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# Decoded



## Synopsis

Expanded paperback edition of the acclaimed New York Times bestseller features 16 pages of new material, including 3 new songs decoded. *Decoded* is a book like no other: a collection of lyrics and their meanings that together tell the story of a culture, an art form, a moment in history, and one of the most provocative and successful artists of our time.

## Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Spiegel & Grau; 1 edition (November 1, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0812981154

ISBN-13: 978-0812981155

Product Dimensions: 7.4 x 0.8 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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## Customer Reviews

Bedford Stuyvesant was his country, and Brooklyn was his planet. With these words we are led into a world that you cannot imagine, that no film can do justice to. It requires hundreds of pages to absorb, and with each page you become further and further immersed. The graphic work accompanying the printed message is among the best I have ever seen, and it will help you to understand this very special person. Somewhere in every person's life if you can experience transformation from where you were born to what your soul intended you to become, there is always a MENTOR figure. Sometimes it is a teacher, a relative, or a friend, but always someone. For Jay-Z it was Slate, who was among the first street rappers, before they even put a name on the movement. He would stand in a circle; he could go 30 minutes just rhyiming, as though he was trained for it. The young Jay-Z would stand and just be mesmerized by Slate, who seemed like an ordinary fellow until he stepped into the circle, and Jay-Z would transform himself by uttering the words, I can do that. And therein begins a WILD RIDE, from the Marcy Projects in Brooklyn to king of the hip hop movement. He would go from drug dealing and drug running to a billion dollar self

created empire that would be the envy of any businessman. Years later, Russell Simmons another hip hop master, and mentor to Jay-Z would say, that one grows up wanting to wear a suit, but hip-hop would mean never having to grow up and instead one would wear sneakers to the board room. Jay-Z Decoded will have an interesting audience. Yes there will be the kids who will own it and never read it, but for those of us, who read this book cover to cover, I promise you that you will not put this book back on the shelf without being affected by it. You will understand the hopelessness of ghetto life, of thousands upon thousands of young people who get destroyed before having a change to figure out what they are even involved with. Only a small number will come through the funnel to survive and thrive, and occasionally break out. Jay-Z is one who broke out, and every aspect of this life biography is fascinating to the uninitiated. Here's why?\*

- \* The money is not in the singing, it's in the producing, owning the company.
- \* Kids treated automatic weapons like clothing, they would wear them the way they would wear their sneakers.
- \* In the hood, it was life during wartime.
- \* Rap is the story of the hustler, and it is the story of the rapper himself.
- \* Jay-Z starts wearing clothes designed by Iceberg, a European Sportswear designer. Upon meeting the designer, they offer him free clothing. The rap star walks away and builds a billion dollar clothing company from scratch. The story is all here and like the rest of the book, it's a page turner.
- \* His views on politics will grip you. He meets Obama the candidate, and astutely figures out that the most important thing the future President brings to the table is that he will help millions of black kids realize that they can aspire to something other than being drug dealers.
- \* He tells the future President that in one moment we will go from centuries of invisibility to the most visible position in the world.
- \* From housing projects designed to warehouse lives, to knowing that the truth will always be relevant, he will tell you that it's not about brainpower but stamina, self-motivation, willpower, and standing up to the mental and physical challenge of meeting life head-on.

**CONCLUSION:** I came to this book with an open mind, and I could not have been more pleased with it. From the discussions about Quincy Jones who revolutionized musical arrangements in his lifetime, to Bono and his commitment to use his celebrity and money to transform society, the whole book was an exercise in literary pleasure. It is a demonstration that Dag Hammarskjold the UN Secretary General who gave his life for peace was right when he wrote the following. "It is more noble to give yourself completely to one individual than to labor diligently for the salvation of the masses". Thank you for reading this review.

Richard C. Stoyeck

I happened to catch an episode of Oprah a few weeks ago when she was in Australia and Jay-Z was a guest on her show. They talked about his book, Decoded, and how it changed the way she

thought about Jay-Z and rap in general. A Jay-Z fan, I was intrigued and purchased Decoded for my Kindle. Decoded was the perfect title and conveys multiple meanings. Jay-Z has the lyrics to many of his songs "decoded". The lyrics are seen in corresponding chapters with an extensive footnote section where he explains why he wrote some of the more cryptic lines. But more than just decoding his song lyrics, Jay-Z decoded many more issues for me: his early life, the drug culture, his business dealings, his philosophies on the music biz, politics, and why rap is so misunderstood by so many. I came away from this book with a new appreciation for Jay-Z...his frankness and lack of apologies for his thug past, the affect of his father's abandonment, the intricacies of his lyrics, his business-savvy attitude and his apparent understanding of the world around him. But perhaps the biggest thing I came away with is a respect for Jay-Z the man. He's intelligent, articulate, and talented as well as paranoid (self described) and private. Rather than writing raps, he would speak them and transcribe them. In 6th grade, he was reading at a 12th grade level. He has a photographic memory. And whether it was by dealing drugs or having a rap career, Jay-Z strove to be the best at his game. For people expecting a tell-all memoir, you will be disappointed in the book. Beyonce's name doesn't even appear. There are also many, many pages of song lyrics throughout the book that probably appeal to the most diehard fans but I skipped a lot of them. Decoded is a great read, and a book I expect will expand some people's minds (at least a little).

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