

Rapper/Actor Common Talks Memoir, Good Storytelling, and Why He Hasn't Gone Digital

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He's won Grammys, acted alongside Denzel Washington, and now, rapper/actor Common has garnered praise from Maya Angelou for his newly released memoir. She donned the book "magnificent."

[*One Day It'll All Make Sense*](#), named after one of his albums, chronicles his Chicago upbringing, his break into music, and his desires for the future. Included with each chapter is a rather personal letter written to someone in his life—including former girlfriend Erykah Badu and friend Kanye West. Also embedded within the story are his mother's reactions and thoughts about the different chapters of her son's life.

Common talks to inReads about the writing process, the elements of great stories and his take on print vs. digital.

inReads: Was writing a book something you always wanted to do?

Common: No, not at all. I was opposed to it even when the idea was mentioned to me. I didn't think I was at a place in my life or career where I could write a book and have something to say. But I thought about it when my manager talked to me about what the perspective of the book could be. It's about the relationship with my mother and the type of human being I'm growing to be and how I want to pass that on to other people, including the people I love.

inReads: What was the writing process like with your co-writer, Adam Bradley? Were there any similarities between that collaboration and collaborating with a music producer or artist?

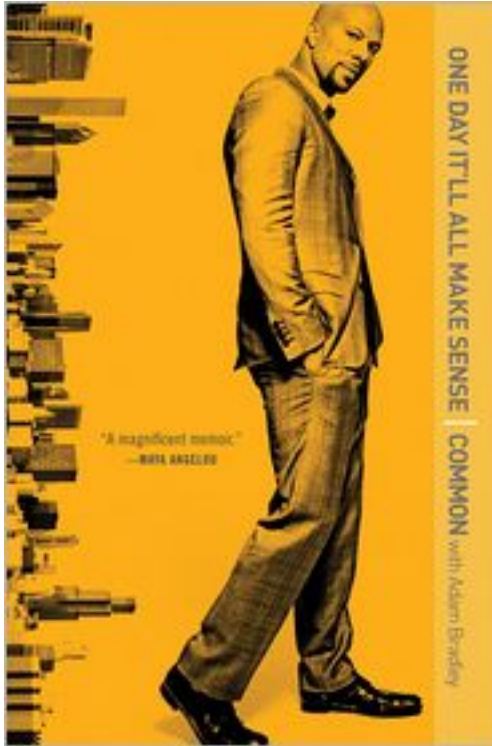
Common: Not really. When you work with producers, it's usually a 50/50 collaboration. With the book, it felt like I was more involved because I had to pull out what was going on with me and give it some type of expression and structure. I had to give a lot; with producers, they offer the music as a guide. With Adam, it was really like, "talk to me." He was great though because he was able to pull out those special pieces and put the book together. He had great ideas that took the book to the level it is at.

inReads: Was any of the book hard to talk about?

Common: I look at myself as a pretty open person. I wear my heart out sometimes. Somebody told me that I was a private person about some things, and that's probably true. But I wasn't scared to talk about them. I read Malcolm X's autobiography and other books by people who told their lives the way they went. I couldn't be afraid to be free with it and I couldn't hold back. I had to tell it like it is.

inReads: Were you a big reader growing up?

Common: I definitely used to read a lot. My mother made me read and write book reports about anything from *Encyclopedia Brown* to *Invisible Man* and *Native Son*. Books of that nature.



inReads: Who are some of your favorite storytellers from any realms—books, music, films?

Common: My father is one of my favorite storytellers. I also admire Spike Lee and Nas. Biggie was a great storyteller. I love Quentin Tarantino movies too.

inReads: What makes a good story?

Common: A great story can make you laugh, make you cry, make you be scared and weary. It can make you go through all these emotions in one story. Great stories are intriguing; sometimes you may not even know where it's going. It engulfs you because of the way it's being told. You feel its soul. Great stories resonate.

inReads: What do you try to accomplish as a storyteller?

Common: I try to tell a story of hope and of love—that love can range from love for what you do, love for God, love in a relationship, love for your hood, love from where you come from. I like to tell stories that have inspiration. I like to tell stories that are intriguing, fun and take you some place. In acting, I love to tell the story of being human.

inReads: Are there other MCs who you'd like to see write an autobiography?

Common: Nas is writing one with the same book company that I've worked with, so I'm glad about that. It would be great to hear his story. I think Kanye's would be interesting. He's a person who would tell his truth.

inReads: What's the last great book that you read?

Common: [*The Four Agreements*](#). I like books that deal with self-love, not how to live, but about life.

inReads: Have you gone digital? Do you own an e-reader?

Common: I like to have books in my hand. I like print.

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Watch [Common's appearance on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*](#).

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