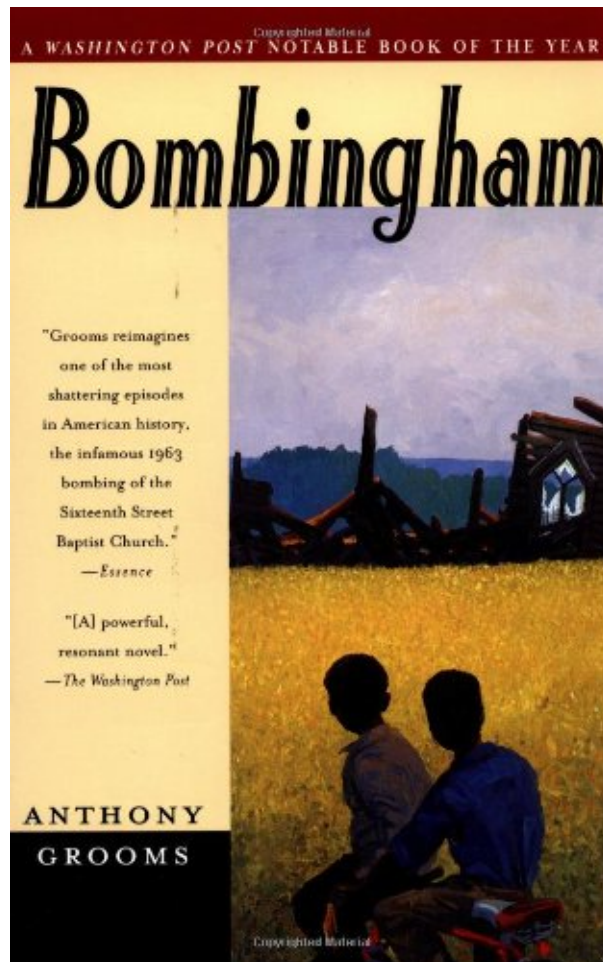


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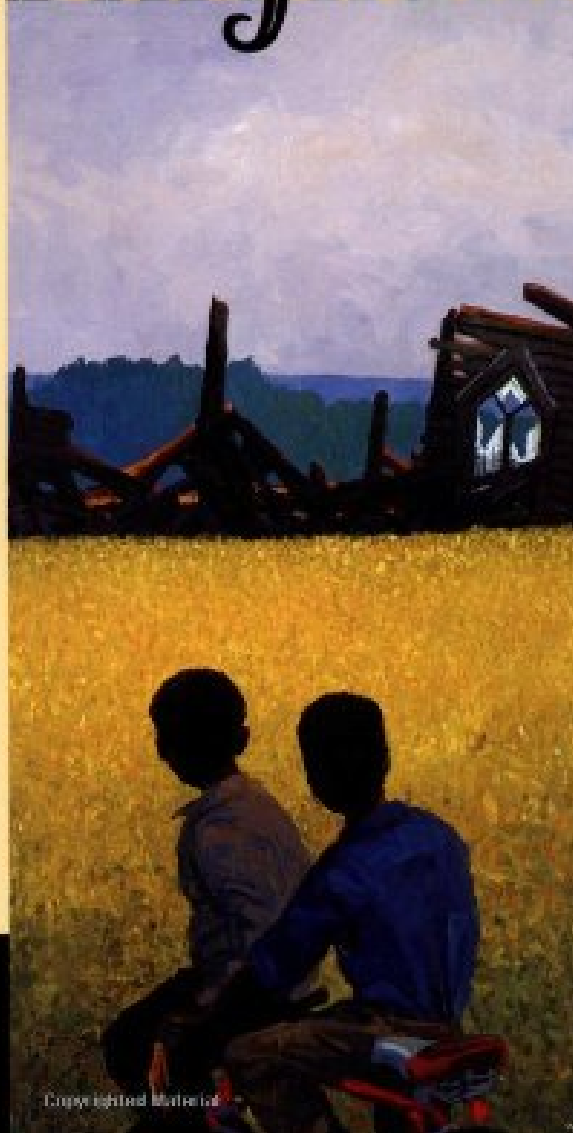
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A WASHINGTON POST NOTABLE BOOK OF THE YEAR

Bombingham

"Grooms reimagines
one of the most
shattering episodes
in American history,
the infamous 1963
bombing of the
Sixteenth Street
Baptist Church."
—*Essence*

"[A] powerful,
resonant novel."
—*The Washington Post*

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From Publishers Weekly

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BOMBINGHAM BY ANTHONY GROOMS PDF

In his barracks, Walter Burke is trying to write a letter to the parents of a fallen soldier, an Alabama man who died in a muddy rice paddy. But all he can think of is his childhood friend Lamar, the friend with whom he first experienced the fury of violence, on the streets of Birmingham, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. The juxtaposition is so powerful—between war-torn Vietnam and terror-filled “Bombingham”—that he is drawn back to the summer that would see his transition from childish wonder at the world to his certain knowledge of his place in it.

