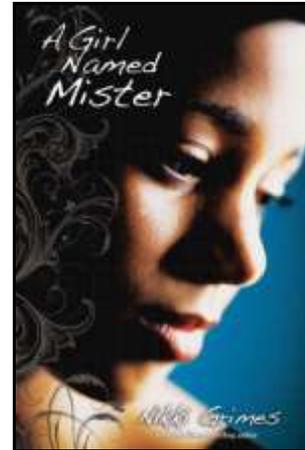


A Girl Named Mister

by Nikki Grimes



About the book:

Mary Rudine, called Mister by almost everyone, has attended church and sung in the choir for as long as she can remember. But then she meets Trey. His long lashes and smooth words make her question what she knows is right, and one mistake leaves her hiding a growing secret.

Another Mary is preparing for her upcoming wedding and has done everything according to Jewish law. So when an angel appears one night and tells her that she – a virgin – will give birth, Mary can't help but feel confused, and soon finds herself struggling with the greatest blessing the world will ever know.

Feeling abandoned, Mister is drawn to Mary's story, and together both young women discover the depth of God's love and the mysteries of his divine plan.

About the author:

Nikki Grimes is the prolific and award-winning author of more than fifty books. A Coretta Scott King Award winner and recipient of the 2006 NCTE Award for Excellence in Children's Poetry, many of her titles have been cited as Notable Books by the American Library Association. She is renowned for her use of poetry to tell a cohesive story, for her insightful writing, and for her ability to connect with her readers. She currently resides in California.

Author interview:

1. Which story did you find more difficult to write: Mary or Mister's? Why?
2. What do you hope young people find in the story of these two young women?
3. Do you map out the entire plot in a novel before writing or plunge in and see where it leads you? Why?
4. What advice do you have for young people who want to be authors some day?
5. What part of the writing process is your favorite? Research? First drafts? Revision? Why?

Discussion guide:

1. Explain how Mary got her odd nickname for a girl. What else is special about this main character?
2. Temple of My Redeemer feels like a second home to Mister. Do you have anyplace that feels like that to you? How does this happen?
3. Describe the process that unravels Mister's concept of who she thought she was. How can a girl know when she's being played?
4. How does Mister get swept away by her emotions for this boy? Does she justify her actions? Can we always justify what we think we want to do?
5. Describe what happens in their relationship afterwards. Why does everyone believe it will be different for her?
6. What is the black room at the end of the hall? (p. 56) How do you keep yourself out of that room?
7. What concerns does Mary of Nazareth have? What occupies her thoughts as she journeys to Jerusalem? What thoughts return again and again to your own mind each day?
8. How does Mary's other show strength? In what ways is she bolder than you might have imagined? How do women make a path for each other?
9. What are Mary's biggest fears? How does she face them? What can we learn from her?
10. After her romance with Trey, Mister feels like her friendship with her best friend has changed forever. Can friendships survive this kind of fundamental shift in tact? How?
11. How should Mister handle her commitments at church? Do you think she should quit the choir or not? Defend your answer.
12. Why does Mary feel the need to visit her cousin Elizabeth? How do they pass time together? What does Mary pray for? What do you?
13. Who do you think has the more difficult task: Mister telling her mother or Mary telling Joseph? Why?
14. How does Mister struggle with her faith? Is she able to find forgiveness? Do you find it difficult to forgive yourself or others more? Why?

15. How does Mister's mom finally take the news? What does Mister learn about her own mother's story? How does this divide their relationship?
16. What struggles and disappointments does Mary face? How is this a comfort to Mister? How else does Mary's story soothe this teen mom?
17. "I always thought/Mary had it easy,/her knowing all along/God was the one/who wrote her story." (p.171) How does Mary's story have more complications than Mister expected? Does God write everyone's story?
18. Compare and contrast Mary and Mister's pregnancies. What do they have in common? How are they different? What can you learn from both?
19. When Mister attempts to make friends with another pregnant teen at school what does she realize? How are these two girl's stories vastly different?
20. In the end, what do you think Mister decided to do? Predict what you think Mister's life will be like in five years. In ten.