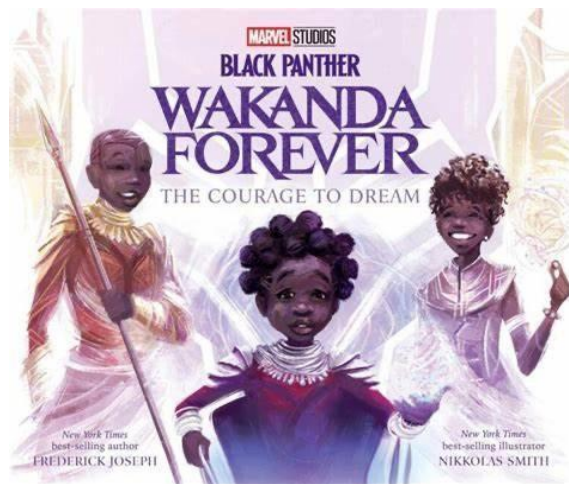


## Second Reaction: Wakanda Forever: The Courage to Dream

Joseph Frederick, and Nikkolas Smith. *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever: The Courage to Dream*. Marvel, 2022.

Teagan Drumm



*Wakanda Forever: The Courage To Dream* written by Frederick Joseph with illustration from Nikkolas Smith tells the story of a young girl Assata who was born with a rare disease that disabled her. Consequently, Assata abandons her dream of joining the Dora Milaje—Wakanda’s elite group of warriors—and embarks on a different journey leveraging her talents in science. She is given the amazing opportunity to attend Wakanda University at the young age of ten years old, where Shuri, the princess of Wakanda, offers Assata to become Shuri’s assistant.

While this was an amazing opportunity, Assata can not help but reflect on her true dream of becoming a warrior. In a moment of reflection by the river, she encounters M'Baku, leader of the Jabari Tribe, who encourages her with a potent perspective: "impossible" merely signifies a need to explore alternative paths. When hearing those words from M'Baku, Assata knew that her dream was possible, that she may need to find another path but nonetheless, Assata's dream is still feasible. She then commences training with Okoye, the leader of the Dora Milaje, learning the crucial lesson that dreams should never be forsaken.

As a future educator, studying both elementary and special education, a book such as this not only affects me but my future students. The character of Assata—a young, disabled African girl—brings attention to essential topics often neglected in classrooms. For my future classroom, I envision a print-rich, loving, open environment; a classroom with diverse books that my students can read, with visuals of impactful leaders throughout the world, and lessons that incorporate diversity and conversation for students to contribute to. Hence, books such as *Wakanda Forever: The Courage To Dream* allows my students to see themselves in ways that they may not have seen before. The goal of diverse literature is to introduce new culture, challenges, and experiences that young children may not encounter in their daily lives. Not only does literature such as this book influence children, but children of marginalized backgrounds get to see themselves in stories told by people who look like them. By promoting diverse representation in children's books, students will be able to strengthen a positive self identity and self esteem as students are able to see themselves in these books. Also, having diverse books will promote empathy and understanding, along with developing a deep conversation for all young students to have.

Furthermore, various lessons can be gleaned and incorporated into the classroom from this inspiring book. For instance, students can reflect on past challenges where they thought their dreams were unreachable, but find a solution so their dreams come true, just like Assata. Hence, students will realize how similar they are to Assata than many may believe. The message of

taking a different path but never giving up on a dream is such a powerful idea. Young children reading this book will discover that no matter who you are, where you come from, or any challenge that you may face, everyone has the ability to succeed.

With this beautifully told story, all educators can have a great impact on their students when reading this book. Students who have disabilities or may not feel represented can see themselves in the book. Furthermore, the message of dreaming big will inspire students to never give up when faced with a challenge. Books like this make me extremely excited to teach the next generation, as students will begin to thrive and see the world at a young age.

### **About The Author**

**Teagan Drumm** is a sophomore at Purdue, originally from Oak Park, IL. She is studying elementary and special education with a concentration in English language learners. Recently, she is an undergraduate research trainee working on the Freedom Schools Project at Purdue.