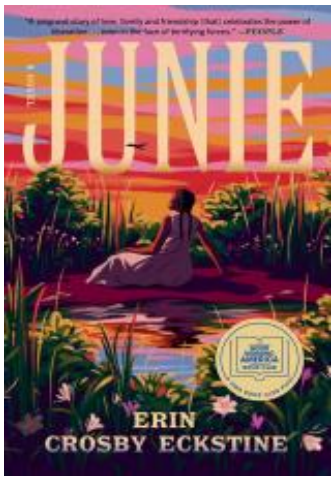
Junie

by Erin Crosby Eckstine



About the Book

A young girl must face a life-altering decision after awakening her sister?s ghost, navigating truths about love, friendship and power as the Civil War looms.

Sixteen years old and enslaved since she was born, Junie has spent her life on Bellereine Plantation in Alabama, cooking and cleaning alongside her family, and tending to the white master?s daughter, Violet. Her daydreams are filled with poetry and faraway worlds, while she spends her nights secretly roaming through the forest, consumed with grief over the sudden death of her older sister, Minnie.

When wealthy guests arrive from New Orleans, hinting at marriage for Violet and upending Junie?s life, she commits a desperate act --- one that rouses Minnie?s spirit from the grave, tethered to this world unless Junie can free her. She enlists the aid of Caleb, the guests? coachman, and their friendship soon becomes something more. Yet as long-held truths begin to crumble, she realizes Bellereine is harboring dark and horrifying secrets that no longer can be ignored.

With time ticking down, Junie begins to push against the harsh current that has controlled her entire life. As she grapples with an increasingly unfamiliar world in which she has little control, she is forced to ask herself: When we choose love and liberation, what must we leave behind?

Discussion Guide

1. What was your biggest thematic takeaway from JUNIE?

2. Talk about the titular heroine at the heart of this novel. What about her story resonates with you the most? If you could meet Junie off the page, what would you ask her?

3. Talk about what freedom and the pursuit of justice look like for Junie. What is she willing to risk in the name of independence and autonomy?

4. How do books provide a means of escape for Junie? And how does this book provide a means of escape for you?

5. Discuss the novel?s narrative style. What storytelling techniques, from foreshadowing to cliffhanger chapter endings, kept you turning the pages? You may choose to share some of your favorite lines of dialogue, characterization or description as well.

6. The Bellereine Plantation is at the center of the action in JUNIE. Discuss the ways in which this landscape functions as a character (or even a character witness) in this novel. How does Junie --- and even her dearly departed sister --- reckon with it?

7. What does Junie have to say about the nature of betrayal and forgiveness in a family? Between lovers? In an entire nation?

8. This novel brings to life a time of social injustice and racial tensions in pre?Civil War America. Take a moment to reflect on how far we?ve come from that era until now --- and the ways in which our country continues to struggle with the issue of race to this day.

9. If you had the chance to ask the author one question about JUNIE --- the inspiration for her story, the writing process, or her personal background --- what might it be?

10. We are taught, as young readers, that every story has a moral, or a lesson about our humanity that is ultimately revealed. What did you learn about the world or yourself after reading this book?

Author Bio

Erin Crosby Eckstine is an author of speculative historical fiction, personal essays, and anything else she?s in the mood for. Born in Montgomery, Alabama, Eckstine grew up between the South and Los Angeles before moving to New York City to attend Barnard College. She earned a master?s in secondary English education from Stanford University and taught high school English for six years. She lives in Brooklyn with her partner and their cats.

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