

of *Looking at a Black Man* (1999). His most recent books are *Mr. Jefferson and Miss Wheatley* (2003) and *Finding Oprah's Roots: Finding Your Own* (2007). In 2010, Gates published *Faces of America: How 12 Extraordinary Americans Reclaimed Their Pasts*. His *Colored People: A Memoir* (1994) recollects in a wonderful prose style his youth growing up in Piedmont, West Virginia, and his emerging sexual and racial awareness. Gates first enrolled at Potomac State College and later transferred to Yale, where he studied history. With the assistance of an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellowship and a Ford Foundation Fellowship, he pursued advanced degrees in English at Clare College at the University of Cambridge. He has been honored with a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, inclusion on *Time* magazine's "25 Most Influential Americans" list, a National Humanities Medal, and election to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Publication  
information:

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In "What's in a Name?," excerpted from a longer article published in the fall 1989 issue of *Dissent* magazine, Gates tells the story of an early encounter with the language of prejudice. In learning how one of the "bynames" used by white people to define African Americans robs them of their identity, he feels the sting of racism firsthand. Notice how Gates's use of dialogue gives immediacy and poignancy to his narration.

Rhetorical  
highlight: \_\_\_\_\_

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**WRITING TO DISCOVER:** Reflect on racially charged language you have heard. For example, has anyone ever used a racial or ethnic epithet to refer to you? When did you first become aware that such terms existed? How do you feel about being characterized or defined by your race or ethnicity? If you yourself have ever used such terms, what was your intent in using them? What was the response of others?

Journal  
prompt: \_\_\_\_\_

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The question of color takes up much space in these pages, but the question of color, especially in this country, operates to hide the graver questions of the self.

Epigraphs: \_\_\_\_\_

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—JAMES BALDWIN, 1961

...blood, darky, Tar Baby, Kaffir, shine...moor, blackamoor, Jim Crow, spooks...quadroon, meriney, red bone, high yellow...Mammy, porch monkey, home, homeboy, George spearchucker, schwarze, Leroy, Smokey...mouli, buck, Ethiopian, brother, sistah...