In a tale full of humor and poignancy, a sheltered twelve-year-old boy comes of age in a small Florida mining town amid the changing mores of the 1960s.

Its 1966 and Dewey Turner is determined to start the school year right. No more being the brunt of every joke. No more Deweyitis. But after he stains his face with shoe polish trying to mimic the popular Shoeshine Boy at the minstrel show, he begins seventh grade on an even lower rung, earning the nickname Sambo and being barred from the whites only bathroom. The only person willing to talk to him, besides his older brother, Wayne, is fellow outsider Darla Turkel, who wears her hair like Shirley Temple and sings and dances like her, too. Through their friendship, Dewey gains awareness of issues bigger than himself and bigger than his small town of Sand Mountain: issues like race and segregation, the reality of the Vietnam War, abuse, sexuality, and even death and grieving. Written in a riveting, authentic voice, at times light-hearted and humorous and at others devastating and lonely, this deeply affecting story will stay with readers long after the book is closed.

My Personal Review:
Steve Watkins sensitively re-creates the claustrophobia and emotional complexity of being 12. You begin to notice your parents flaws. You come to share (without much real understanding) the anxiety of global events, see how pain and dysfunction thread through your family and your friends, judge societal injustices such as racism, wade through the bafflement of sexuality, parse grownup situations with a limited vocabulary. You have eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but as will be your fate, cant always judge which is which, because sometimes lying is right and usually its some of both.
Because this book is set in the 1960s, it is like a reassuring letter from parent to child. The particular issues and struggles have evolved, but the central feelings of the age are eternal. Just like Dewey’s parents in their finer moments in the book, this sensitive tone extends a hand of comfort to the foreheads of Watkins young readers (and reminds parents to slow down and pay attention for chances to do the same). Indeed, you sense Watkins parenting experiences inform the story as much as his memories of being Dewey’s age.

DOWN SAND MOUNTAIN is an intense, immersive, sad, hilarious and aching adventure. It captures the jungle social structure of high school, with predators and prey, where natural selection has cast the die for the Darwin Turkels of the world -- and maybe for us as the narrator, Dewey, too. The story elevates these universal teenage struggles to literal life-and-death -- just as they feel when you’re living them. I closed the back cover marvelling that I survived.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
Down Sand Mountain by Steve Watkins - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!