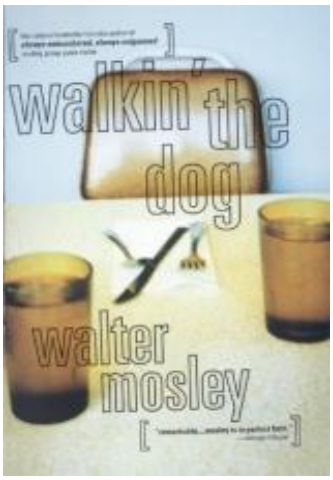
# Walkin' the Dog

by Walter Mosley




## About the Book

Socrates Fortlow, the popular ex-con hero of Walter Mosley's bestselling Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned, is back. Nine years out of prison, he's still living on the streets of Los Angeles, struggling to find the right path--a challenge, given that the police make Socrates their first suspect in every local crime--and confronting, ultimately, the most dangerous emotion of all: hope.

## Discussion Guide

**1.** Discuss Socrates' approach to daily life. Was he always so confident about what is morally right and wrong? What are the sources of his strength and hopefulness?

**2.** Socrates didn't "learn" through formal education. Discuss where his knowledge comes from and how it might be different from knowledge gained through formal education. Is Socrates aware of the power of his knowledge?

**3.** Discuss Socrates' relationship with Darryl. What did this relationship provide for Socrates that he did not have when he was in prison? What lessons does Socrates hope to teach Darryl? Is he successful?

**4.** How does Socrates feel about freedom in L.A.? Did he feel free as soon as he left prison? If not, why?

**5.** How does Socrates achieve personal triumph? What is it that compels him to "do the right thing" in each story?

**6.** Discuss Socrates' views on violence? Are there times when Socrates considers violent behavior acceptable? Do you agree with Socrates' position?

**7.** How does Socrates deal with issues of race and politics in his community?

**8.** When Darryl asks Socrates whether he is afraid of getting in trouble and being returned to jail, Socrates replies, "I'm scared'a livin' in my own skin, I'm scared of all the evil and sad I know" (p. 196). What does Socrates mean by this?

**9.** When Darryl asks Socrates whether he intended to kill Officer Cardwell, Socrates says, "The gun was out and he passed not three feet from me. But I just stood there-smiling, thinkin' 'bout how good it felt to be in my own skin" (p. 241). What accounts for the difference in Socrates' attitude? How has Socrates changed toward the end of *Walkin' the Dog*?

**10.** Discuss Socrates' community of African-Americans in Central L.A. Discuss their support system.

## Author Bio

Walter Mosley is one of the most versatile and admired writers in America. He is the author of more than 60 critically acclaimed books that cover a wide range of ideas, genres and forms, including fiction (literary, mystery and science fiction); political monographs; writing guides, including ELEMENTS OF FICTION; a memoir in paintings; and a young adult novel called *47*. His work has been translated into 25 languages.

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**Publication Date:** October 10, 2000
**Paperback:** 288 pages
**Publisher:** Back Bay Books
**ISBN-10:** 0316881716
**ISBN-13:** 9780316881715