



Tutored

Allison Whittenberg

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Wendy Anderson and Hakiam Powell are at opposite ends of the spectrum—the social spectrum, the financial spectrum, the opportunity spectrum, you name it. Wendy lives in an all-white suburb of Philadelphia, where she’s always felt like the only chip in the cookie. Her dad, who fought his way out of the ghetto, doesn’t want her mingling with “those people.” In fact, all Wendy’s life, her father has told her how terrible “those people” are. He even objects to Wendy’s plan to attend a historically black college. But Wendy feels that her race is more than just the color of her skin, and she takes a job tutoring at an inner-city community center to get a more diverse perspective on life.

Hakiam has never lived in one place for more than a couple of years. When he aged out of foster care in Ohio, he hopped a bus to Philly to start over, but now he’s broke, stuck taking care of his cousin’s premature baby for no pay, and finding it harder than ever to stay out of trouble. When he meets Wendy at the tutoring center, he thinks she’s an uppity snob—she can’t possibly understand his life. But as he gets to know her better, he sees a softer side. And eventually—much to the chagrin of Wendy’s father and Hakiam’s cousin—they begin a rocky, but ultimately enlightening, romance.

This edgy story about a star-crossed couple features strong African American characters and sparkles with smart, quirky dialogue and fresh observations on social pressures and black-on-black prejudice.

Tutored Details

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From Reader Review Tutored for online ebook

Kyleigh says

I went into Tutored expecting it to be a quick read with a nice short little story. Essentially that's what I got. It is one of the few "real life teen" books I've read in awhile, and I found it kinda nice. It wasn't particularly thought provoking, or unsettling, or at all amazing. Just a nice story with some good life lessons.

I really enjoyed Wendy's POV and found her really relatable. She is literally the nicest and most caring MC I have ever come across. She always puts others before herself and I find her compassion and willingness to do things for others very admirable. I've never really been much for volunteer work, so it's amazing to me that Wendy does so much of it. I would never volunteer to tutor those who are seeking their GED. Heck I wouldn't tutor at all, unless it was for a friend. Wendy genuinely wants to help people, not because she has to, or it's expected of her, but because she wants to. She wants to be a doctor and you can tell that it's not for the paycheck. I have a feeling she would be in Somalia or seeing patients for free. She has that big of a heart. While she is caring, she's not a push over. In the case of Hakiam, she will only provide help if he puts forth his own effort to become successful. She doesn't take any shit from anyone and is one tough cookie herself.

Hakiam has led a troubled life and he's just 17. I can't imagine going through the crap he's gone through in one lifetime, much less my own 17 years. Losing a sibling, being abandoned, tossed from foster home to foster home, and ultimately taking a bus to a new city hundreds of miles away. Desperate times usually call for desperate measures, but Hakiam can't bring himself to steal like he used to. Touched by Wendy's generosity and the fact that she really cares about his situation, he tries to better himself. He's staying at his cousin's apartment and in return he looks after her premature baby girl. While he may not be the brightest bulb, for instance lighting up right next to the baby, he still has a kind heart and truly cares for her.

Hakiam and Wendy couldn't be more different, yet they surprisingly connect with each other. It's hard to describe, but in essence they just "get" one another. There is really nothing more to it than that. Wendy doesn't expect Hakiam to change, and vice versa. They simply accept each other for who they are, and a nice relationship starts to take shape. There are some nice life lessons to be learned as well, but that message is likely to change for different individuals so I won't share. Ultimately Tutored was a quick read that can be enjoyed by a wide audience.

Stephanie says

How would you write Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet today, including cultural characteristics and social complexities? Just to add a little edge try changing the setting to Philadelphia, PA instead of Verona, Italy. Allison Whittenberg wrote a great novel by following these guidelines. Tutored is an edgy story about a star-crossed couple from opposite ends of the spectrum—socially, financially, opportunistically... everything.

