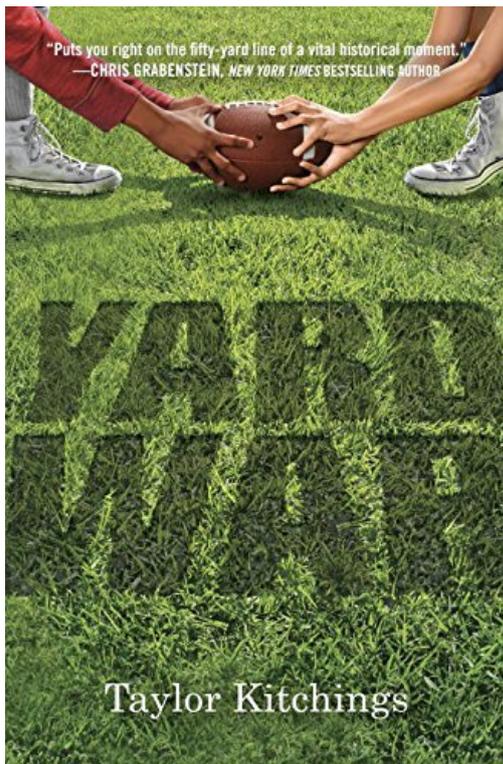


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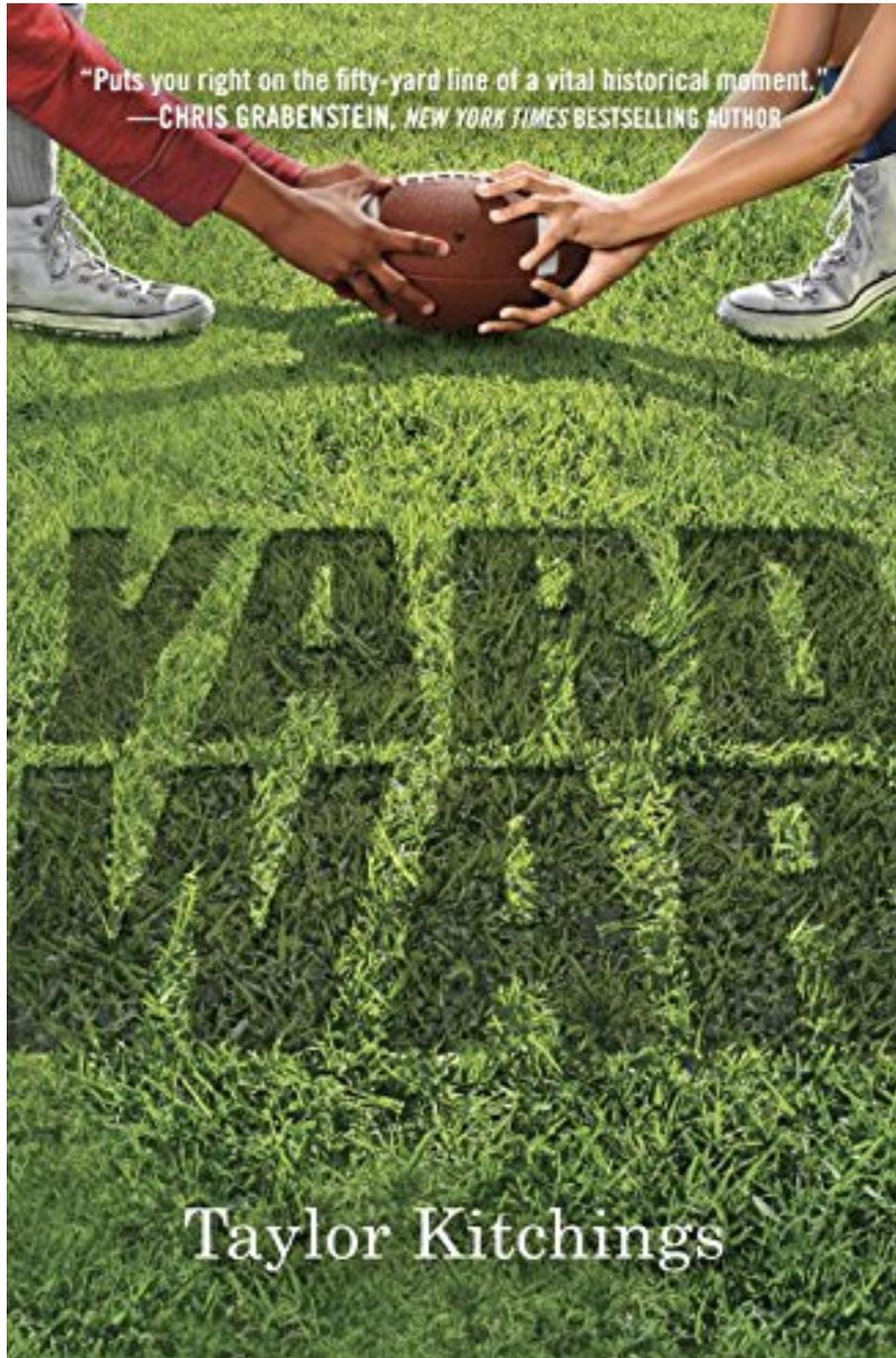
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From School Library Journal

Gr 4–6—It's the fall of 1964, just after the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Trip Westbrook lives with his parents in Jackson, MI. They have a black maid, Willie Jane, who serves as a sort of second mother to Trip and his sisters. When Trip invites Willie Jane's son, Dee, to join in for a game of football in the front yard, he unwittingly sets off a chain reaction of bigotry and harassment. But it's when he tries to bring Dee to lunch at the all-white country club that the tightly knit community turns inside out. This is an unusual book. There is a solid coming-of-age story and there is some football, though the cover design may throw off some readers: students who come looking for typical sports fiction might be disappointed. While a pick-up game is the occasion for the events that drive the plot, the sport itself is a small fraction of the story. At times the action is intense. True to usage at the time, Kitchings's narrator refers to African Americans as "colored" and "Negroes." The use of a more offensive epithet is limited, but does occur repeatedly. The scenes in which Trip is persecuted by the ignorant Bethune brothers (and their hateful father) are compelling and cringe-inducing. Nonetheless, the racist violence, verbal and physical, is historically significant and amount to a stinging indictment of the hypocrisies of the culture. VERDICT This is a challenging but worthwhile portrait of a very difficult period in American history.—Bob Hassett, Luther Jackson Middle School, Falls Church, VA

About the Author

Taylor Kitchings' roots in Mississippi run many generations deep, though it took him a while to circle back to them. As a college freshman, he recorded the original album *Clean Break*, now considered a collector's item. As a junior, he wrote music for mallet and giant Möbius strip, performed at Manhattan's Café La MaMa. In the years between his BA from Rhodes College and MA from Ole Miss, he traveled from Memphis to New York to Europe, writing and performing songs on piano. He and his wife Beth have two children and live in Ridgeland, Mississippi, where he teaches English at St. Andrew's Episcopal School. His short story "Mr. Pinky Gone Fishing" was published in the collection *Tight Lines* from Yale University Press. *Yard War* is his first novel.

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