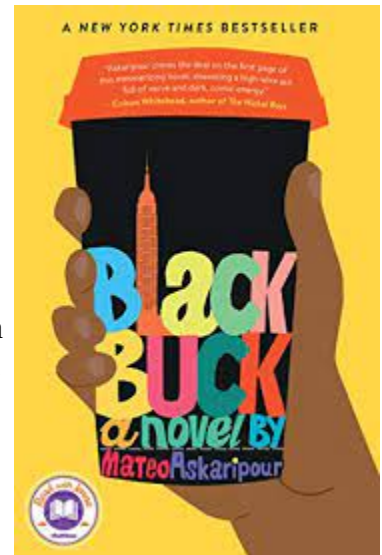


# Our interview with Mateo Askaripour

-LLCE senior class with Mrs. Ndodjio -

On Thursday, January 5<sup>th</sup> we had the chance to talk with an American writer, Mateo Askaripour, and his French publisher using videoconference. He was born in 1991 in Long island to a Jamaican mother and an Iranian father. He started working in start-ups and call-centers before being revealed by his novel, *Black Buck*. He now lives in Brooklyn, NYC, and is writing a second novel. He has also collaborated with various magazines.

*Black Buck*, published in 2021, is his first novel which has had a huge success. The book deals with several topics such as racism, ambition, minorities, and tells the story of Darren, a 22-year-old who lives with his mother in a popular district in Brooklyn. After dropping out of university to work at a Starbucks coffee shop in Manhattan, he suddenly changed the course of his life by joining a start-up, in which he is the only black employee. This novel offers a full immersion into the business world and is an excellent satire of the work world. This novel is similar to the author: radiant.



The cover of *Black Buck* by Mateo Askaripour

The questions that were asked were very varied and revolved around the themes of literature, the author's job or his inspiration in his job and in everyday life. Here are some of the questions that were asked:

**- What is his favourite part about writing a book?**

→ At the time he started writing, nobody really knew what he was doing and he was still living with his parents. At that time he was quite independent and could follow the rhythm he wanted without feeling the pressure of having an agent. Of course he is very happy to be where he is now but sometimes he misses the time when it was just him and what he was writing.

**- How does he always manage to write? Does he ever lack inspiration and how does he overcome this?** (That question was asked by a student who wanted advice on writing.)

→ The author then explained that his main method for his writing to progress is to settle into a routine: he forces himself to write a little everyday. It doesn't matter if what he writes is not particularly good, at least he writes. Forcing himself allows him to make progress in his writing and find inspiration.

**-Does he intend to continue to write his novels in the same way as *Black Buck* which was written in the first person and addressed the reader directly, or does he intend to change his style?**

→ Although he enjoyed writing *Black Buck* this way, addressing the reader directly in short paragraphs and using the point of view of a narrator speaking in the first person, he plans to diversify his writing style in future works. He explained that he is currently working on a new novel written in a completely different way. Mateo Askaripour does not want to lock himself into one type of writing, but it is not impossible that he will write a new novel like *Black Buck*.

**-According to him, should works, and books in general, necessarily have a political/social aim and a message to convey?**

→ He answered that it is important to have novels with a political aim, to educate oneself and even to transmit messages. *Black Buck* itself is a novel that addresses issues faced by marginalised minorities in society such as people of colour, LGBTQ+ people, etc... But it's also important to have books that are only entertaining. You need to diversify your reading. These kinds of novels also have their place in literature and are just as important if only to detach oneself from reality and the issues that make it up.

**- What does he think of screen adaptations? Does he have one planned for his novel?**

→ Although some of them do not do justice to the original work, some of them are really good and make the work accessible to a wider audience. He was himself proposed by a platform to adapt *Black Buck* into a short TV show. Even if the project did not happen, he still hopes that this idea will eventually come true.

**- Questions were also asked to the editor. What does her job consist of? Which manuscripts does she focus on?**

→ The editor also answered questions from students about her job and what it involved. She explained that her job was to read manuscripts sent in by authors to judge whether they could be published. She then took care of buying the rights for the book, promoting it and other procedures until the novel was published. She then told us that what was most important to her in a manuscript was that it was human, she wanted to feel the author's intention through the writing. She does not really stick to one genre of writing but she does have her preferences and does not read many, if any, romance and fantasy manuscripts.

**-Finally a student asked him if he could tease us his future novel.**

→ He had not yet decided on the story of his future novel and was thinking about it as he told it to us, but his novel would be about a relationship between a brother and a sister, and the difference between the people in the spotlight in our society and the people who were seen as "nobody" and how they could also act even if in the dark. All this included in a thrilling plot.

We are very grateful to have been able to talk to a person from the United States. It is a chance to have a privileged time with a famous writer. It was a special occasion and some of us were stressed but he managed to lighten the mood easily. Moreover it was a good exercise of spontaneity to be more fluent and comfortable with spoken English. We learned a lot of things with this rich exchange, in terms of advice, or even to know more about the jobs of publisher and writer. It also allowed us to exchange on how we perceive life and how we are going through it.

We are really thankful to our teacher, Mateo and his publisher for this interview !



*Photo taken with the class at the end of the interview*

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