

**UNIT 8 Social Transitions**  
**Early Contemporary Era 1960 to 1980**

A STEW school  
**FROEBEL**  
BILINGUAL SCHOOL  
Home of the Space Generation



# THE ROCKPILE

with **Jim Soto**

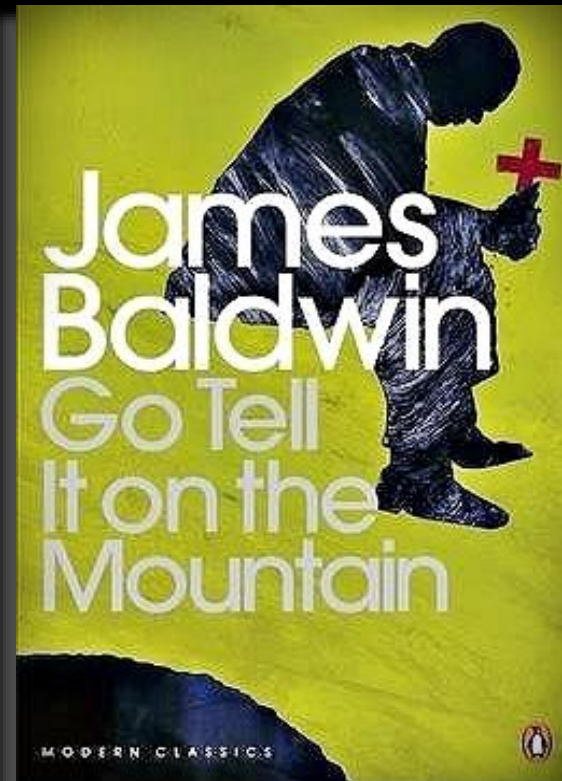
# **SPEAK YOUR MIND**

*We are not islands. Environments affect us one way or another.*

*How does the community in which you live influence your family?*

*How does it influence you?*

*Take a minute to consider, answer and explain the question in your notebook.*



Published in 1965 in *Going to Meet the Man*, a short story anthology, James Baldwin's "The Rockpile" draws on several characters and events featured later in his 1953 novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. The characters, members of an Black family in Depression-era Harlem, confront the issues that appear in various other Baldwin works: poverty, violence between African-American males, and the importance of religion in the African-American community.



The family in "The Rockpile" lives near "a mass of natural rock jutting out of the ground." Described as a favorite gathering spot for youth, the rockpile is a source of temptation and danger. As such, it symbolizes the physical and social problems faced by the family as well as the community.

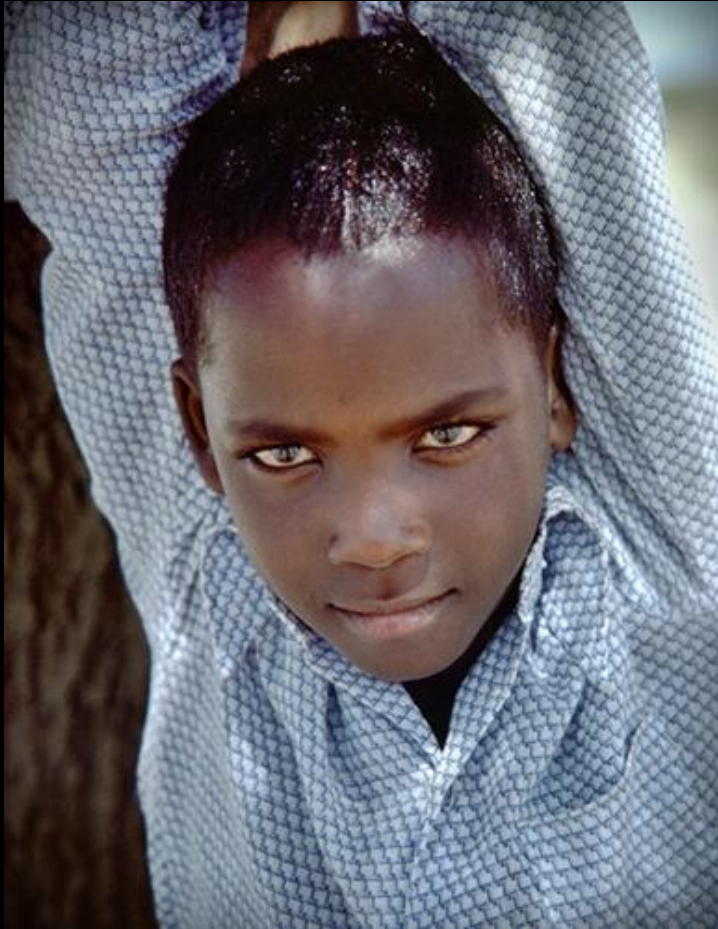
James Baldwin was born in Harlem, NY and grew up in poverty. He began writing at a young age and addressed issues of race, sexuality, and identity in his works.

Baldwin's works explored the experiences of Blacks and the impact of racism on their lives. He was known for his insightful critiques of American society and his ability to articulate complex issues with clarity and depth.

Some of his most famous works include "The Fire Next Time," "Another Country," and "If Beale Street Could Talk". Baldwin is widely regarded as one of the premier writers and thinkers of the 20th century.



# LITERARY ELEMENTS



## Setting

It is an element which includes the historical moment in time and geographic location in which a story takes place, and provides the main backdrop and mood for a story.

## Characterization

Is the act of creating or describing a character. Indirect techniques include showing what characters say, do, or think and showing what other characters say or think about them. The direct technique involves describing a character's physical features and personality.



Baldwin's choice of title indicates the significance of the setting in this story. As you read it, think about why the rockpile is important. Identify the ways it both challenges and endangers those attracted to it. Also determine how each character's behavior somehow is tied to the rockpile. Determine how Baldwin uses characterization to develop Roy, John, Elizabeth, and Gabriel.

# ASSESSMENT

After reading pages 748-759 in your book, complete the activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &
2. REASON WITH TEXT
3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE
  - **Setting and Characterization** - How is the rockpile both challenging and dangerous? How is it an essential feature of the story? Explain how the story would be different if the neighborhood did not have the rockpile.
  - How does the presence of the rockpile affect each character? How does Baldwin develop each character? What methods of characterization does he use? Discuss his use of direct versus indirect techniques.





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