

not necessarily translate into improved outcomes for children and young people. Indeed, findings related to outcomes emphasised that the process of providing care – what managers and staff teams do – determines much of what children and young people achieve as opposed to the number and availability of staff. Accordingly, the research concluded that the effective leadership of children's homes was paramount to positive outcomes.

Finally, the authors consider the implications of the research in terms of the ways in which managers work, the management of staff, the overall process of working for and on behalf of young people, and the implications for training. Perhaps most significant, is the final comment that collaborative cultures where success is a shared concern of all leads to positive outcomes for young people. The challenge for leaders and managers is to achieve such cultures. The fact that the research was carried out in England and Wales does not diminish its relevance for Scotland in any way. This accessible book has much to offer anyone interested in the study or practice of management and leadership in residential child care homes.

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### **Autobiography of my dead brother.**

Walter Dean Myers (author) and Christopher Myers (illustrator).

New York, Harper Collins, 2005. 224 pp,  
ISBN 978 0 06058 291 3  
£11.99.

Autobiography of my dead brother portrays the life of teenage Jesse, living in the ganglands of Harlem, downtown New York. As Jesse matures into another anonymous black teenager, he finds his life divided. Childhood friendships, traditional family values and church on the one hand, clash with the demands of 'being in the 'hood', gang warfare, guns and drugs on the other. Walter Dean Myer's graphic novel highlights the daily realities of being a black teenager in the city, and the fear and danger that have to be overcome to stay alive.

Jesse is the narrator of the story. He comes across as being a 'good' kid, who is growing up and struggling to understand the lure of gangs that his older friend, Rise, seems to be getting tangled up in. The two friends come from honest, traditional families, whose parents fear for them every day as more news breaks of drive-by shootings and teenage boys being killed.

Jesse is a gifted artist. As Rise becomes disillusioned with school and tries to make his mark and find his identity, he 'commissions' Jesse to draw an autobiography of his life. But as Jesse tries to put his closest childhood friend on paper, he finds that in every way Rise has changed so much, that he doesn't recognise what he draws. As Jesse says: 'I've been with him all his life, or at least most of it. The thing is, he's been changing so much, and I'm looking at him and I'm seeing him, but somehow the picture I did of him isn't right...'

Jesse, Rise, C.J. and Calvin, the childhood friends, had taken on the legacy of their fathers' black social club, The Counts. As the boys grow older, Rise is keen to make his mark on the street by calling The Counts a 'gang'. Suddenly, Jesse finds himself implicated in all sorts of trouble, from fire-bombing a local shop, to being questioned with connection to drive-by shootings. Jesse is troubled to learn that Rise is involved in these criminal activities, and worse - that he has taken to dealing drugs. When he realises that his life is in danger, and that keeping a low profile isn't how he wants to live his life, Rise decides it's time to move onto 'greener pastures'.

Jesse realises that only Rise can finish his autobiography; Jesse will not follow him to the greener pastures, and even if he did, he no longer knows the man who was once his closest friend. He does not understand why being a black teenager means ignoring all your parents' warnings and putting your life and

the lives of others on the line every day. Rise pulls up in style to bid farewell to his 'homeys', before 'splitting' to Miami. But fate catches up with him before he can make his escape. 'Yo, Jesse. I'm scared, man! I'm so scared!' Rise's dying words sum up how all the kids have lived their lives - in fear of the fate that awaits so many of them.

The black community console themselves after yet another meaningless death. It is summed up in the words 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away... truly it is a sorrowful thing for us to gather here in yet another going-home ceremony for a young man not yet reached his prime.' Jesse decides that since Rise can't finish his own autobiography, he'll do it for him, and that maybe one day he'll be able to make sense of the meaningless of a life cut short.

I think that Walter Dean Myers picks up on, and portrays accurately, the life of black teenagers in downtown New York. But for teenagers in the UK, especially in Scotland, it's hard to relate to the level of danger the teenagers live with. For us, as young people we ignore our parents' fears for us, but in reality their fears are so much greater than the reality of the danger. Gang culture exists, but with gun laws it's a lot rarer for deaths by shooting. It can maybe be compared to knife crime in this country, but even then the number of deaths is much fewer than in the USA.

I think for teenagers who read this graphic novel, the biggest question we are left with is how to make sense of life. At the end of the day, we can be like Rise, play with fire, and watch what goes around come around to us. We have the choice to make every day of how to live our life.

**Angus Norquay**  
Young person

### **The growth of love.**

Keith White.

Abingdon, Barnabas, 2008. 240pp,  
ISBN 1841014613  
£8.99.

This is a brave book in which Keith White puts the words love and God on the centre stage. The book sets out to connect theology and child development. It also discusses insights from sociology, anthropology, philosophy and travel. Most tellingly, though, White draws on he and his wife's lived experience of running Mill Grove, a residential child care community in London. The book is motivated by 'the desire to understand better the lives, struggles, growth and development of particular children and families' (p.10). This quest is grounded firmly in the day-to-day experience of caring for children. Writing from such an experiential base can appear rather quaint these days and provides a welcome antidote to policy overload and the 'what works' zeitgeist.

White describes five motifs contributing to the growth of love. His chosen motifs are security, boundaries, significance, community and creativity. Different chapters develop these themes from a range of theoretical and experiential perspectives, topped and tailed with a discussion of how Biblical insights might contribute to the theme.

So what is this thing called love of which White speaks? In a move that I am not sure I agree with, he deliberately does not define it, taking the view that we all have our own perspectives. I wonder if C.S. Lewis' schema of love, which only appears in the notes to the final chapter, might have been introduced a bit more prominently. In the absence of a clear exposition of what is meant by love, I suspect that practitioners might persist in their current unease and under-developed conception of the term, either struggling to move beyond romantic connotations or else regarding love as an equation whereby loving relations with children can only exist at the expense of children's love for their parents. While not providing a definition, he nonetheless places a concept of love at the heart of practice, arguing that '(t)he fundamental need, desire, hunger, longing and potential gift of every human being is to love and be loved' (p.45).

God, the other central theme running through the book, conflates with love in the sense of 'God being love'. While White's God is the Christian God, it is not constrained by any particular denomination or established Church. Rather, a broad conception of 'church' identifies it with community; places where groups of people come together in shared activity, mediated by a