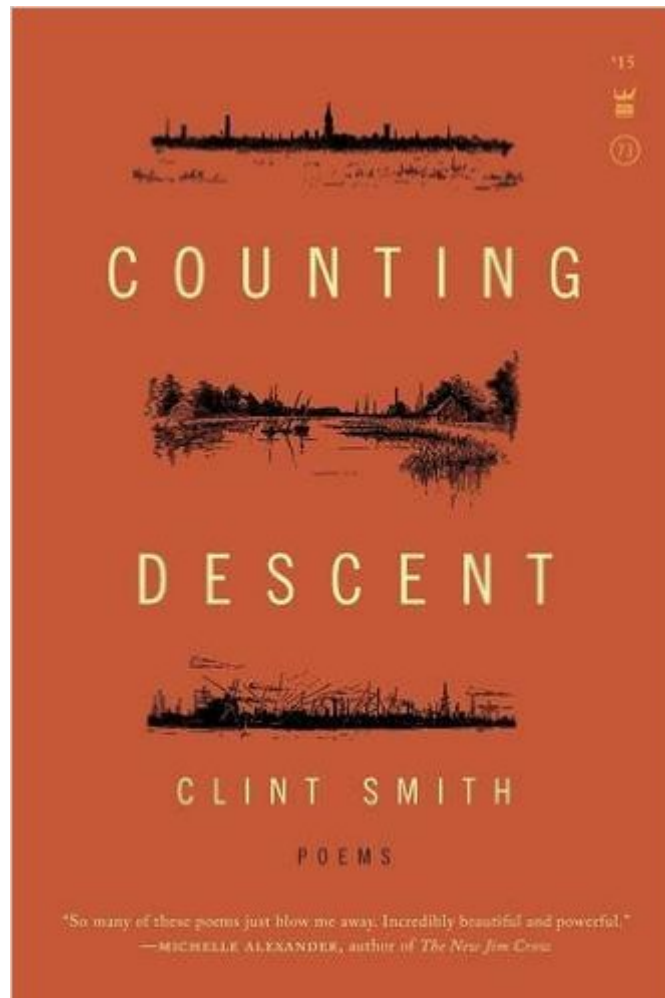


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Counting Descent



Synopsis

Clint Smith's debut poetry collection, *Counting Descent*, is a coming of age story that seeks to complicate our conception of lineage and tradition. Smith explores the cognitive dissonance that results from belonging to a community that unapologetically celebrates black humanity while living in a world that often renders blackness a caricature of fear. His poems move fluidly across personal and political histories, all the while reflecting on the social construction of our lived experiences. Smith brings the reader on a powerful journey forcing us to reflect on all that we learn growing up, and all that we seek to unlearn moving forward.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I must preface my review with a bit on my background: I live in the midwest, Iowa to be precise. I teach high school between two major highways and copious fields of corn and soybeans. To be clear: There's a lot of white people here and not much diversity. However, last year I came across Clint Smith while researching for class materials. In class, we watched his TED talk video from 2014 titled "The Danger of Silence" to investigate language devices in English I and speaking strategies in Advanced Speech. We also watched "When They Tell You The Brontosaurus Never Existed" because we loved it. Meanwhile, I Googled and watched other videos. It was clear that not only was Smith unapologetic at unearthing human and racial truths but he was (and still is) also a master of craft--adding in alliteration and assonance like it was his native tongue. Beautiful. His book of poetry could not have been published at a more appropriate--albeit a terribly racist--time. Just in the past several weeks, sixteen more innocent black victims have lost their lives due to (on optimistic days)

miscommunication or (on bad days) blatant bigotry. It's something I don't know how to talk about to my students because they don't see it. They live in a nearly all-white community; they see the television and media reports and think "That's not here. We don't even have any black people around here." That is to say, they're in denial. This book of poetry could change that. In "For the Boys Who Never Learned How to Swim," Smith writes: His face against the front of the police / car made him look like a fish out of water. / But where is the water? / When has there every been water? / When have we ever been allowed to swim?

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