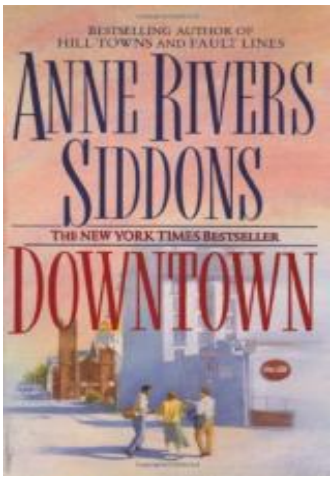
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Downtown

by Anne Rivers Siddons



About the Book

When Smoky O'Donnell, a small-town girl with big-city ambitions, arrives in Atlanta in the spring of 1966, both she and the city find themselves on the brink of cataclysmic and irrevocable change. Invited to be a new writer for the burgeoning Downtown magazine by its eccentric and revolutionary editor, Matt Comfort, Smoky finds herself thrown into a social and political whirlwind that is a world apart from her conservative, sheltered family in Savannah. Embracing the city, and the nascent Civil Rights Movement that is enveloping it, Smoky rises from caption writer to fearless chronicler of the Civil Rights Movement as it sweeps through Atlanta, forever transforming first the once sleepy city, and then the nation. In this tumultuous time of conflicting passions, Smoky also finds herself torn between three young men: Brad Hunt, the wealthy young scion of "old Atlanta," who loves Smoky but fears her passion for her career; Luke Geary, a rakish photojournalist who becomes her sparring partner both at the magazine and in bed; and John Howard, the young civil rights activist who works as a right-hand man to Martin Luther King Jr. Set amidst the swirling melee of the late '60's, Downtown celebrates and illuminates the extraordinary journey of Smoky O'Donnell from a sheltered girl to an irrepressible woman, writer, activist, and lover.

Discussion Guide

1. Trace Smoky's involvement in Atlanta's Civil Rights Movement. How do her developing politics affect her life choices? Do Smoky's newfound beliefs require her to make sacrifices? How do they liberate her?

2. How does Smoky navigate her career in the primarily male-dominated world of Downtown? How does she go about gaining the respect of her male boss and peers? When is her womanhood and sexuality an asset? A hindrance? What links can you draw between the Civil Rights Movement and the feminist movement?

Author Bio

THE GIRLS OF AUGUST is Anne Rivers Siddons's 19th novel. Her previous bestselling novels include BURNT MOUNTAIN, OFF SEASON, SWEETWATER CREEK, ISLANDS, NORA NORA, LOW COUNTRY, UP ISLAND, FAULT LINES, DOWNTOWN, HILL TOWNS, COLONY, OUTER BANKS, KING'S OAK, PEACHTREE ROAD, HOMEPLACE, FOX'S EARTH, THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR and HEARTBREAK HOTEL. She is also the author of a work of nonfiction, JOHN CHANCELLOR MAKES ME CRY. She and her husband, Heyward, split their time between their home in Charleston, SC and Brooklin, ME.

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