Wendy Anderson is a 16 year-old high-school student living in an upscale neighbourhood and dreams of attending medical school at Howard University. When she is not studying, she volunteers at an inner-city community center by tutoring the students at the alternate education school. Her father is very strict and does not want Wendy to associate with people from the ghetto after he fought very hard to get out. He takes an extreme view against "those people" and even prohibits Wendy from applying to historically black colleges. Wendy, however, believes that race is more than just skin colour and demonstrates pride of her culture. She

seeks out ways to help people in need, and always tries to keep an open mind rather than immediately judging people like her father.

Hakiam Powell, however, is a high-school dropout who has been in trouble with the law. After his mother abandoned him, Hakiam lived in foster care. He decided to move from Ohio to Philadelphia for a fresh start, but found the city's brotherly love reputation to be just a myth. Hakiam is forced to take care of his cousin's premature baby for no pay, and finds himself constantly battling his cousin over small things like providing enough food for the household. With no history of legal employment, Hakiam struggles to make ends meet and finds it difficult to stay out of trouble. In an attempt to better his life, he decides to join an alternative high-school diploma program at the local community centre. While registering for classes he runs into a pretentious snob named Wendy...

What will happen when the worlds of these two extremely different teenagers collide?

Tutored features strong, intelligent characters that face real problems in today's society. Both must overcome social pressures and prejudice in order to pursue their dreams. The dialogue is smart and witty while the narrative subtly teaches valuable lessons about strength and tolerance.

Allison Whittenberg is an established young adult author from Philadelphia, PA. Her books all include strong characters who are of a visible minority. Her other books include Sweet Thang, Life is Fine, and Hollywood & Maine. If you like novels by authors like Varian Johnson, William Nicholson and Sharon G. Flake, you will enjoy Allison Whittenberg too!

Laura (booksnob) says

Two African American teens living two totally different lives cross paths in a GED center. Hakiam wants a better life, he is unemployed, uneducated and down on his luck, living a day to day existence with the help of his cousin Leesa, who has a newborn baby. Hakiam is two steps away from being homeless because Leesa is erratic. Wendy is a star student living in an almost all white suburb and is tutoring teens in the "bad" part of town, much to her father's chagrin. She wants to attend a traditional all black college but her father is against it. Wendy only has one friend at school and feels separated from her true identity.

When Hakiam and Wendy meet, their distaste for each other is evident. They constantly annoy each and yet an invisible force draws them together. Opposites attract and eventually an awkward romance develops between them.

Wendy and Hakiam are fairly stereotypical versions of the African American teen at opposite ends of the social class system. As a teacher in a urban school, I see kids who are versions of Wendy and Hakiam everyday. Some kids struggle more than others regardless of race.

I love the cover art on this book and while the book is called Tutored, there is not much traditional tutoring going on in the book. The tutoring is actually real world advice, like how to get a job and take care of a newborn baby, to how to study and deal with your parents. Tutored has an interesting storyline with characters you care about and want to succeed so they can find their way in the world. I believe most teens would enjoy this book and recognize the value of what we can learn from each other if only we take the time to listen.

Kathleen says

I was looking forward to the romance of two people who hate each other and then start to like each other, and I was disappointed. There really wasn't anything tutoring going on. Hakiam had character development, but he changed too quickly for it to be believable. I liked his cousin's character. It felt realistic and I felt sorry for her baby.

Wendy was annoying. She read like a textbook and all of her dialogue was emotionless. She thought she was better than everyone else.

And her dad! He wasn't racist, so much as class prejudiced. But the things he said about low wage African Americans! I wanted to slap him. He acted too crazy to be believable. And he seemed only prejudiced against poor African Americans. What about other races that have high rates of urban poverty?

According to Kaiser, with percentages from 2011, 13% of whites live in poverty, 35% of African Americans, 33% of Hispanics, and 23% of other races. But this book took place in Philadelphia (which I have visited briefly) so here are the rates on poverty by ethnicity in Pennsylvania:

13% of whites, 35% of African Americans, 35% of Hispanics, and 35% of other races. So why does Wendy's dad hate just impoverished African Americans? Well, probably because he is crazy and not a realistic character. No wonder Wendy turned out weird.

But the book did an interesting job of examining how poor people are perceived in an urban society.

