

ADAPTED FOR YOUNG READERS

I'M STILL [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] HERE [REDACTED]



AUSTIN CHANNING
[REDACTED] BROWN [REDACTED]

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

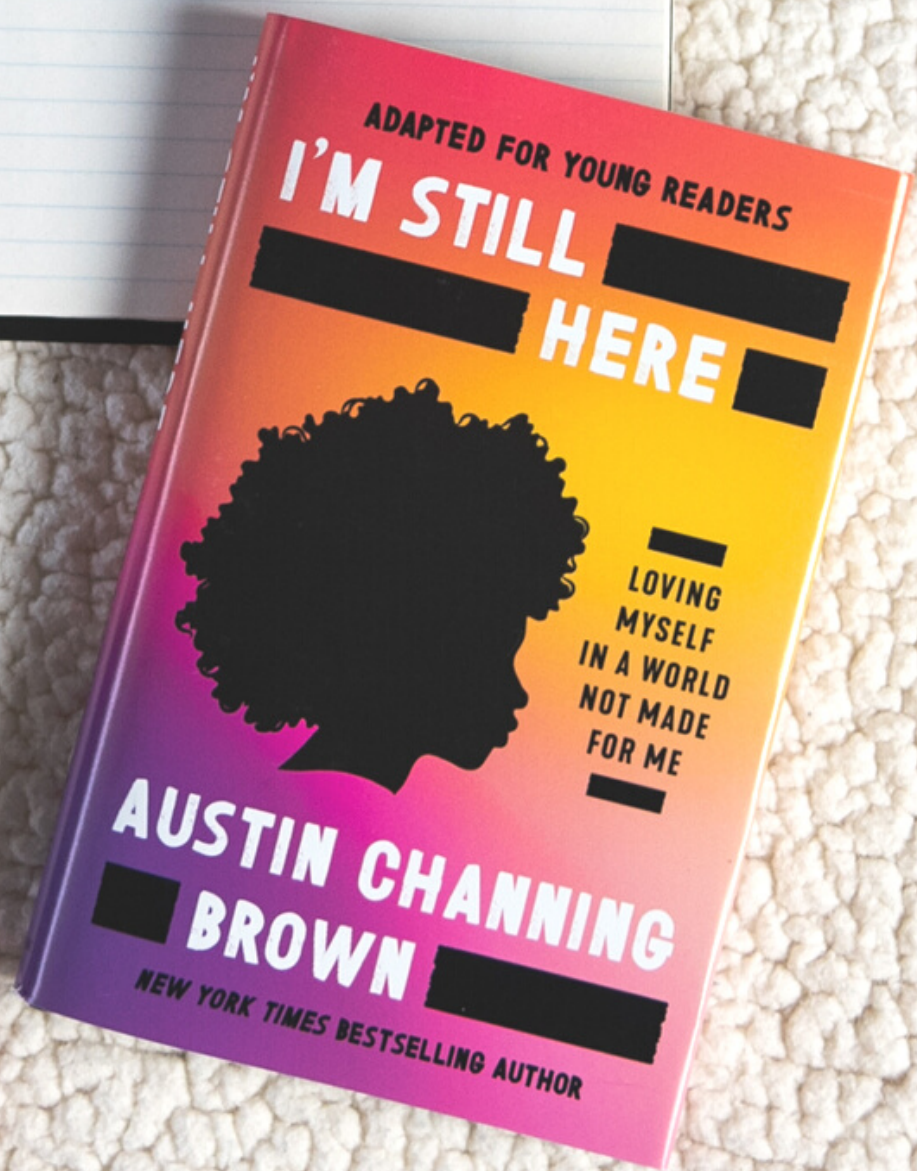
A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

I am so glad you have downloaded this book club kit developed for my young readers edition of *I'm Still Here*.

Reading about race in America is hard. And talking about what we're reading can be tricky at best, scary at worst! But it's important that we practice being brave together.

In this handy school-friendly discussion guide, I offer questions that your class, family, and small group can use to foster conversation, and interpret and share your own stories. I truly hope this is helpful.

