Books

Review: *What's Mine and Yours*

By Naima Coster '15SOA. (Grand Central Publishing)

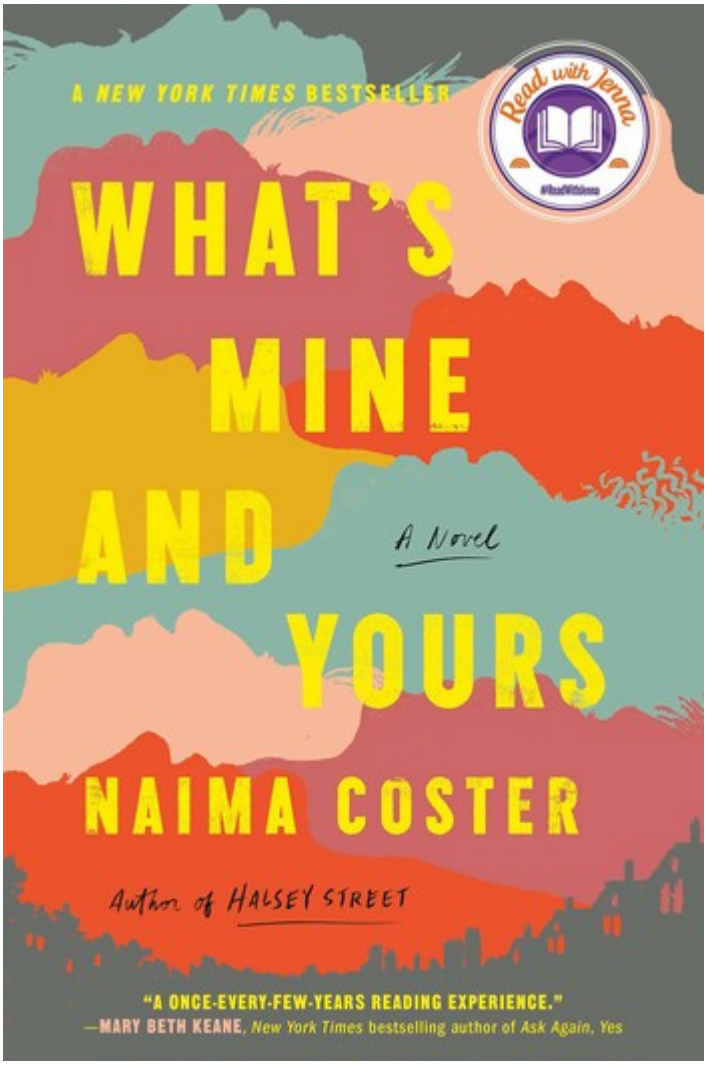
By
Kate Lawler
|
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Naima Coster (Sylvie Rosokoff)

Two strong-willed mothers are on opposite sides of a bitter community battle over integrating a North Carolina high school in this searing novel — the second from Naima Coster '15SOA — about race, privilege, and the messy family relationships that shape our sense of self.

It is 2002, and the county has passed an initiative to bring students from the largely Black east side of town into a school on the largely white west side. Jade lives on the east side and is determined to see her reserved, anxious sixteen-year-old son, Gee, succeed as a transfer student. Lacey May, a mother of three girls who lives on the west side, resents the new students. After enduring financial hardship and a volatile first marriage, she doesn't want anyone encroaching on the opportunities she believes her daughters are owed. "I made sacrifices to get here. It cost me. It cost my children. And I'm not just going to give it up so you can get handed what you think you deserve," she states defiantly at a town-hall meeting to "welcome" the new students and their parents.



Grand Central Publishing

Much to the dismay of Noelle, her oldest daughter, Lacey May leads a group of white parents determined to protest the integration. Meanwhile, Gee and Noelle become fast friends after she convinces him to act in a play she is directing at school. "Gee

and Noelle saw their classmates horsing around on stage, and they knew they were different," Coster writes. "Too old for childish games. They were better off watching, shoulder to shoulder, from the empty seats." As their relationship grows, it sets off a series of events that will bond their families in surprising, and sometimes heartbreaking, ways.

Told from the perspective of myriad characters over nearly twenty years, this multigenerational novel explores the meaning of family — the ones we are born into, the ones we create — and the legacies that children must overcome to make their own way in the world. Coster's 2018 debut novel, *Halsey Street*, was a finalist for the Kirkus Prize. In *What's Mine and Yours*, Coster has created an urgent, unforgettable story that feels all too relevant.

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