



## On the Come Up: A Novel, Based on a True Story

*Hannah Weyer*

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**On the Come Up: A Novel, Based on a True Story** Hannah Weyer

**Based on a true story, an impassioned and propulsive debut novel about a headstrong girl from Far Rockaway, Queens, who is trying to find her place in the world**

Written in an urban vernacular that's electrifying and intimate, *On the Come Up* introduces a heroine whose voice is irrepressible, dynamic, and unstintingly honest. Thirteen-year-old AnnMarie Walker dreams of a world beyond Far Rockaway, where the sway of the neighborhood keeps her tied to old ideas about success. While attending a school for pregnant teens, AnnMarie comes across a flyer advertising movie auditions in Manhattan. Astonishingly, improbably, and four months before she's due to give birth—she lands a lead role. For a time, AnnMarie soars—acting for the camera, flying to the Sundance Film Festival, seeing her face on-screen. But when the film fades from view and the realities of her life set in, AnnMarie's grit and determination are the only tools left to keep her moving forward.

Told with remarkable compassion and based on the real-life story of Anna Simpson, whom the author met during the filming of the award-winning *Our Song*, Hannah Weyer's debut novel is an incredible act of literary ventriloquism that powerfully illuminates the lives of the urban unseen.

### On the Come Up: A Novel, Based on a True Story Details

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Author : Hannah Weyer

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## From Reader Review On the Come Up: A Novel, Based on a True Story for online ebook

### Hannah says

This was not a book I would have chosen were it not for playing Book Bingo at my library. I needed a book where the author and I share the first name...hence, Hannah Weyer's first novel.

I'm glad I read it however. One of the benefits of being a reader is the fact that reading opens our minds to new and different worlds, mindsets other than our own and forces us to walk in another's shoes.

On the Come Up is so far from my reality that it accomplished all of the above. I am white, Southern, rural and while I have been poor, I have never experienced true poverty.

The main character, Anne Marie, is black, urban, and becomes a teenaged, single mom. She has been raised in true poverty, in a cycle of poverty that is unending. Her story is one worth knowing. Her strength of character and her ability to move through her life are admirable.

The importance of this novel and it's ability to inspire is exceptional. I am sure that it is more relative to the lives of many than it is to mine. I am thankful that there are books such as this available.

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### Emmkay says

Absorbing coming-of-age story about a teenage girl in Far Rockaway, Queens, as she navigates life on the economic and geographic margins of the city and carves a life for herself as a young mother. The author based her novel on the life of a friend, whom she met while involved in an independent film project. I had some concerns about the author's use of the vernacular to tell someone else's story, but it's respectfully and thoughtfully done, and the story flows like butter. I wondered if being "based on a true story" was a bit restrictive, and Weyer felt overly bound to be truthful, but I enjoyed it all the same. I think this would also be a great read for high school students. 3.5 stars.

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### Readerly Magazine says

Hannah Weyer goes the distance in creating a novel that is authentic, even as it delves in the dreamlike reality of a pregnant teenage girl's journey from her home in the projects of Far Rockaway, Queens, to movie screenings at Sundance, where she makes her debut. Anne-Marie's voice is raw, distinct, and courageous. Her pain and triumphs are the readers', in this heartfelt and gritty narrative.

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### Rachel says

Books written in vernacular don't typically sound like the thoughts and voice of a real person, but *On the Come Up* so does. I have a ton of admiration for Weyer's ability to capture her friend's voice and let that be the center of this book. I wanted to know more about her when I was done, where her life ultimately went after enduring such ups and downs.

It's about a girl growing up in a housing project, poor and pregnant young, yeah, but it never slips into being

overly sentimental or like caricature. It's very clearly "based on a true story" because it's nothing but real.

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### **Kristi says**

A good novel about a young girl who struggles to move out of poverty. I enjoyed the book and felt the events were handled realistically. I did however, feel that one too many things happened to the main character.

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### **Chasie C says**

I absolutely love this book. I purchased and read in ONE DAY! ! The characters were so real, life like. I just know this story is similar to so many young girls growing up too fast. I would highly recommend!

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### **Jacque says**

After I got used to the ghetto vernacular lol it got really good. See my Vine review on Amazon.

