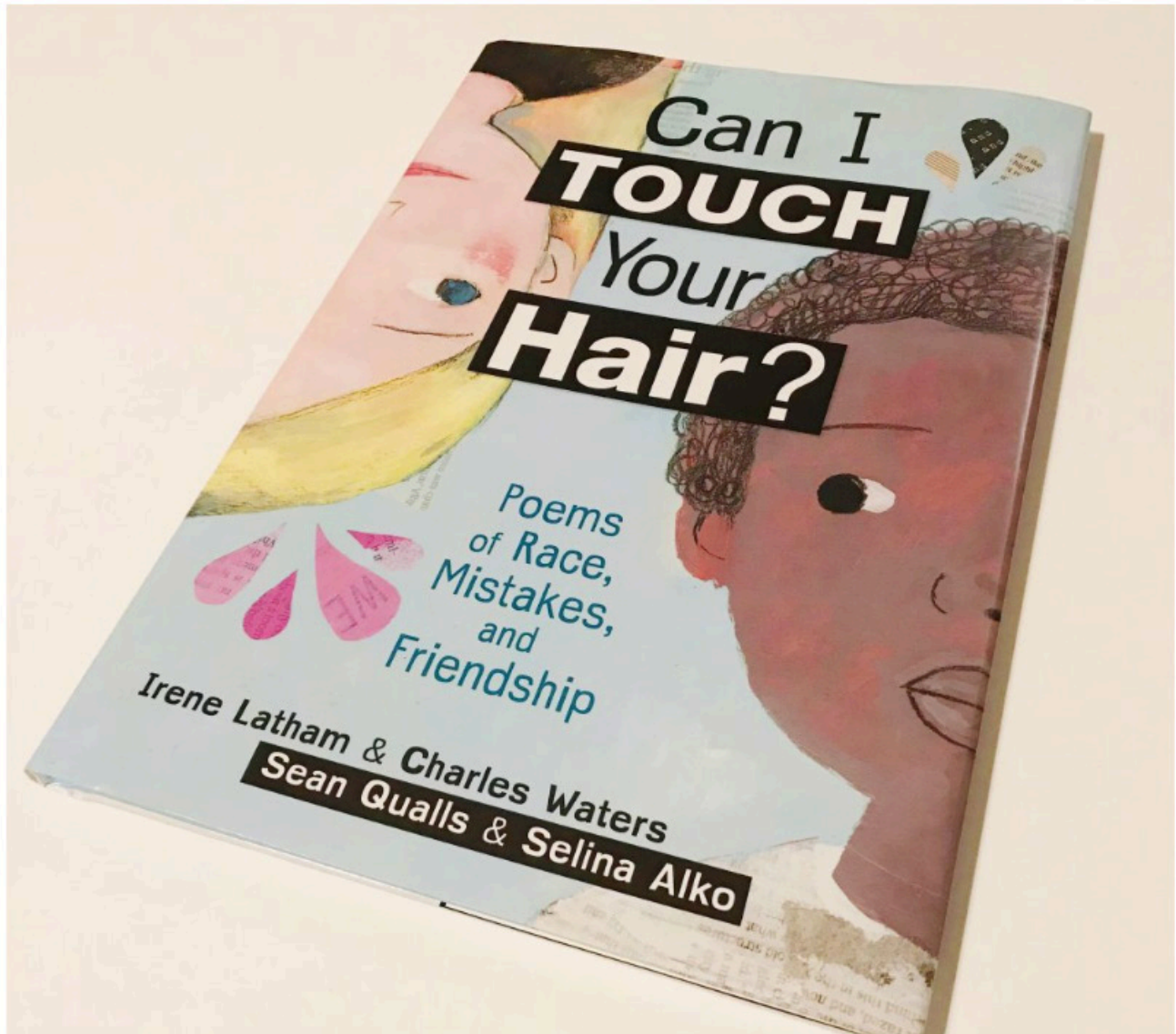




## (BOOK REVIEW) CAN I TOUCH YOUR HAIR? POEMS OF RACE, MISTAKES, AND FRIENDSHIP

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We're so excited to bring you the *first of many* children's book reviews here on our website. First up is "[Can I Touch Your Hair? Poems of Race, Mistakes, and Friendship](#)" by Irene Latham and Charles Waters.



My oldest niece brought this book home after her field trip to this year's [Mississippi Book Festival](#) and I thought it was such a great gesture on behalf of the trip organizers. Not only do children need to read books that deal with real life subjects, children in Mississippi should definitely be exposed to healthy ways of approaching the topic of race. Our State's history in dealing with racial issues is no secret to any of us who reside here and it remains a nasty stain that many of us are not proud of.

Publications like this one allow us to reconcile with our past and create a brighter future. Check out our review of the book below.

**Publisher:** Carolrhoda Books (January 1, 2018)

**Age Range:** 8-12 years

**Grade Level:** 3-6

**Format:** Hardcover

**Pages:** 40



### About the Book

How can Irene and Charles work together on their fifth grade poetry project? They don't know each other . . . and they're not sure they want to. Irene Latham, who is white, and Charles Waters, who is black, use this fictional setup to delve into different experiences of race in a relatable way, exploring such topics as hair, hobbies, and family dinners. Accompanied by artwork from acclaimed illustrators Sean Qualls and Selina Alko (of *The Case for Loving: The Fight for Interracial Marriage*), this remarkable collaboration invites readers of all ages to join the dialogue by putting their own words to their experiences. ([via Amazon](#))

### Reflection

Written from the perspectives of a child version of both Irene and Charles, distinguishable by font and design, both authors discuss the same topic from their own unique point of view. While reading I noticed that Charles seemed to be very intuitive as it relates to the differences in how blacks and whites are perceived, represented and celebrated – particularly when he expressed his confusion in church, fear and anger toward police brutality against blacks and even cultural appropriation. Young Irene was curious about black people and our culture but seemed to struggle with the right way to “bring it up” without making a mistake or embarrassing herself.



A couple of my favorite poems in the book broke down situations that adults often debate about in a very simple way, like the irony of cultural appropriation when whites mimic black culture (*dreadlocks, tanning, fashion, etc.*) but still seem to hate black people. These poems also helped me realize that just like adults, kids can have an identity crisis when they don't fit a particular stereotype of their race. It's a powerful reminder to us why stereotyping is such a harmful thing to do and how it can hurt others beyond what we think or can see.

I love how in the end, Irene and Charles became friends through their shared experiences being “different.” It just goes to show that we all have more in common than we know. Overall I really enjoyed this book and I'm thankful that it gives parents and teachers an easy way to approach race, especially in today's climate.

To learn more about the book or to purchase for your own collection, click [here](#).

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