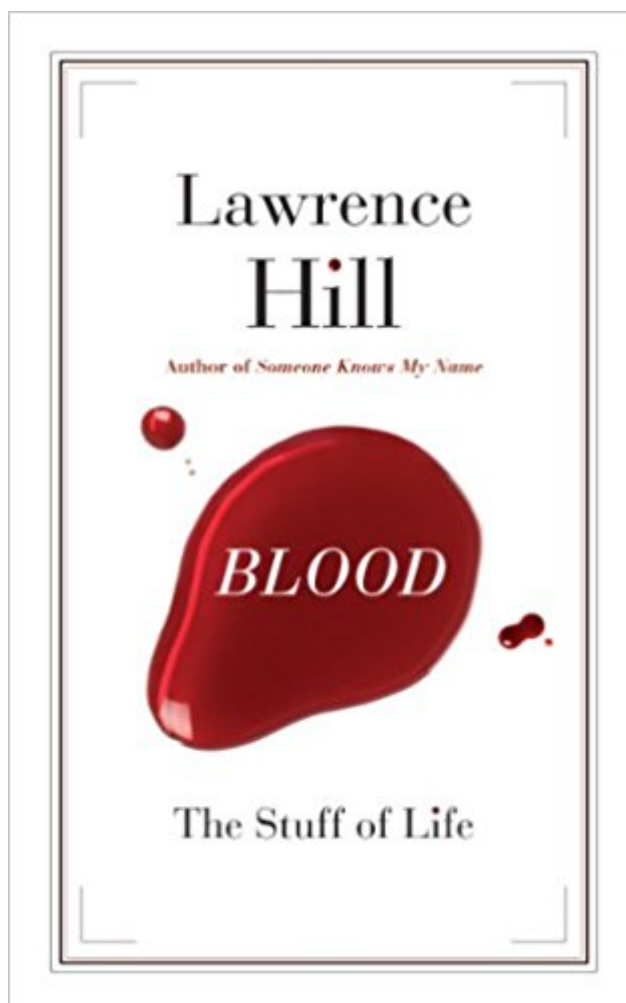


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# Blood: The Stuff Of Life (CBC Massey Lecture)



## Synopsis

In *Blood*, bestselling author Lawrence Hill offers a provocative examination of the scientific and social history of blood, and on the ways that it unites and divides us today. Blood runs red through every person's arteries, and fulfills the same functions in every human being. However, as much as the study and use of blood has helped advance our understanding of human biology, its cultural and social representations have divided us perennially. Blood pulses through religions, literature, and the visual arts, and every time it pools or spills, we learn a little more about what brings human beings together and what divides them. This book is a fascinating historical and contemporary interpretation of blood, as a bold and enduring determinant of identity, race, culture, citizenship, belonging, privilege, deprivation, athletic superiority, and nationhood.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Transparent and compelling. The book is as enthralling as it is informative." - *Publisher's Weekly*

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**Lawrence Hill:** Lawrence Hill is the author of several novels and works of nonfiction, including the national bestseller *Someone Knows My Name*; *Black Berry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada*; and *Some Great Thing*. He also co-authored, with Joshua Key, *The Deserter's Tale: The Story of an Ordinary Soldier Who Walked Away from the War in Iraq*.

I learned of Lawrence Hill through the Canadian miniseries: The Book of Negroes. I wanted to see his nonfiction writing and was amazed at the way he weaves in history, philosophy, and the personal narrative on the topic of blood. I learned so much that the book was filled with my highlighting to share nuggets of knowledge and stories with family and colleagues.

I am a huge fan of Lawrence Hill's work, but this book manages to merge together his multi-layered talents. He takes statistics and facts; history and a broad spectrum of world events both social and political and brings them together for a truly fascinating read. As per his usual style, race plays a part here but he also devotes significant time to gender and definitions of these terms. A truly great read as it's a compendium of interesting and valuable information. Similar to Malcolm Gladwell, but better.

Hill provides a narrative on how blood (not only as the liquid coursing through our veins) but the concept and thought of blood has shaped us and our society - both today and in the past. While the book is a bit meandering and at times plodding, generally, there is a sufficient flow of ideas to sufficiently capture one's interest and to consider how next Hill will frame his views on blood. Overall, he demonstrates to us that blood is truly "the stuff of life"

It was a Xmas present for my granddaughter, who studies sociology and is very interested in racial topics. The book was on her wish list. She was very happy with her present. That's why the 5 stars.

This book arose out of a lecture series given by the author at the University of Toronto. Divided into five chapters, which I guess represent five lectures he gave, this book is difficult to give a label to. A mix of science, biology, medicine, history, social commentary and personal memoir it covers all sorts of stuff about blood: the good stuff in our bodies that carries around oxygen that keeps us alive; the bad stuff that carries diseases such as HIV, malaria, plague; who invented blood transfusions; Lady MacBeth and that damned spot; blood as a weapon of power; his musings on blood being thicker than water or not; do men and women have different blood; human sacrifice; drug taking in sport; and taking up most of the book blood as a factor in race, culture and ethnicity. And this latter theme is really what the author is looking at in his exploration of blood and what it all means. By way of background, Lawrence Hill is a successful Canadian author, whose black father and white mother migrated from the US to Canada when they got married in 1953 to escape the difficulties such a union at the time brought. He grew up in a family very involved in human rights,

and most of his writings are concerned with issues of identity, especially race. For those of a certain age, you may be surprised to know that the author's brother is Dan Hill, he who sang that tear jerker song of the 1970s 'Sometimes When We Touch'. On googling their images, to me they look nothing like brothers, and I can understand his fascination and intense interest in looking at how our origins and blood lines define us. But more importantly perhaps how others see us and may label us differently from what we ourselves think we may be. This, then is the crux of the book, and although it wasn't quite what I thought it would be, it really is a most interesting and informative read. There may be a little too much self-indulgence on the part of the author, but in a world where peoples of different cultures, religions, races, and ethnicities are meeting and having children of their own, these are very real issues that he is bringing up. It made me feel good to be an NZer, where on our five yearly census form, under the 'Which Ethnic Group Do You Belong To' there is a space for 'Other' where increasingly people are simply putting 'New Zealander' rather than identifying themselves as just one of the many others listed.

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