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# A ROAD TRIP OF ACCEPTANCE AND LOVE: A REVIEW OF AMBER MCBRIDE'S *ME (MOTH)*

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## **Abstract**

The author reviews Amber McBride's 2021 young adult novel *Me (Moth)*, providing a brief summary, potential classroom audiences and instructional strategies, and similarly-themed texts.

**Keywords:** young adult novel-in-verse, Amber McBride, *Me (Moth)*, self-discovery, grief, mental health

A novel depicting a road trip of acceptance, grief, love and transcendence, 2021 National Book Award finalist *Me (Moth)* by Amber McBride tells the story of two high-school-aged teens, Moth and Sani, as they trace their respective cultures and histories across America.

Reader alert: my copy of the book's pages wore a rainbow of highlighters' colors, as I wanted to mark as much of the beautiful language as possible. McBride's metaphors had me feeling the emotional impact throughout the entire book. This book reached the perfect pitch of high emotion, with waves of sadness and fondness not only from the perspective of the characters' personalities but also from their experiences as they drive cross-country on a quest to discover the truth about their roots.

Written in free verse, this tale of the road is told from the perspective of Moth, a young African-American teenager who recently lost her family in a car accident. Once a Juilliard-quality dancer filled with love for life, Moth now struggles to accept her existence. Then, she meets another young teen, Sani, a Juilliard-quality singer who struggles to express his love for life, who comes from a rough home life and who faces an even rougher life as dictated by his stepfather. Looking for both a way out and the truth, Moth and Sani run away, driving to Sani's Navajo homeland in New Mexico.

Along the way, Moth and Sani visit historic sites of oppression of Native and African-American people, while sharing their own personal stories of spirituality. As the two travel, beginning to know each other on what is almost a supernatural connection, they fall in love. However, when they reach their final destination, the two face a truth that could cut the red string of love they had sewn together.

This book is appropriate for high school students because, like many students of similar ages, *Me (Moth)*'s protagonists focus on finding their identities and roots to discover more about themselves. Many readers of this age, like Moth, struggle to understand their current selves and, like Sani, what they will become in the future. This book also explores the inner world of mental health and grief in a real and beautiful way, with language that highlights the struggles of finding peace in one's mind.

Challenges that could happen while teaching this book are the discussions of mental health, the destructive behaviors stemming from those issues, and the spiritual beliefs of Moth and Sani. Young adult titles that can be offered as an alternative to this book include Angeline Boulley's *Firekeeper's Daughter* and Dan Gemeinhart's *The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise*.

### Author Biography

Madilyn Kramer, who cannot wait to integrate fun books into classroom units, is a student at Pittsburg State University studying English Education. Madilyn grew up in rural Southeast Kansas and plans to stay and teach in the area. Madilyn can be reached at [mekramer@gus.pittstate.edu](mailto:mekramer@gus.pittstate.edu).

