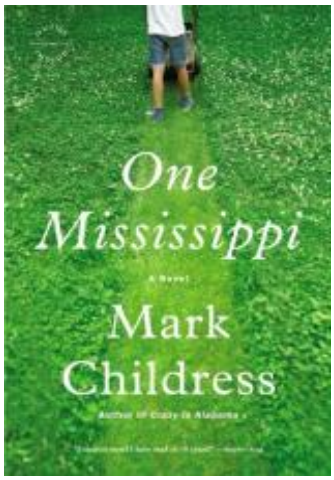
One Mississippi

by Mark Childress



About the Book

This exuberantly acclaimed novel by the author of the bestselling **Crazy in Alabama** tells an uproarious and moving story about family, best friends, first love, and surviving the scariest years of your life.

You need only one best friend, Daniel Musgrove figures, to make it through high school alive. After his family moves to Mississippi just before his junior year, Daniel finds fellow outsider Tim Cousins. The two become inseparable, sharing a fascination with ridicule, The Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour, and Arnita Beecham, the most bewitching girl at Minor High. But soon things go terribly wrong. The friends commit a small crime that grows larger and larger and threatens to engulf the whole town. Arnita, the first black prom queen in the history of the school, is injured and wakes up a different person. And Daniel, Tim, and their families are swept up in a shocking chain of events.

Discussion Guide

1. When Daniel Musgrove learns that his family is moving from Indiana to Mississippi, he angrily muses that "there was nothing down there but redneck sheriffs and protesting Negroes and civil rights workers buried in earthen dams" (page 6). Are his perceptions of the South proved correct in any way? At the end of the novel, do you think Daniel would describe the South differently?

2. Tim and Daniel spent their early years in very different communities, and grew up in quite different families. Why is their friendship such a strong one? What do they have in common?

3. What was your reaction when Arnita ? fresh out of a coma ? announced her new identity? Do you think she truly believed what she said, or were there other reasons for her insistence? Why was Arnita's speech to the school so provocative to both black and white students in the audience?

4. In an interview Mark Childress once said about readers of **One Mississippi** he encounters: "Everyone [tells] me about their own high school experiences, and that is exactly what I wanted. I wanted the book to remind you what it was like to be sixteen." What was your high school experience like? Did parts of this novel make you feel nostalgic for the early 1970s? What do you miss about those days? What *don't* you miss?

5. Tim harbors a secret throughout the novel that propels him to the book's explosive conclusion. Did learning his secret help you feel sympathy for his choices throughout the book ? especially regarding Arnita and Eddie? What did you think of Daniel's reaction to Tim's revelation?

6. Daniel has a fraught relationship with his father. What do you think motivates Mr. Musgrove to be so hard on his younger son? Have they reached any kind of mutual understanding by the end of the book, or is this just a temporary reprieve? How do you think their relationship will develop from here on in?

7. Do you think everyone in the novel feels guilty about something? Do you think anyone in the novel is completely innocent? Trace the lines of guilt that connect the characters to each other and each other's secrets.

8. Mr. Waxman's students devoted much time to preparing for the All-State band competition, so the black students' protest during the competition itself was especially upsetting to many of their white classmates. Do you feel the protest was justified? How did Daniel's perception of this protest change as he considered both sides of the debate?

9. One Mississippi ends in a shocking way. What unexpected sides of Tim's and Daniel's characters are ultimately revealed? Might anything have averted the events at the school in the final scene?

Author Bio

Mark Childress was born in Monroeville, Alabama. He has lived in Ohio, Indiana, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, California, and Costa Rica, and currently lives in New York City.

Attending high school in the 1970s in Mississippi was an experience that contributed to his desire to become a writer. (He wore a tasteful charcoal-gray tuxedo to the prom, and the girl he invited was very good-looking.)

After graduation from the University of Alabama in 1978, Mark was a reporter for *The Birmingham News*, Features Editor of *Southern Living*magazine, and Regional Editor of *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*.

His articles and reviews have appeared in *The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, The Times of London, San Francisco Chronicle, Saturday Review, Chicago Tribune, Philadelphia Inquirer, Travel and Leisure*, and other national and international publications.

Tender, a Literary Guild and Doubleday Book Club selection, was named to several Ten Best lists, and appeared on many national bestseller lists. **Crazy in Alabama**, a featured selection of the Literary Guild, was an international bestseller in the U.S., Great Britain, Germany, Spain, Italy, France, Russia, Holland, Denmark, Poland, and Finland, and appeared on many Ten Best lists. **Crazy** was named *The (London) Spectator*'s "Book of the Year" for 1993 and a *New York Times* "Notable Book of the Year," and spent ten months on the Der Spiegel bestseller list in Germany.

Mark received the Thomas Wolfe Award, the University of Alabama's Distinguished Alumni Award, and the Alabama Library Association's Writer of the Year. He has also written three picture books for children, **Joshua and Bigtooth** (1992), **Joshua and the Big Bad Blue Crabs** (1996), (both from Little, Brown), and **Henry Bobbity Is Missing And It Is All Billy Bobbity's Fault**, (Crane Hill Publishers, 1996).

He wrote the screenplay of the Columbia Pictures film "*Crazy in Alabama*," directed by Antonio Banderas, and starring Melanie Griffith, an official selection of the Venice and San Sebastian film festivals.

Mark is the author of six novels: **A World Made of Fire** (1984), **V for Victor**(1988), **Tender** (1990), **Crazy in Alabama** (1993), **Gone for Good**, (1998), and **One Mississippi**, to be published July 3, 2006 by Little, Brown and Co.

Critical Praise

"By turns rollicking and troubling, as provocative as it is droll, **One Mississippi** is about as easy to resist as a riptide. This critic's advice is to go with its powerful flow."

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