

## **JAMES BALDWIN: THE SEARCH FOR SELF IDENTITY**

**Coordinator:** Ted Auerbach

James Baldwin is one of the most profound writers and essayists of the 20th century. As an African-American, gay man, and expatriate, he searched for the brutal truths about our society . We follow his journey by reading some of his great novels and essays. This study group also discusses and tries to answer some of the following questions: Do we live in a post-racial society now? What is the role of the black church in the thought and life of Baldwin? Can we understand him on a purely psychological level? What was his relationship to M.L.K., Malcolm X, Marlon Brando, Bessie Smith, Dostoevsky, Henry James etc.? What were Paris, Istanbul and Harlem like culturally and politically at the time? As Baldwin said, "Love takes off all masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within."

### **Readings:**

*Go Tell It On The Mountain* by James Baldwin {Vintage. ISBN 978-0-345-806543; Sept. 2013}

*Notes From A Native Son* by James Baldwin { Beacon}

*Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin {Vintage/ISBN 978-0-345-806567; Sept. 2012}

*The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin {Vintage.ISBN 978-0-679-744726; 1992}

*If Beale St. Could Talk* by James Baldwin {Vintage International}

**Ted Auerbach** taught in the public schools for many years. He has coordinated a group on Montaigne and is a political activist.

\*\*\*\*\***Syllabus- A Work in Progress**\*\*\*\*\*

**Week 1:** Introduction to James Baldwin

*Notes of A Native Son* pgs. 3-9 ,87-125.

*Go Tell It On The Mountain* Part 1 pgs. 3-101

We will discuss the following questions: In the novel, what do we learn about the influence of the black church on John?

What does it tell us about the youth of James Baldwin?

How does this essay help us understand both the novel and his life?

**Week 2:** *Go Tell It On The Mountain* pgs.- 102-176

*Notes Of A Native Son* pgs. 25-45

We will continue to analyze the themes, main characters and there social and psychological development.

What does the essay tell us about racism in the U.S.?

**Week 3:** *Go Tell It On The Mountain* pgs.177- end.

*Notes Of A Native Son* pgs.13-2 In the essay ,we will discuss Baldwin's philosophy of the protest novel and compare it to Richard Wright.

We will continue our discussion of the novel.

**Week 4:** *Giovanni's Room* pgs. 3-84

*Notes of A Native Son* pgs.119-139

**Week 5:** *Giovanni's Room* pgs. 85- end

**Week 6:** *Notes of A Native Son* pgs.141-179

*The Fire Next Time* pgs. 1-10, pgs. 15- 50

**Week 7:** *The Fire Next Time* pgs.50-end

*If Beale St. Could Talk* pgs 3- 70

**Week 8:** *If Beale St. Could Talk* pgs. 71- 125

**Week 9:** *If Beale St. Could Talk* pgs. 126- end

**Weeks 10-13:**

We will decide to read either *Another Country*, *Selected Short Stories*, or the play *Amen Corner*.