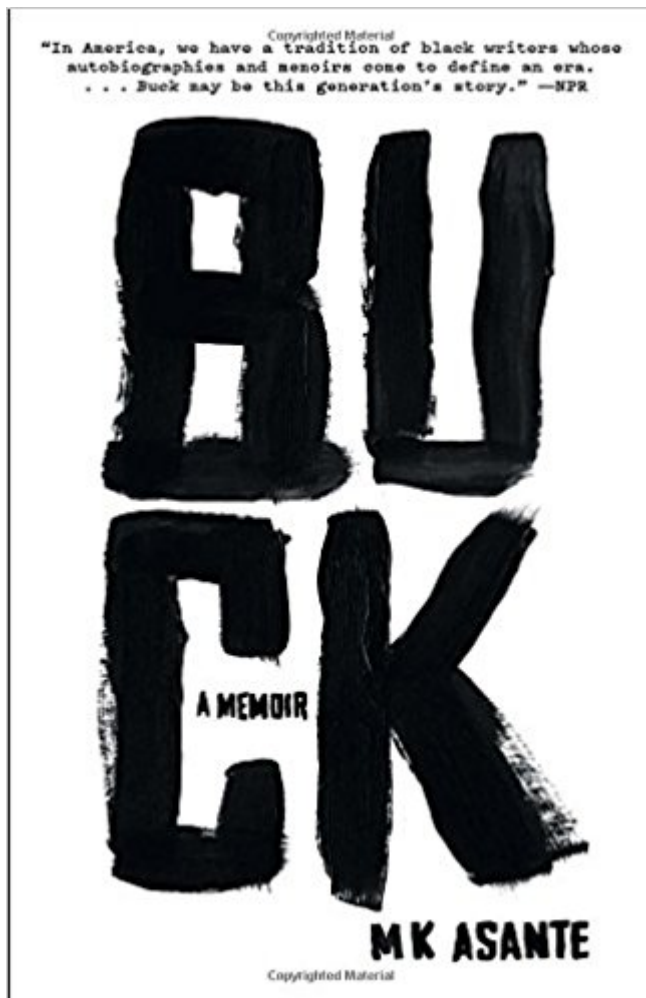


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Buck: A Memoir



Synopsis

A coming-of-age story about navigating the wilds of urban America and the shrapnel of a self-destructing family, Buck shares the story of a generation through one original and riveting voice. MK Asante was born in Zimbabwe to American parents: his mother a dancer, his father a revered professor. But as a teenager, MK was alone on the streets of North Philadelphia, swept up in a world of drugs, sex, and violence. *MK* is an unforgettable tale of how one precocious, confused kid educated himself through gangs, rap, mystic cults, ghetto philosophy, and, eventually, books. It is an inspiring tribute to the power of literature to heal and redeem us. Praise for Buck

“A story of surviving and thriving with passion, compassion, wit, and style.” —Maya Angelou

“In America, we have a tradition of black writers whose autobiographies and memoirs come to define an era. . . . Buck may be this generation’s story.” —NPR

“The voice of a new generation. . . . You will love nearly everything about Buck.” —Essence

“A virtuoso performance . . . [an] extraordinary page-turner of a memoir . . . written in a breathless, driving hip-hop prose style that gives it a tough, contemporary edge.” —The Philadelphia Inquirer

“Frequently brilliant and always engaging . . . It takes great skill to render the wide variety of characters, male and female, young and old, that populate a memoir like Buck. Asante [is] at his best when he sets out into the city of Philadelphia itself. In fact, that city is the true star of this book. Philly’s skateboarders, its street-corner philosophers and its tattoo artists are all brought vividly to life here. . . . Asante’s memoir will find an eager readership, especially among young people searching in books for the kind of understanding and meaning that eludes them in their real-life relationships. . . . A powerful and captivating book.” —Hector Tobar, Los Angeles Times

“Remarkable . . . Asante’s prose is a fluid blend of vernacular swagger and tender poeticism. . . . [He] soaks up James Baldwin, Zora Neale Hurston and Walt Whitman like thirsty ground in a heavy rain. Buck grew from that, and it’s a bumper crop.” —Salon

“Buck is so honest it floats—even while it’s so down-to-earth that the reader feels like an ant peering up from the concrete. It’s a powerful book. . . . Asante is a hip-hop raconteur, a storyteller in the Homeric tradition, an American, a rhymer, a big-thinker singing a song of himself. You’ll want to listen.” —The Buffalo News

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review In this bruising memoir, author, filmmaker, and professor Asante recalls his troubled youth in Philadelphia, or, as he calls it, *“Killadelphia, Pistolvania.”* The story begins with Asante’s older brother, Uzi, being placed under arrest. Asante, nicknamed Malo and all of 12 at the time, looks up to Uzi, even as (especially as) he sees him carted away by the police. Uzi is more than a big brother, he says, *“he’s my idol.”* Malo is on the same path as Uzi. Worse, his father is absent and his mother has health issues. He hates the schools he attends where, invariably, he is told that his personality and attitude are *“unacceptable.”* As a last resort, he enrolls at an alternative school that is *“perched on a hill and looks like a gingerbread house.”* His classmates are misfits and outcasts with purple Mohawks, some wearing trench coats and ponytails, *“looking like Columbine shooters.”* And yet, it is here that he learns how to express himself in writing, and that changes his life. Interspersed with hip-hop lyrics by the likes of Tupac Shakur and Public Enemy, this is an inspiring story about perseverance and finding purpose that is sure to appeal to readers interested in hip-hop, black studies, and American pop culture in general. --June Sawyers
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“A story of surviving and thriving with passion, compassion, wit, and style.” Maya Angelou *“In America, we have a tradition of black writers whose autobiographies and memoirs come to define an era. . . . Buck may be this generation’s story.”* NPR *“The voice of a new generation. . . . You*