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### **Karen says**

Based on a true story, this author narrates the life of a young girl she calls AnnMarie Walker. This thirteen year old girl lives on the edge of life. Raised in and out of foster care, a father she has never met and mother who is full of love but not always capable of parenting. With all the odds against her AnnMarie is brave, she is smart and she wants more. AnnMarie lives in a rough neighborhood with barely enough money or food stamps to get by, but she works it. She sells ice pops to make money for "back to school" and she has the singing voice of an angel. Pregnant and feeling alone AnnMarie finds an opportunity to audition for an indie film and it is this experience that takes her out of Far Rock for the first time. She is a hard worker with little support or guidance but finds love and friendship and even humor where its least expected. Told with compassion and honesty, this story is written in an urban vernacular that is so real the characters voices will remain in your heart long after the novel ends. Do not miss this glimpse into the life of a remarkable young woman faced with many obstacles and unending hope. Highly recommend this unique, outstanding first novel. BUY TODAY! On the Come Up: A Novel, Based on a True Story

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### **Laura says**

**"She thought about how she'd made Darius it , the number one be-all, end-all. Even with making the movie and getting out in the world, she'd tethered herself to him, first for love, then for Star, then simply for the sameness of it. There'd been a comfort in the sameness. She'd never had the guts to tell him down. Five years, coming and going. He could punch her. F\*\*\* her. Kick her in the head. She'd get up...Yeah, she'd get up but she'd say, Come on in. She didn't speak these words aloud. But she understood them suddenly and in a deep way. [...]having gone out into the world and come back again, seeing her life as a map with lines and markings...all the**

**boundaries to cross and the ones she'd accepted. All the markings scratched out by petty beefs and throw-downs, the want of attention and money, by having a baby too young. The weight of an arm confused with a promise.**

**It came to her just before sleep, an idea crystallizing in the dark--how maybe the size of your world ain't what matter, whether it expand or shrink up or expand again. Hurdles to jump. You jump. Erase the lines, draw new ones. Chart a course and follow."**

Meet AnnMarie Walker. She's a tween in the Far Rockaway neighborhood of Queens, New York. She doesn't know her dad--he was a violent drunk who her mother escaped from when AnnMarie was a baby. Escaping involved fleeing Trinidad for New York, and sleeping in homeless shelters while trying to eke out a live for herself and her child. Along the way AnnMarie spent time in various foster homes until her mother could provide a stable home environment. Now AnnMarie is nearing her teen years, and back with her mother. We meet her as she heads down the beach to sell Popsicles and other frozen treats to fund her back to school clothes.

We see her navigate her neighborhood, and the various joys and threats it contains. She has friends who are years older and are trying to form a girl's rap group. Through them she is introduced to Darius--he poses as a go-between for up and coming artists with recording studios. Most likely though, he is a thug. AnnMarie falls for his looks and smooth talking manner. Predictably, she becomes yet another human face to the teenage pregnancy statistics. Not so predictable is her response to challenge, and her fierce love for her daughter which gives her a reason to live.

Bottom line: Weyer breathed life into AnnMarie. Her personality is drawn in great detail, and I loved watching her grow and change when faced with adversity. Hers is not a "Cinderella" story. She was given opportunities, but realistically, an Indie film did not change her life excessively. Instead, it gave her the self esteem and motivational tools to change her \*own\* life if she should choose to do so. Grab this book if you are looking for a summer read with a heroine to cheer for. Given 4 stars or a rating of "Excellent". Recommended!

Another favorite quote: "So they did the scene, walking through the courtyard, the three girls from the movie, Crown Heights kids by the ice-cream truck, mad quiet, listening to the lines and waiting for their cue. And they had only had to do it three times. [...] Dean bought ice cream for all the kids out there that day and AnnMarie was about to tell him about Blessed doing the same thing a long time ago but she thought, Nah. I'm good. Right here, right now, staying in the moment with Sonia and Melody and all the other kids whose names she didn't know but who'd come up with a scene about bleeding without spilling a single drop."

Stuff I learned: Here's a link to a great article about Far Rockaway. It describes the natural beauty of the area, while briefly mentioning the Redfern houses that AnnMarie (and most people she knew) steered clear of late at night. <https://ny.curbed.com/2016/9/2/127567...>

And here's a link to a discussion on the pro's (not many) and the con's of separate schools for pregnant high school students. The example school is similar in many ways to the one that AnnMarie attended. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/24/ed...>

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## Nicole Mansfield says

This book was simply amazing! I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads and had no idea what to expect. I couldn't put the book down! AnnMarie's life will shock you and inspire you. You will laugh at her spunk, cry with her pain and root for her. If you like great coming-of-age stories, this one is perfect for

you.