Also, Wendy wanted to go to a historically African American college. I'm fine with getting in touch with your roots, but she seemed to want to go in part to spite her father, which is the completely wrong motivation.

It was a quick read, but the romance promised never happened and the social critique felt off.

Lindsay says

Tutored was an arc I received and was a very cute short read about some very realistic racial issues that people deal with constantly in reality. What I would have loved to have seen more of in this book that would have given it 4 or 5 stars is substance and life. My advice for this author is tell more about these characters, flesh them out, let them speak and live. And more importantly, give Hakiam and Wendy more of a connection and some actual chemistry.

This book had a lot of potential and despite certain scenes, I found myself very interested in the character's lives. Each emotion that the characters felt were completely relatable but I would have loved to see more. I wanted to see those girls that Wendy hated show why they were so evil in person, show why Hakiam's cousin was so neglectful of her child, show Wendy's father at his worst and why he can't stand his own race. There was so much to be revealed that was hidden from the reader that I would have loved to see more of. Because readers like me love the mysteries to be solved.

So in reality, this wasn't the greatest book of all time but it certainly wasn't the worst. Allison Whittenberg is a good writer that has a lot of potential yet to be discovered. With more time and practice, I believe her writing will improve and until then, I would love to continue to read her books. The book itself is a very cute love story that I feel younger audiences will enjoy to read more than others.

Rating: 2.5 out of 5 Stars

Ms. Yingling says

Wendy's father is a well-to-do, educated black man who is vehemently opposed to black people who have not made something of themselves, so he is not happy that Wendy is volunteering with a tutoring center in an economically disadvantaged part of town. While there, she meets Hakiam, whose mother got tired of raising him and put him into foster care. Having had enough of that, he moves from Cincinnati to Philadelphia to help his cousin Leesa raise her premature baby, Malikia. He doesn't really have a plan. Wendy does-- it includes going to college at Howard University in order to reconnect with her ethnic heritage, a plan that her father does not embrace. Wendy and Hakiam are strangely drawn to each other, and start to date. Wendy helps Hakiam take care of little Malikia, and tries to get him to secure a job and continue his education, but when things go wrong with the baby, he's not sure if he can hang on.

Strengths: I don't know that I have read anything that covers black-on-black prejudice, so this was interesting.

Weaknesses: The pictures of Wendy and Hakiam appear only on the back cover! There are a few instances where this verges into more high school territory-- Hakiam smokes marijuana, and there is a party or two-- but these events are not glamorized. I think this would be a good addition to my library.

Shannon says

I enjoyed this book quite a bit. I think it highlights the disparity between all human beings even when those beings are of the same race. A perfect example is the class system that existed amongst whites on the Titanic. It didn't matter that you were white it mattered what social standing you had in society and Tutored showed that the same social classing that existed in 1912 is still alive and well in today's world.

I've seen quite a few poor reviews for this book and I can honestly say that I am glad I was able to "get" what the underlying story was...it wasn't a love story like so many have indicated. It's a story of how two people from different worlds help each other to understand the others world of which they know nothing about. Wendy's character is showing Hakiam that he does have choices and that he can make his life better.

Wendy's father does come off a little brutal but the story gives his background thus showing why he is the way he is...I liked that he was intolerant of the "poor me" attitude. He was there where Hakiam was and made the decision that he wanted more. That's an awesome idea. The fact he passed that idea onto his daughter and she was in turn passing it on to Hakiam was a great part of the story. Little by little you could see Hakiam changing and picking up that attitude.

I think it was a fantastic book and hope that those reading it see it for more than a love story.

Jamie Kline says

Wendy and Hakiam certainly don't hit it off right away - in fact, they seem to annoy each other. They're preconceived notions about the other play a big part in their attitudes. Wendy sees Hakiam as a lazy hoodlum and Hakiam sees Wendy as a stuck up snob. There's no way for Wendy to know that Hakiam has a lot of responsibility; he has to watch his cousin, Leesa's, premature daughter. And Wendy has a father who lived in

the ghetto as a child and has become successful; he doesn't not want to associate, nor does he want her to associate, with anyone of a lower social class. Against all odds the two become friends and learn a lot about each other, which helps them both grow as people.

