



**Title:** What Lane?

**Author:** Torrey Maldonado

**Imprint:** Nancy Paulsen Books

**Publisher:** Penguin Young Readers

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**Format:** Hardcover and Paperback

**Age Range\*:** 10 and up

**Grade Range:** Gr 5-8

(Recommended by School Library Journal)

## BOOK RESUME: WHAT LANE?

### BOOK SYNOPSIS

“STAY IN YOUR LANE.” Stephen doesn’t want to hear that—he wants to have no lane.

Anything his friends can do, Stephen should be able to do too, right? So when they dare each other to sneak into an abandoned building, he doesn’t think it’s his lane, but he goes. Here’s the thing, though: Can he do everything his friends can? Lately, he’s not so sure. As a mixed kid, he feels like he’s living in two worlds with different rules—and he’s been noticing that strangers treat him differently than his white friends . . .

So what’ll he do? Hold on tight as Stephen swerves in and out of lanes to find out which are his—and who should be with him.

Torrey Maldonado, author of the highly acclaimed *Tight*, does a masterful job showing a young boy coming of age in a racially split world, trying to blaze a way to be his best self.

### REVIEWS AND PRAISE

“If you are wondering how to begin confronting Anti-Black racism in your classroom, start with *What Lane?*” —*School Library Journal: The Classroom Bookshelf*

★“In an NYC landscape deeply shaped by race, sixth grader Stephen struggles to speak his piece. . . . Maldonado pursues a story about biracial boyhood, healthy friendships, and self-discovery while gesturing toward the influence of social movements like Black Lives Matter in reshaping what accountable friendship looks like. Voiced in the creative language of NYC youth, the novel models what it means to embrace the power of self-awareness and relationships built on mutual respect. Bridges everyday racism and accountable allyship with sincerity.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★“Engaging, timely novel. . . . Maldonado (*Tight*) paints a vivid, relatable picture of an adventurous boy learning the rewards and dangers of straying out of his lane against the backdrop of an unfair system that could see him killed or arrested for the behaviors his white peers easily engage in. The characters are warmly realistic, by turns impulsive and regretful. In relatively few words, Maldonado elucidates matters related to racial profiling, police violence against black people, and allyship, all through the eyes of a brave kid trying to figure out who he is and where he belongs.” —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

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\*Publisher suggested age range covers the wide range of readers publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate range for their diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book’s intended use.

★“Maldonado depicts his young hero’s awakening to the ugly realities of contemporary American racism. Caught between his best friend Dan, and Dan’s racist cousin Chad; straddling the line between his overprotective, naive white mother and his realist, all-too-aware Black father; and doing his best to integrate his middle school friend group, biracial Stephen is finding it tricky to ‘stay wide in all lanes.’ . . . Maldonado uses a biracial adolescent boy’s perspective to draw his readers into an engaging story of identity and tough choices that will appeal to middle schoolers everywhere. An ideal choice for school book clubs and advisory.”—*School Library Journal*, starred review

“Sixth-graders Stephen and Dan are so close that they could be twins aside from their race difference, but that difference is beginning to matter to the outside world. . . . Presents an honest account of a Black boy who has to grow up faster than his white friends, all while wishing his friend groups could just be together regardless of race. . . . Makes the point that the frequency of racist encounters means they’re daunting yet mundane, and there is an interesting dynamic between Stephen’s Black father and white mother, who both want to protect their son but take different approaches. His father and friend Wes both tie in real life details about current events such as Tamir Rice’s shooting and the Black Lives Matter movement, which adds to the authenticity and could make this selection a discussion starter.”—*The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*

#### **AWARDS AND ACCOLADES**

- An Iowa Teen Book Award selection
- A Maine Student Book Award selection
- A *Kirkus Reviews* Best Book
- A *School Library Journal* Best Book
- A *Washington Post* Best Book
- An *NPR* Best Book
- A Cooperative Children’s Book Center Choices selection

#### **MEDIA AND RESOURCES**

- [Educator Guide](#)
- [SLJ Fuse 8: Who, Where, When, Why, What Lane? Talking with Torrey Maldonado](#)
- [CNN: Book Bans are surging—and taking an emotional toll on authors](#)
- [NEA Today: Why We Need Diverse Books](#)

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