

Home Across the Road

by Nancy Peacock



About the Book

With the simple, evocative grace of her nationally acclaimed debut novel, *Life Without Water*, Nancy Peacock has created a poignant story of two families -- one black, one white -- and the North Carolina house that binds their lives together for more than a hundred years.

In 1861, Roseberry was the plantation home of the white Redds; the black Redds were one of the slave families who worked there. In 1971, Roseberry stands empty, a wisteria vine growing through the dining room window, and China Redd, who worked in the house for half a century, is ready to die.

But first she has a story to tell. Not the one recorded by Lydia Redd, the matron of the house, in her own book, beginning with the earrings, the selling of Cleavis, and the curse, and ending with the death of Coyle, the last of the white Redds. If she has nothing else from the forty-seven years of work in a house where nothing was her own, she has this story.

Moving effortlessly back and forth in time through the parallel legends of the Redd families, *Home Across the Road* is a beautiful, haunting, and timeless drama that touches your heart and soul.

Discussion Guide

1. What role do the family stories serve for both Redd families? Whose stories are closer to the truth -- and why?
2. When Earnest and Julia move to another city, why doesn't China go with them? Couldn't she find a job and a home closer to her family? What keeps her at the old home?

3. Why is it so hard for China to let go of Earnest? What does he represent to her?
4. When black laborers are assigned to cut back the wisteria growing along Roseberry, a legend emerges that the wisteria has simply stopped growing. What does this say about the regard of the white Redds for the black Redds' work around the plantation?
5. What is the significance of the Roseberry estate to China? Why does she stay on after the rest of her family has left?
6. What finally makes Coyle distance himself from Jenny Wolfe? What is he trying to keep himself from experiencing?
7. China was a major figure in Coyle's life. What prevented him from treating China better than his parents had?
8. Why didn't Lydia or Coyle tell China or Abolene about Martin Luther King's assassination? What do you think they were afraid of?
9. What does *Home Across the Road* say about ownership -- of possessions, of land, and of people? What makes the characters in this story feel attached to the land? To the possessions at Roseberry? How does this motivate their behavior throughout the years?
10. Why do you think China is ready to die once Abolene's daughter is born? Why is that the turning point for China?
11. What keeps China from telling her story, since it's been nagging at her for so long? It's a story few people know. Why doesn't she write it down or talk to a reporter about it?
12. Why is Coyle so eager to get rid of all of those possessions at the end of the story?

Author Bio

Nancy Peacock is the author of the novels *LIFE WITHOUT WATER* and *HOME ACROSS THE ROAD*, as well as the memoir *A BROOM OF ONE'S OWN: Words on Writing, Housecleaning, and Life*. She currently teaches writing classes and workshops in and around Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where she lives with her husband, Ben.

Critical Praise

"Employing simple prose that possesses a rhythmic, repetitive, almost Biblical cadence, Peacock retells and revises these multigenerational stories in a fascinating palimpsest. "

Home Across the Road

by Nancy Peacock

Publication Date: February 27, 2001

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Bantam

ISBN-10: 0553381024

ISBN-13: 9780553381023