My opinion: As I first started reading this book, I kept thinking "I just KNOW I'm not going to like it!" But I pushed on and about 2/3 of the way through I really started liking it more and more. I really had a hard time grasping why Wendy agreed to have coffee with him that first time, they hadn't exactly been on good terms up to that point. I guess we can assume that she wanted to see if there was more to Hakiam than his rough exterior. And of course there was. It was really easy to see Hakiam grow through the story; his cousin Leesa was very irresponsible, not interested in her tiny premature baby, or really anything for that matter besides having parties. He was expected to take care of that poor baby most of the time and as Wendy taught him more and more about childcare he really took a renewed interest in the little girl's well being. There were a couple of passages in the book that made me chuckle, which was a good surprise. Not to give too much away, but the ending, I'm sure, will disappoint some people. PLEASE do not let this dissuade you from reading this book; I actually happen to like books that let the reader come to their own conclusions. It's nice to let your imagination fill in the blanks sometimes!

My rating: 3/5 stars

Steph Su says

I like the concept of this "unlikely love conquers all" story, and I especially looked forward to a contemporary YA romance featuring black characters. Unfortunately, TUTORÉD did not make much of an impression on me, due to undeveloped characters and average writing.

Wendy and Hakiam were rather flat characters, neither of whom held my attention and garnered my sympathies. They seemed to each have one main conflict that drove them. For Wendy, it was her father, who is racist against his own race; for Hakiam, it is his cousin, a very irresponsible single mother. These conflicts were carried in the most basic manners, with lots of snappy dialogue, but let's be honest here: how many people are actually defined by one conflict as straightforward (though no less serious, let's clarify that here) as the ones that are presented in this book?

All of the relationships in this book seemed to exist only on a surface level. Wendy and Hakiam may have squeezed in a handful of memorable lines within their constant dialogue, but the majority of the dialogue told me little except that Allison Whittenberg can write dialogue. I felt little chemistry between the two, little development of their interactions. The climax and resolution unfolded in such an unexciting way that I have my doubts as to whether or not it is worth reading less than 200 pages to get to it.

Indeed, the part of TUTORÉD that I liked best was Wendy's relationship with her father. As much as I loathed how judgmental and controlling he was, I could believe that a father like him would exist, one who so completely rejects his own upbringing that he'd speak ill of his own race. I don't have personal experience with black-on-black prejudice, but Wendy's relationship with her father was eye-opening to be sure.

Unfortunately, with shortcomings in character development and pacing, it will be hard to promote TUTORÉD as a good example of POC literature. I appreciate the effort that Allison Whittenberg made, though, to tell the love story of two non-white characters, and hope that others will follow her example in the

future.

Kristina says

Read the full review @ [Frazzled Book Nommer](#).

For a book that's called *Tutored*, not much tutoring was going on at all. That seems just like a random complaint, but for a book that had the word "tutor" in the title, I expect something along the lines of tutoring actually happening and falling in love because of their closeness while tutoring/being tutored.

The romance between Hakiam and Wendy was so flat. To put it simply, I hated it. It starts off good: they hate each other and it seems like romantic relations will start to develop. But it totally skipped the "developed" part. One moment Wendy and Hakiam hated each other, the next, Hakiam shows Wendy his baby cousin and dares kissing her and BAM! They're in love and they don't even question their relationship or anything. They're a solid team. They don't even try to get to know each other well. It felt forced and I didn't enjoy reading it at all.

The only thing I saw develop in this book was Hakiam, and it was refreshing to see him go from being a nothing, a no one, who is about to become homeless to someone who wants to make a change in his life. You could see it his change very gradually – first he starts watching some of Wendy's movies, then he becomes knowledgeable about illnesses prone to pre-mature babies, and it finishes off with him getting a job and trying to get his GED. He went from a thug home-boi to someone who cared about his life. Hakiam was such an amazing character, compared to Wendy, who I hated reading about.

