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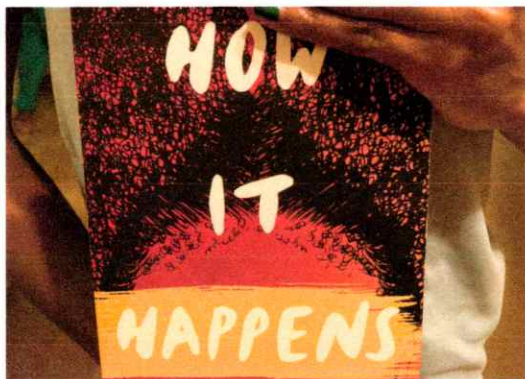
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# Review: How It Happens Views Racism Through 3 Generations of Black Women



Posted by [elenareads](#)

*How It Happens* is an intriguing new book by Jean Alicia Elster that explores racism through three generations of Black women. Following her other stories: [The Colored Car](#) and [Who's Jim Hines?](#), Elster takes her relatives' experiences with

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racism and uses them in her writing.

In my opinion, this is her best book yet!

Using three women – the author's great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother – the story explores racism through each of their lives. In the late 1800s, the great-grandmother, Addie Jackson, has struggles working for a white man, and has anxiety in everything she does so that she and her family would be safe from the evils of white supremacists. In the early 1900s, Addie Jackson's daughter, Dorothy May, faces racism like her mother, but in different ways. Her skin was lighter than most Black people in her community because her father was white. So, she endured hatred from both Black and white people. Finally, Jean,

the daughter of Dorothy May, encounters racism in the mid-1900s at her college, where only a few Black students attended.

I really liked how the story transitioned from one woman to the next. It flowed nicely. One thing I realized is that racism doesn't seem to go away. It shapeshifts from one form to another. From slavery to segregation, and now unjustified police shootings and hate crimes, racism remains. I wonder if we will ever reach a point where racism ceases to exist?

I loved the cliffhanger in the story. The ending ties back to the first woman, Addie Jackson, and how she wasn't allowed to make choices about some important things in her life, and how now Jean, her great-

granddaughter does.

I'm glad I was given a review copy of *How it Happens*. It is such a unique novel because it tackles racism from multiple perspectives, each written beautifully.

I recommend this book to young people who are mature enough to read about topics like racism, lynching, and sexual assault.

Four out of four roses!



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