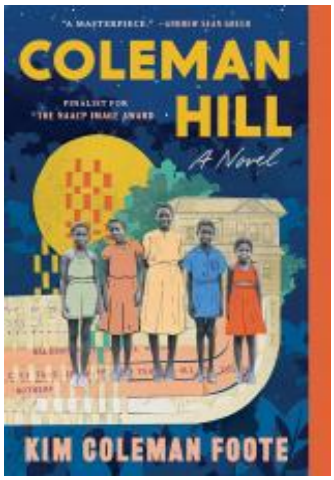
Coleman Hill

by Kim Coleman Foote



About the Book

COLEMAN HILL is the exhilarating story of two American families whose fates become intertwined in the wake of the Great Migration. Braiding fact and fiction, it is a remarkable, character-rich tour de force exploring the ties that bind three generations.

In 1916, during the early days of the Great Migration, Celia Coleman and Lucy Grimes flee the racism and poverty of their homes in the post?Civil War South for the ?Promised Land? of Vauxhall, New Jersey. But the North possesses its own challenges and bigotries that will shape the fates of the women and their families over the next 70 years. Told through the voices of nine family members --- their perspectives at once harmonious and contradictory --- COLEMAN HILL is a penetrating multigenerational debut.

Within 10 years of arriving in Vauxhall, both Celia and Lucy?s husbands are dead, and they turn to one another for support in raising their children far from home. Lucy?s gentleness sets Celia at ease, and Celia lends Lucy her fire when her friend wants to cower. Encouraged by their mothers? friendship, their children?s lives become enmeshed as well. As the children grow into adolescence, two are caught in an impulsive act of impropriety, and Celia and Lucy find themselves at irreconcilable odds over who?s to blame. The ensuing fallout has dire consequences that reverberate through the next two generations of their families.

A stunning biomythography --- a word coined by the late great writer Audre Lorde --- COLEMAN HILL draws from the author?s own family legend, historical record and fervent imagination to create an unforgettable new history. The result is a kaleidoscopic novel whose intergenerational arc emerges through a series of miniatures that contain worlds.

Discussion Guide

1. The author has called the book ?a biomythography? --- a word coined by the late great writer Audre Lorde --- because it combines the author?s own family history with fiction. Why do you think the author chose to define her novel this way? What effect did it have on the reading experience?

2. COLEMAN HILL is written in the first-, second- and third-person at different points. How did the alternating points of views impact your connection to the characters? How did the author?s writing style contribute to your reading experience?

3. Which character did you sympathize with the most? Who did you have the most trouble with? Why?

4. In the book, different characters have different interpretations of pivotal family events. Why do you think this is done? What do you think it says about the way memory informs our understanding of ourselves and the world around us?

5. Which photograph or artifact in the book intrigued you the most and why?

6. The characters perceive their own and others? skin color, hair, weight and other physical attributes in both positive and negative ways. How are their beauty standards impacted by mainstream culture like Hollywood movies?

7. In the book, women are expected to marry young, boys and men are expected to hold back tears, and children are expected to be quiet around adults. How do these and other expectations shape the characters? lives? Which of these expectations are still prevalent today?

8. Explore the theme of generational trauma. What behavioral patterns are passed down in the book? How do they affect the younger generations?

9. The novel?s epigraphs are from Jacqueline Woodson?s BROWN GIRL DREAMING and Elizabeth Strout?s MY NAME IS LUCY BARTON. Talk about why the author might have chosen these two passages and how they relate to COLEMAN HILL.

Author Bio

Kim Coleman Foote was born and raised in New Jersey, where she started writing fiction at the age of seven(ish). A recent fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, she has received additional fellowships from the NEA, NYFA, Bread Loaf, Phillips Exeter Academy, Center for Fiction and Fulbright, and residencies at Yaddo, MacDowell and Hedgebrook, among others. Her fiction and essays have appeared in *The Best American Short Stories 2022*, *The Rumpus*, *Prairie Schooner*, the *Missouri Review*, *The Literary Review*, *Kweli* and *Obsidian*. COLEMAN HILL is her first book.

Coleman Hill

by Kim Coleman Foote

Publication Date: September 17, 2024
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction, Women's Fiction
Paperback: 336 pages
Publisher: Zando ? SJP Lit
ISBN-10: 1638931704
ISBN-13: 9781638931706