Wendy, to put it simply, is stupid. Sure, she's a self-proclaimed genius and is going places. But she's spiteful. She refuses to go to a "white" college just because her black father was against anything second-rate. If the only reason she wants to apply to a black college is to spite her father, then that is the most un-intelligent thing she could ever do. She never even states why she wants to go to one or ever puts up a valid argument – she can't see exactly what's in front of her because she's a spiteful little girl who thinks she knows it all. I hated listening to her talk and I have to admit I was tempted to skip her passages altogether.

I was really looking forward to a book that had African-American portrayal, but this just fell flat for me. The only real African-American portrayals were extremes – very opposite ends of the spectrum – with the ghetto and with "white-washed" blacks. There was no in between. I expected this book to celebrate its race, but rather, it just came off as scorned – and not just from Wendy's father. I did, however, like how much of our current culture was present in the book. One of Wendy's father's favorite examples of intelligent black men was President Obama and he'd come up in a lot of his arguments against Wendy going to a black school.

Overall, I think this book had a lot more potential than how it was executed. *Tutored* was a quick read, but it didn't hold my attention nor did it lure me into the story. I never felt the connection between Wendy and Hakiam – the romance fell short on so many levels. The only character development occurred with Hakiam, and I still think Wendy needs a lot of growing up to do.

Imani ♥ ? says

I'm in a good mood tonight, so I gave this book ***. In my mind it only honestly deserved 2 1/2, but like I said, I'm in a good mood so I rounded.

This is the mediocre story of Hakiam and Wendy, two African American teens on the opposite ends of the social and financial spectrum. Wendy, is well-off. She lives in an all white neighborhood with her prejudiced father. Her father, who struggled to get out of the ghetto, constantly puts down his own race, while Wendy fiercely supports it. And in turn, they are always arguing. So, Wendy, in an attempt to give back, tutors at a center. And that's where she meets the troubled Hakiam. A drop-out, he moved from Cincinnati after aging out of a foster home and wanting a fresh start in Philly with his mean cousin and baby. He can only stay with her if he takes care of her baby for free. While he's doing that, he works to get his GED but struggles not to turn to a life of crime. After he meets Wendy, he finds that he isn't like how he thought she would be and vice versa. In short, a common, opposites attract thing.

The thing is, though, the characters were flat. Everyone seemed 1-D in a way. Some of the things Wendy and her father argued about seemed very unrealistic. In fact, for the most part, the dialogue, period sounded unrealistic. Even the whole love thing was out of the blue. First, Hakiam and Wendy are "arguing" or whatever. Next thing you know, the two of them are going out for coffee and making out. I don't know, it just didn't feel real. And after finishing the book, I didn't feel like any of the characters had accomplished anything. A lot of strings weren't tied up. It seemed as if the author had to make the story end on a specific page. So it turned out awkward.

I like this author, honestly. But this book, along with Hollywood and Maine, just didn't match up to her other works.

Ari says

This novel reads like a work in progress. I honestly couldn't believe the book ended where it did, I flipped back and forth a few times. The ending isn't suspenseful, it's a solid and cute ending but it seemed so abrupt. The transitions from chapter to chapter were awkward and not a single character is well developed. The story is told in third person but I still expected to learn more about Wendy. Off the top of my head all I can tell you is that she's the only black girl at her school, doesn't really get along with her father, is a tutor and wants to attend a HBCU (I had to go back and look up what HBCU because I couldn't remember if it was Howard or Spelman). Hakiam came a little closer to being two dimensional, but the book ended before he could fully manifest. I wanted to know more about Wendy's likes, Hakiam's likes (we learned a good deal about their dislikes), more details about growing up in Philly, etc. Why did Leesa (Hakiam's cousin) have such an attitude? Why is Wendy's dad so against poor Black people? Furthermore, there is no romantic chemistry. I'm not an expert, but there was absolutely no indication that they would like each other except for the obvious 'opposites attract'. It's only after they've started to hook up that I could sort of understand why they liked each other, but again, I needed MORE.

