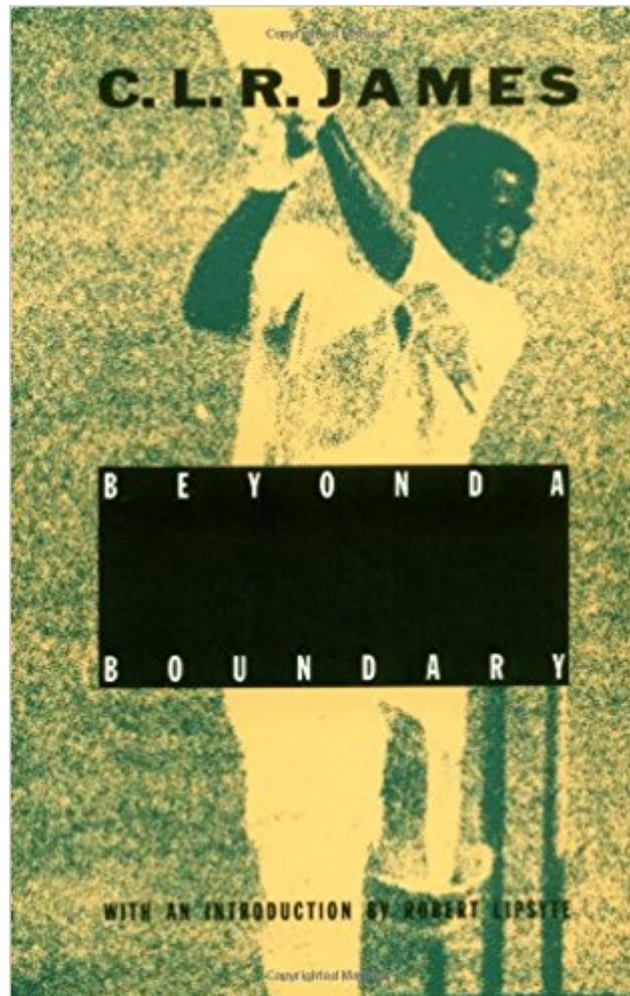




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Beyond A Boundary



Synopsis

In C. L. R. James's classic *Beyond a Boundary*, the sport is cricket and the scene is the colonial West Indies. Always eloquent and provocative, James--the "black Plato," (as coined by the London Times)--shows us how, in the rituals of performance and conflict on the field, we are watching not just prowess but politics and psychology at play. Part memoir of a boyhood in a black colony (by one of the founding fathers of African nationalism), part passionate celebration of an unusual and unexpected game, *Beyond a Boundary* raises, in a warm and witty voice, serious questions about race, class, politics, and the facts of colonial oppression. Originally published in England in 1963 and in the United States twenty years later (Pantheon, 1983), this second American edition brings back into print this prophetic statement on race and sport in society.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Beyond a Boundary reached number 3 in the UK Observer Sport Monthly's poll of the best fifty sports books of all time. It is burdened with enormous praise; amongst the quotes included on the cover are: 'To say "the best cricket book ever written" is piffingly inadequate praise' and 'Great claims have been made for [*Beyond a Boundary*] since its first appearance in 1963: that it is the greatest sports book ever written; that it brings the outsider a privileged insight into West Indian culture; that it is a severe examination of the colonial condition. All are true.'The praise is justified. The only way that this is not the best cricket book ever written is if you do not consider it as a cricket book. It is beautifully crafted, transcending the genre: an engaging combination of cricket book, personal memoir and political and cultural commentary. There are other very good books about

cricket but this is something more than that. It is a cricket book, a history book, a sociology book and more. CLR James is a fascinating man: widely travelled, spending long periods in England and the USA as well as Trinidad, an important writer and journalist, a politically active Marxist, instrumental in getting Frank Worrell appointed captain of the West Indies team. The book covers a wide range of subjects including his childhood in Trinidad; great cricketers he has known and watched; Caribbean politics amongst others. For cricket lovers one of the beautiful things about the book is that James loves cricket, he appreciates it as an art form. He possesses the clarity of thought and the prose to convey this love and appreciation to the reader.

The best blurb endorsing *Beyond a Boundary* is "To say 'the best cricket book ever written' is piffingly inadequate praise." It succinctly conveys this is a great book, is about cricket, is about other things as well, and is written in language you don't use that often. *Beyond a Boundary* was published in 1963, but was written over most of the previous 35 years or so. The author, CLR James, was a West Indian Cricket fan, journalist, and patriot. The book is organised according to his reminiscences of other Cricket players, most significantly better players than James (although it sounds like James was a quality player, just not an international class player). Now, any American thinking about reading this book already knows there is no such thing as a "famous cricket player". These people may be national heroes in other places, but one of the most famous cricket players, WG Grace, was to me just a name that reminds me of a floor wax company. So be forewarned that James is prone to using phrases like "the story of which is known to all" when for me little was known. It is either fortunate that there is so much else beside cricket in this book or unfortunate that there is so much cricket in this book. There are many chapters where James goes on about the role of cricket in a boy's life, role of cricket in society, and the role of cricketers in society. These are the best parts of the book, especially if one is able to substitute the word "sport" for "cricket". These chapters do not dwell on the detailed points of the game, but simply need the reader to acknowledge that cricket is a game that people care about. Any sports fan should be able to make that leap. He does a great job describing how sport got organised in the West Indies, and the meaning of that organization.

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