Walter and Lamar were always aware of the terms of segregation—the horrendous rules and stifling reality. Their paper route never took them to the white areas of town. But that year, everything exploded. And so did Walter’s family. As the great movement swelled around them, the Burkes faced tremendous obstacles of their own. From a tortured past lingered questions of faith, and a terrible family crisis found its climax as the city did the same. In the streets of Birmingham, ordinary citizens risked their lives to change America. And for Walter, the war was just beginning.

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Pleasantly surprised!

By Bliss

I wasn't quite sure what to expect. Honestly, Bombingham was a book club selection for me, so I had no choice in reading it! Initially I thought I would have a difficult time getting into the Vietnam sub-plot narrated by a male protagonist, but once I got started, I couldn't stop! It offered a viewpoint often overlooked in media; the fact that the same black men who were sent to fight in Vietnam were coming from the ugly heart of Jim Crow, segregation, and an America bent on oppression. How difficult (impossible) it must have been to fight for a country that didn't fight for you...

I loved the depth of the characters, especially the family dynamics. For every action there is a catalyst, and the reader was presented with the opportunity to see the story from all perspectives.

Wonderful book!

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Where Were You When They Bombed the Children?

By Dera R Williams

How many of us remember the burning of homes and black businesses and the bombing of a church where four little girls were sitting in Sunday School? In Anthony Grooms' touching, poignant novel, *Bombingham*, you will travel back in time and be reminded, if you are old enough, and introduced if you were not, to that turbulent time of unrest in U.S. history. *Bombingham* became synonymous for Birmingham, Alabama because of the bombings of Negro homes and businesses was such common occurrences.

Fast forward to the Viet Nam War where Walter Burke finds himself with the dreaded task of writing to the parents of one of his fallen war comrades. How do you write a letter to the parents of a dead soldier? Haywood was a country boy from rural Alabama and was in awe of the fact that Walter was from Birmingham, the big city, where the civil rights struggle was prominent. Walter attempts to write this letter to make Haywood's parents understand why he was unable to discuss that dark, ominous period over several months that changed his life forever.

The story is told in first person from Walter as an eleven year-old boy from a solid middle class family in Birmingham. His father is a high school science teacher and mother a secretary for a wealthy black businessman. They were the kind of family we see on a funeral home fan; handsome father, pretty mother, young well-groomed boy and little sister with perfectly braided hair. They don't raise their voices, are nice people and a credit to the Negro race. But the pretty picture is shattered within a few months when a series of tragic events occur, events that mark the end of Walter's childhood innocence and existence.

He and his best friend, Lamar, a boy from the projects, are a pair of kids who ride their bicycles and have a paper route. Their dreams are to be astronauts; they cling to this hope though they realize that as Negroes, the chances are near impossible. Nevertheless they pursue their endeavors by collecting and dissecting specimens. Lamar is a daring kid and one day he talks Walter and his sister, Josie into trespassing in the Whites only park where they are caught and severely reprimanded by a White man. Meanwhile the civil rights movement has come to Birmingham full force and the children are pulled into it. Many of the Negro adults are fearful of the movement, some because of the fear of losing their government and teaching positions as well as domestic jobs, and many because they view the civil rights movement as something done by those "troublemakers". Walter's parents fall into both categories as many Negroes do, who feared for their lives standing up for basic human rights. Because many of the parents could not or would not join the marches and sit-ins, the children did so, embracing the charge with enthusiasm and fervor.

When Walter's mother becomes seriously ill, the family falls apart leaving in its wake alcoholism, abuse, and destroyed dreams that continued to haunt him as an adult. The notion that all blacks were for the movement is dispelled as many of them were in a resigned state of hopelessness and belief that it was the Negroes' lot to dare not hope for change. Poignant, compelling, moving, this story is however a testament to those brave souls, including the children, who sacrificed and stepped up to the plate for righteousness only to have their spirits and very lives snuffed out of them. This novel is a must read for those who have an interest in the civil rights movement. Thank you, Mr. Grooms for sharing this heart warming story.

Dera Williams

APOOO BookClub

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

A Child's Perspective

By Michelle A. Jenkins

Walter Burke is a soldier in Vietnam and has just witnessed the death of his buddy Haywood. He's made a promise to Haywood that if he died he would send a letter to his parents explaining the circumstances. In contemplation of the letter Walter recounts his childhood in the sixties. He lived in the hotbed of the civil right movement a neighborhood called Titusville near Birmingham, otherwise known as *Bombingham*.

Walter his family, sister Josie, mother Clara and father Carl are living a nice enough suburban life. His father a teacher and "scientist" his mother a secretary. The family lives as normal a life as one can in this

segregated city and they steer clear of clear of "the agitators" and live their lives, working, going to school and for Walter hanging out with his best friend Lamar. They are soon however pulled in to the movement by an event that changes the family forever. As Walter watches his family break apart at the seams, he, Josie and Lamar, all children are drawn into the movement because they "had to" be a part of it.

In Bombingham, Grooms tells an amazing story of the civil rights movement through the eyes of a child, Walter. Bombingham is a story of loss, of faith and of fear and is gripping all the way through. Though fictional, the child's perspective shines a new light on how the struggle for civil rights affected blacks at the most intimate of levels, in their very homes, in their very families.

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