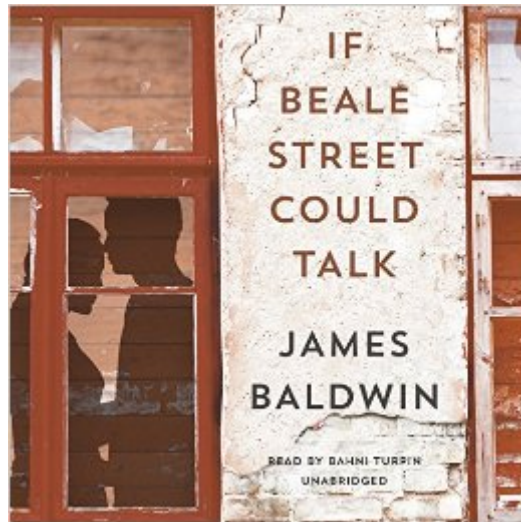


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# If Beale Street Could Talk



## Synopsis

Nineteen-year-old girl Tish and young sculptor Fonny have pledged to get married, but Fonny is falsely accused of a terrible crime and is imprisoned. Their families set out to clear his name, and as they face an uncertain future, the young lovers experience a kaleidoscope of emotions-- affection, despair, and hope. In a love story that evokes the blues, where passion and sadness are inevitably intertwined, Baldwin has created two characters so alive and profoundly realized that they are unforgettably ingrained in the American psyche.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It is always a great disappointment and a tremendous joy to read Baldwin. The author's ability to bring the experiences of African American life and the circumstances under which those lives are lived here in America is a joyful, although difficult, reading experience. The disappointment comes in realizing that although Baldwin's canon of work spanned the late 1960's through 1970's, many of the conditions that he writes about so candidly still exist in 2003. The novel is, at its core, a beautiful love story. Not the kind where man meets woman, they fall in love, marry, have children and move into their lovely suburban home adorned with white picket fence and a two car garage. For that American dream was rarely the experience of many African Americans during the period in which the novel is set. In this depiction of the American dream, Tish and Fonny meet as children, grow up and in love, all the while aspiring to create a life together. Their hopes for the future are destroyed when Fonny is jailed for a rape he did not commit. With classic Baldwin insight, the novel reveals how individual, systematic and internalized racial hatred ruined the lives of two lovers and their

families. From the white cop that set Fonny up, to the court system that held him down (although he had an alibi) to the family that turned their backs on him, all contributed to his destruction. When Baldwin isn't rendering a scathing critique of America's racial injustices, he's rebuking the unquestioning manner that many African American's cling to religion in hopes of obtaining freedom here on earth. Although at times it is difficult to distinguish the characters' voice from the author's, the novel truthfully depicts a fictional account of the realities of America's racism.

I think it sure would help our world if more people would read James Baldwin. He tells stories about parts of life (real life) and places in this world (in our country) that existed a long, long time without a reporter's voice. He wrote this book in the 1970's but it is still pertinent today. His talent is to turn into literature a reality that we might well prefer to hide from. His talent is not to be underestimated. He was a trained preacher and his cadence and language use are beautiful and compelling. There is hard well-honed anger fueling this story -- you can taste it as you read. But it is equally love that spurs Baldwin: the immense and enduring love he sees that holds people together in the corners where he's throwing his light for us to see. And, maybe more important, I contend that it is a bigger love and faith that moves his stories. Ultimately his faith is that in the possibility of our society waking up and responding out of love to the anger/stories/ reality he reports on. Why else would he tell us these stories if he didn't believe we could be moved and change? This book is a marvelous story of young love (Tish & Fonny) and mature love (Tish's parents/family) and distorted love (Fonny's parents) caught in a world that is cruel and arbitrary. It is the story of families holding together and falling apart as they cope and struggle with false accusations that tear their lives apart. It is about ways people: contend with / find resolve in the face of / are crushed by / survive and can be destroyed by / racism --as individuals; as families; as a society.

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