—Austin



1. Stories help us make sense of ourselves and our world. This edition of *I'm Still Here*, adapted for Young Readers, features many personal stories from the author. Which story connected with you the most? Why?
2. Austin Channing Brown begins her book with: "I love being a Black girl. And sometimes being a Black girl in America is hard. This whole book can be summed up in those two sentences. Book report done!" How did you feel about this paragraph the first time you read it?
3. "As early as preschool," Austin writes, "I felt different in my school, like I always stood out." Describe your experience in grade school or high school. Have you ever felt different from your classmates? In what way? How do you deal with those feelings?
4. In the book, Austin names some of the teachers who made an impact in her life (like Mr. Slivinski, Mrs. Gilsdorf, Sister Phillips, and Professor Crendalyn McMath). Do you have a teacher (or another adult!) who you particularly admire, or find supportive? Describe them. What makes them special?
5. Austin talks about being on the outskirts of every group when she spent summers in Cleveland visiting her mom, "not really belonging anywhere, but not being pushed away either. Every day required my effort to participate until I could retreat to the ease of the home." Meeting her friend Tiffani changed all that. They were so different. Why do you think their friendship clicked? Have you had similar experiences making friends in a new environment?



6. In the chapter “Pushing Back,” Austin describes a time when she observed her mother’s subtle ways of questioning Black history in America during a family discussion, and it inspired her to “push back” and correct Black narratives in her own way at school. She writes, “When I was supposed to say that Christopher Columbus discovered America, I would write that he ravaged and stole it. When I was supposed to praise Lincoln for the Emancipation Proclamation, I added a line about Frederick Douglass. . . . Anytime I had a reading list, I found the Black authors on it—or I put some Black authors on it.” Would you do the same at school? Why, or why not?

7. In the chapter “The Mask,” Austin references the poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar, titled “We Wear the Mask”:

*Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.*

Reflect on masks, the ones you hide behind and the ones you remove when surrounded by certain people. How do you think these masks affect your sense of who you are?

8. What is the importance of representation, to see yourself and your experience reflected in the stories you read?



9. For Austin, one college professor stands out in particular: Dr. Simms, who taught courses in African American and Mexican American histories, who humanized the people who dared to stand against the white supremacist system. Figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, and Malcom X. Who are other BIPOC individuals who fit into this category of boldness, both historical and current? What were their triumphs, setbacks, and achievements?
10. In the book, Austin writes about Mr. Slivinski, her freshman English teacher who exposed students to an intentionally diverse curriculum and steered race discussions in the classroom through his lessons. Have you had a teacher like Mr. Slivinski? What was your experience like?
11. What did you take away from the chapter that started, “Dear Dalin”? Why do you think Austin included this letter to her cousin in the book?
12. In the chapter “Affirmation,” Austin writes “Black girl affirmation was vital. I didn’t realize I was only beginning to scratch the surface of how important our secret language was. Sometimes being a Black girl is like being in a secret club. In a situation that could have felt isolating, we were bonding. In a situation that could have made us upset, we were trying not to giggle at one another’s expressions. In a situation that could have been hard, we were affirming our own existence.” Do you ever feel like you have a shared “secret language” with others? How does this “secret language” help you bond with your friends and classmates?



A MUSIC PLAYLIST INSPIRED BY THE BOOK

Here is a playlist to complement your reading of *I'm Still Here* (Adapted for Young Readers). What other songs would you add to the list?

I Am Light | India.Arie Simpson

Masterpiece (Mona Lisa) | Jazmine Sullivan

Undefeated | Rayana Jay

I Get Out | Lauryn Hill

Count On Me | CeCe Winans and Whitney Houston

Break You Down | Georgia Anne Muldrow

Put Your Records On | Corinne Bailey Rae



FURTHER READING

YOUNG ADULT

Our Stories, Our Voices edited by Amy Reed

Badass Black Girl by M.J. Fievre

salt. by Nayyirah Waheed

ADULT

The Lightmaker's Manifesto by Karen Walrond

Hood Feminism by Mikki Kendall

Black Joy by Tracey Michael Lewis-Giggetts

ARTICLE

Tressie McMillan Cottom: "Why Black People Are the Most Future People She Knows"

PODCAST

The Hey Girl Podcast

Episode: Fanny Kearse On Telling Our Truth

6

I'M STILL

HERE



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

