



The Undefeated

Books Reviewed:

[The Undefeated](#) [1]

Issue:

[240](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Carey Fluker Hunt](#) [3]

Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

0

‘We may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated.’ Maya Angelou

This deeply affecting picturebook for older readers is a tribute to the many experiences of African Americans, both past and present, and a powerful demand for change and growth.

Kwame Alexander’s lyrical text quotes from the artists, athletes and activists whose naturalistic portraits gaze out at us from almost every page, and the book includes an informative index to help us identify them. But **The Undefeated** is more than simply a roll call of black heroes. As Alexander says in his afterword, much of what he’s talking about in this poem, so much of American history, has been forgotten, left out of the textbooks, and to truly know who we are as a country we have to embrace all of our woes and wonders. So **The Undefeated** doesn’t just celebrate Thelonious Monk and Malcolm X, Serena Williams and Martin Luther King, it commemorates the unknown heroes of the everyday – those who are ‘unspoken but no longer untitled’, who remain undefeated despite the many wrongs inflicted on them. It’s for ‘the ones who survived America by any means necessary’ as well as ‘the ones who didn’t’ - because the unspeakable has happened, and is happening. Just look at the searing eloquence of that blank page; those broken photo frames.

This is not a book to shy away from challenges, and part of its value lies in provoking informed debate, but messages of resilience and hope resound throughout. Our children are looking to the future with energy and optimism, but they still need the passion and resilience of those who went before. They still need ‘the swift, sweet ones who hurdled history and opened a world of possible’.

Kwame Alexander is a best-selling poet, author, playwright, producer and performer who won the **Newbery Medal** for [The Crossover](#) [4] and is currently Innovator-in-Residence at The American School in London. Kadir Nelson is an award winning illustrator who exhibits internationally and was the lead conceptual artist for Oscar-nominated film *Amsted*.

The Undefeated is an uncompromising tour-de-force that deserves a place in every library and classroom, where its ability to speak to the heart will provoke reflection, enable discussion and inspire creative responses as well as further

research.

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Links:

[1] <http://imap.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-undefeated>

[2] <http://imap.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/240>

[3] <http://imap.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/carey-fluker-hunt>

[4] <http://imap.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/215/childrens-books/reviews/the-crossover>