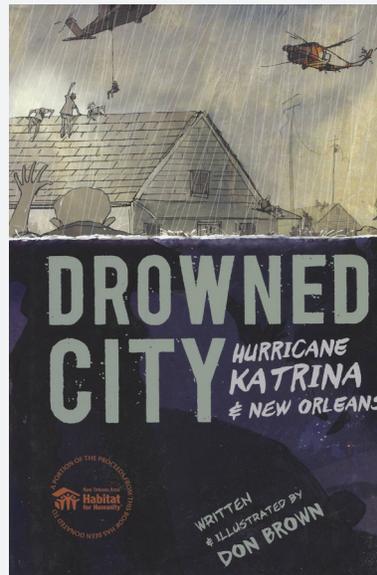


Second Reaction: Sharing Don Brown's *Drowned City* with Young Readers

Brown, Don. *Drowned City: Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans*.
New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015. Print.

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As someone who experienced Hurricane Katrina, reading *Drowned City* by Don Brown made the events described in the book very real. Through the images and the dialogue of the characters, Brown depicts everything I experienced as a result of the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina. Using my firsthand experience allowed me the opportunity to offer insights to the readers I shared the book with by adding additional details that I remembered. The author has written a great story for adolescents that informs them of the struggles the people of New Orleans, Louisiana had to face during Hurricane Katrina. It also informs them of the politics that came into play as a result of this catastrophic event.

Drowned City lends itself to young readers through its dialogue, statistics, and images, which helps to highlight the experiences of the people of New Orleans. Each page offers dramatic images to aide children in visualizing the atmosphere at the time of the storm. Several characters, who reflect their points of the hurricane, are also heard from throughout the book. They may be mayors, presidents, mothers and fathers, and rescue workers who illuminate how they coped with the storm, the destruction, and the fear of those affected. Also, the

characters' dialogue adds to Brown's visual interpretation, expanding his audience's immediate understanding of the events and consequences people faced. The statistics of Hurricane Katrina assist young readers in comprehending the extremity of the storm. Before reading *Drowned City*, some children may be oblivious to the idea of the destructive power of a hurricane; Brown uses statistics to show children how real Hurricane Katrina was to the individuals it impacted. Reading books like this is an efficient way to engage children because it uses realistic images, facts, and dialogue that can educate any reader of the natural disaster that took place. In the book, Brown specifically describes Hurricane Katrina in a way in which children can comprehend.

Children are never too young to learn truth. As adults, we cannot shelter children from the world that surrounds them. The hurricane that devastated the Gulf Coast was a historical moment for New Orleans; one way for young readers to understand this kind of natural disaster is by reading well-conceived presentations that recall the actual losses people faced and the resolutions that were reached. Throughout *Drowned City*, Brown has provided stories that recount the enormity of Hurricane Katrina. He has graphically related how an extreme disaster like Hurricane Katrina can happen and what society can do to help stop its reoccurrence.

I read *Drowned City* by Don Brown to a group of four children with ages ranging from six to ten years old. The book is rather lengthy, so it does take at least two sessions to complete. Each child enjoyed the book for the facts and images it displayed; it was very intriguing to the young listeners. With each page, questions arose, such as, "Why did that happen?" "What are they going to do next?" When sharing books based on real events, one must have background knowledge or personal experience in order to explain the event in depth.

The theme of *Drowned City* becomes clearer toward the end of the book. On the last page, a character states, "We're coming back. This is home. This is life." This last page spoke to the two children I shared this with in a realistic and hopeful way. The young listeners understood that no matter how much devastation had occurred in New Orleans, it was still home to many citizens. The kids related this to their lives by understanding that having a home is a special privilege that should be appreciated. *Drowned City* is a great book for children because it teaches them about natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina, and it shows them how people can protect themselves before, during, and after such disasters.

About the Author

Alexis M. Porter is a first-year student majoring in professional writing at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. Porter was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, but after Hurricane Katrina, her family moved to Lafayette, Indiana. She has always had a passion to write, which she hopes will lead her into an editing career. In high school, she was a columnist for the school's newspaper and an editor for the school's literary magazine. Currently, Porter exercises her talents by writing for Purdue University's Black Cultural Center's newsletter. While at Purdue, Porter hopes to continue writing for the newsletter and to gain a chance to write for *The Exponent*, Purdue's student newspaper.