will love nearly everything about Buck. *• Essence* – “A virtuoso performance . . . [an] extraordinary page-turner of a memoir . . . written in a breathless, driving hip-hop prose style that gives it a tough, contemporary edge. *• The Philadelphia Inquirer* – “Frequently brilliant and always engaging . . . It takes great skill to render the wide variety of characters, male and female, young and old, that populate a memoir like Buck. Asante [is] at his best when he sets out into the city of Philadelphia itself. In fact, that city is the true star of this book. Philly’s skateboarders, its street-corner philosophers and its tattoo artists are all brought vividly to life here. . . . Asante’s memoir will find an eager readership, especially among young people searching in books for the kind of understanding and meaning that eludes them in their real-life relationships. . . . A powerful and captivating book. *• Hector Tobar, Los Angeles Times* – “Remarkable . . . Asante’s prose is a fluid blend of vernacular swagger and tender poeticism. . . . [He] soaks up James Baldwin, Zora Neale Hurston and Walt Whitman like thirsty ground in a heavy rain. Buck grew from that, and it’s a bumper crop. *• Salon* – “Buck is so honest it floats – even while it’s so down-to-earth that the reader feels like an ant peering up from the concrete. It’s a powerful book. . . . Asante is a hip-hop raconteur, a storyteller in the Homeric tradition, an American, a rhymer, a big-thinker singing a song of himself. You’ll want to listen. *• The Buffalo News* – “The book’s strength lies in Asante’s vibrant, specific observations, and, at times, the percussive prose that captures them. The author’s fluid, filmic images of black urban life feel unique and disturbing. *• Kirkus Reviews* – “Asante’s noir chronicle is imaginative, powerful, and electric, written with passion and conviction. *• Publishers Weekly* (starred review) – “This is an inspiring story about perseverance and finding purpose that is sure to appeal to readers interested in hip-hop, black studies, and American pop culture in general. *• Booklist* (starred review) – “Buck takes the daily words of the American streets and forges something low and lovely. Angry, profane, and beautiful, it honors the best of hip-hop’s literary canon by producing a work worthy of inclusion. *• Ta-Nehisi Coates, author of The Beautiful Struggle* – “Buck sings a song that will force all of America to face what it has become and remember what it could be. *• Eddie Huang, author of Fresh off the Boat*

Buck is a renaissance message. It is a page turner, luring you in, with its tapestry of the revolutionary in the African diaspora movement. This relevant piece of work will both let you know

and remind you that black is not merely a color in your color box, but a hue of a people, who without them no white hue of a people would ever exist. For those of us who are parched to hear the truth, this book urges you to thirst for more and begin to drink the truth. Beautiful work MK.

The depths of this writer's experiences and the heights to which he will someday climb are evident in this memoir! He inspires me to strive harder, and he shows how to pull success from desperation. Although the graphic language was, at first, difficult for me, as a Christian, to navigate, I persevered until I understood that the language was as necessary to his story as was the air we breath for life! It would be impossible to share this story with proper English learned in the domain of white America, and have the same impact from his words! I RECOMMEND THIS FOR ANYONE INTERESTED IN BETTER UNDERSTANDING THE JOURNEY AND PLIGHT OF AFRICAN-AMERICANS!

Buck is the story for the young hip-hop generation. We've been destroyed by gangs, drugs, and sex. I love how blunt Malo was with his words. You would never expect this lifestyle from someone with accolades as his, a tenured professor, award-winning filmmaker, and published author. It will always breath life into me to see young black males turn their lives around from despondent environments.

I read this book after hearing the author speak & read at an education conference. His story and his voice blew me away. Buck is a remarkable story about a remarkable young man who grew up the hard way in Philadelphia. His life is turned around when he lands in the right school in the classroom of the right teacher. This is a story about connection, about raw talent, and about never giving up. It calls into question the relationship between school and education. A must-read for any young person who struggles with "doing school" and for educators.

I went to a conference where M.K. Assante was present to talk about his book and the upcoming movie. He is a brilliant young man who has made a success of his life while recognizing that his ability to put pen to paper is what saved him. He said the miracle in his life was a piece of paper. The book and the author are inspirational.

This book is great at many levels - the story itself is tough, harsh, and then has a great twist to the positive and encouraging. The language is right from the Philly streets, but still totally understandable for me middle aged white guy. The links to sections of rap are perfectly linked to the

story. This is a great biography and a wonderful eye-opening story about city street life. Amazing read.

What a powerful story. I loved hearing his story-the pain, struggle, the "happy ending" and especially loved hearing about his writing process. I think it is important for everyone to have an understanding of life in urban America. Sadly, his story is not an anomaly. But an important one to be told. Thank you MK Asante!

There is so much to love and admire about this book, the story it tells and the lives it helps us to understand. This brother is BECOMING. His writing, refreshingly honest and bold, gritty and poignant and complex yet simple. Such a fine example of the types of stories that need to be told so that youth (and old folks alike) can see themselves in others and know that there is ALWAYS light just up ahead. MK Asante was even generous enough to join our bookclub discussion which added more depth and perspective to the written word. Read it, reflect on it and give it to a young person trying to find their way...

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