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## Banke Awopetu-McCullough says

I picked this book up because of the reviews. It took a second to grab me, but I'm so glad I kept reading. The book is dope--plain and simple. The writing is poetically raw, it completely sweeps you up into the story. I read a lot of urban fiction and I read a lot of Classic African-American literature, Weyer masterfully weaved these genres together.

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## Tab says

\*Won ARC from Goodreads giveaway\*

### Plot

Written in urban vernacular, *On the Come Up* is a coming of age story about black teen, AnneMarie Walker. While attending a school for pregnant girls, she spots an audition flyer for a movie. After landing the role, she must balance pregnancy, home-life and a rocky love life. Based on a true story.

### Thoughts

First, full disclosure, I tend to stay away from books where the main character is a downtrodden black woman/girl. The new book releases have been so disappointing this year because the ones featuring black female protagonist tend to always be so depressing. As a black woman, I really am burnt out reading yet another story where someone like me is a slave/maid/servant/downtrodden. However, I gave this one a try because the blurb described it as "moving and funny." A little bit of tears and a little bit of laughter? That I can do!

AnneMarie is an extremely likable character. She is drawn so realistically (probably because she is based on a real person) that you can't help but empathize and root for her.

The book is written in an urban vernacular, a task that is not a very easy. *On the Come Up* does it with both success and failure. Once you get into the rhythm, the narrator will slip out of the vernacular. This is really evident when the author uses analogies. Also, some of the slang became repetitive, like the use of *mad*. Since the story is told over a period of about 5 years, the slang should have changed with the times. If you are going to write in vernacular, you have to fully commit to it. It may have been more successful if the book was written in 1st person, through AnneMarie's eyes.

The characters dialogue, however was very believable. Hannah Weyer is credited as a screenwriter, which explains why the book reads more like a play or movie.

The story itself is somewhat predictable. Although there was a plot twist in the last fifth of the book that came out of nowhere. It really ruined one of AnneMarie's the most beautiful and supportive relationships. *On the Come Up* lacked a lot of the humor that was described in the blurb. Too much despair for me.

Last quibble, I initially thought the book took place in the early 90s because of some of the slang and pop culture references. But, some scenes seem to be set in the early 2000s. One that sticks out is the girls arguing over the best girl groups: En Vogue, SWV, TLC, Destiny's Child. It was odd because the first 4 groups were popular in the early-mid 90s, while Destiny's Child didn't really breakout until the '99-'00 (DC was one of the

last popular R&B girl groups). I was a huge fan of R&B girl groups in the 90s; that scene stuck out to me :P

### Conclusion

AnneMarie is a great, realistic character. However, the story tends to be more downtrodden than humorous and uplifting. As I read the blurb on the back of the book closely, I see that they related AnneMarie to the Sapphire's Precious Jones. If you like *Push*, you'll like this. If you are like me, and really have burnout on *Push* type stories, proceed with caution.

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### Shanae says

I didn't get the hype. *On the Come Up* had even been described to me as today's *Coldest Winter Ever* by Sister Souljah by a fellow reader. Now I wonder, what was she reading? Clearly she had not read *Coldest Winter Ever* or she hadn't read it in a long time.

Anyway, Weyer's narrator was weird to me and I felt that if we'd heard the story only from AnnMarie, it would have been better. I really liked the plot, but I don't feel that Weyer really made me connect with the characters. Surprisingly, I didn't feel AnnMarie, Blessed, Darius, Niki, Raymel, Star, or even Lu. And I feel that the power in this book would have been the connection I felt to the characters.

It's a young adult work with some serious material, like domestic abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and I think homosexuality is considered serious material these days, so I recommend it for older or mature teens, 14-18.

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### Lizzie says

I love this book. Great story, sad, joyous, heartbreaking, and told in a very moving, very real voice. Great summer read.

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### Kathrina says

Beautifully written, and very affective. I would recommend this to a high school curriculum, women and juvie resource programs, and for fans of *The Coldest Winter Ever*. This inner-city female narrative is both literary and accessible.

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