Mostly I can only commend the author on what she tried to do. Although I loved the scene when Wendy and Hakiam go on their first date and Wendy has an entire conversation with herself. I also enjoyed some of the banter between Wendy and Hakiam. At times it was sharp, both of them being quick on their feet. At other times, it fell flat. I'm glad the author tried to write a YA romance about Black people that wasn't street lit (not knocking street lit but I like having options). I like that the author wrote about Black prejudice towards other Blacks. I like that the author tried to address the positives and the negatives of going to a HBCU.

Tutored has potential. I firmly believe that if it was longer (the ARC is 179 pages) and the romance slowed down, there would be more obvious chemistry between Wendy and Hakiam and the characters would be more fleshed out. It's not just the characters that need fleshing out though, it's also the issues the author tries to address. I appreciate her discussing Black prejudice, use of the 'n' word and HBCUs but she only touches on these for the briefest of moments. There's no gradual change in attitudes, instead it's a rather dramatic shift. I was hoping Wendy and Hakiam would talk more because when they did, they had interesting discussions. Hakiam opened Wendy's eyes to a new world and she did the same for him, they are good for each other but as a reader, the palpable connection just wasn't there. Ultimately I not only WANTED more, I NEEDED more from the book in order for it to be a success

Bless says

It was very good. I wish it would have ended differently. Great job Mrs. Whittenberg! I recommend this book to all older boys and teens who have lost hope.

Carmen Yeung says

This novel consisted of two protagonists and each one of them are introduced in their own perspectives every other chapter. Wendy is a black female that learns a lot from her father, but she never seems to understand life based on her race and thinks that there are more to what she looks like. Wendy then went on to get a job as a tutor and there she meets Hakiam. As tutors, they did not like each other at first, because they were completely different. Since Hakiam was from a foster home and he is living with his cousin to experience life. Hakiam dislikes Wendy for her high status or better home conditions than him. Wendy was absolutely rude to Hakiam as soon as she sees him, she was disrespectful and thinks he is lazy. Wendy and Hakiam's relationship grew as expected, like any other enemies; they always become a loving couple at the end. Hakiam and Wendy not only became a couple, they helped each other understand more about life and more about differences in different statuses. They learned to never underestimate one another and to look at different people as equals.

I enjoy this book, because it was a quick read, but I didn't like how the plots were a bit confusing. The story was moving back and forth from Wendy's perspective and to Hakiam's perspective, this not only confused me; it irritated me a little. Sometimes, I want to finish reading Hakiam or Wendy's thought, but it gets interrupted by the other protagonist; which interrupts the whole scene for me. I did like this story, because it had a really nice ending and the ending was well written. The ending not only allowed me to understand more about the different people's experiences and how they intertwine, they taught me to look at situations with different sides and not only the surface. I might not connect to anyone of the protagonist, but their struggle to stay alive and to live in a busy society portrays life in a busy city. I enjoy this book for the lessons taught to view life from different perspectives and always think outside the box, because life itself contains a lot of problems

Jenna says

I loved the fact that Allison Whittenberg has written a book that features POC (People Of Color) as the main characters. Tutored is a breath of fresh air in a genre where most of the books written and published center

around Caucasian characters. Whittenberg explores how the lives of African-Americans from different classes can be very divergent. I also loved how the author showed that even though Wendy was well off and did not want for most things, this did not necessarily mean that she was happy. Being the only African-American in her suburban neighborhood was difficult for her.

I also liked the contrast of Wendy's father's character with Hakiam. Wendy's father had grown up in a bad neighborhood and had used this as motivation to improve his situation as an adult. While I didn't agree with his attitude regarding other blacks who lived in the same conditions he grew up in, I liked how he used his poor upbringing to inspire himself to do better and be successful in adulthood. In contrast, Hakiam didn't seem to have any motivation to improve his situation. He felt that this was his future and he just needed to accept it. Whittenberg was able to capture the two different ideals that poor African-Americans have today.

However, I did not feel much of a connection with Wendy's character. With Hakiam, readers were able to see his development, especially in terms of his relationship with his niece, Malikia, but I just didn't feel that Wendy developed much as a character from who she was in the beginning of the story.

I loved the concept of this story, but I wish that I could have felt more of a connection with the characters, especially Wendy. I think a little more character development could have gone a long way to making this an excellent example of a great story featuring POC.
