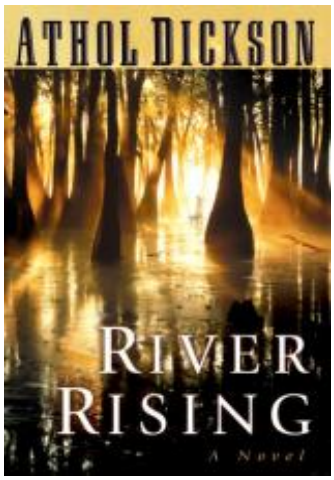
ReadingGroupGuides
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River Rising

by Athol Dickson



About the Book

Welcome to Pilotville, Louisiana, 1927, isolated outpost on the Mississippi River--a stilt village bounded by swampland to the horizon, accessible only by boat, an island of brotherly love in a sea of racism. Meet Hale Poser, a stranger with a bad hip who's come looking for his roots--a humble man, a righteous man, a miracle man. In the swamp beyond the cypress and the tupelo and veiled by Spanish moss lies a lingering evil. For years it slept in dreadful isolation. Now comes Hale Poser, and it will sleep no more. It will rain down on Pilotville, it will rise up like a river, and nothing but a miracle can stop this awful flood.

Discussion Guide

1. What is the primary theme of the novel, and what makes you believe it is the primary theme?

2. What secondary themes does the novel explore, and how do they relate to the primary theme?

3. What is the allegorical significance of the village, the plantation, the boardwalks, the levees, the slaves, the kidnapped babies, and the flood?

4. Of all the Pilotville residents? reactions in Chapter 24 when Hale Poser told them about the plantation and begged them to return there with him, which one sounds the most like something you might say, and why?

5. What is "the paradox of miracles" in Chapter 25? How does it apply to your life?

6. What was your initial reaction when you read the statement, "God came down a nigger" in Chapter 25? Why did you respond that way? Has your reaction changed upon further reflection, and if so, why?

7. Other than Hale Poser, which one of the characters do you respect the most, and why?

8. On a allegorical level, what main problem faced the people in the village? What main problem faced the people on the plantation? How are these problems similar and how are they different? What does this suggest about the solution(s) to the problems?

9. What is the allegorical significance of the fact that the slaves destroyed the levee themselves? How does Hale Poser?s choice to die alongside them relate to this?

10. Were Dorothy Truett and Wallace Pogue right to leave their churches in the final chapter, or should they have stayed?

Author Bio

Athol Dickson's university-level training in painting, sculpture, and architecture was followed by a long career as an architect then his decision several years ago to devote full time to writing. RIVER RISING, named one of the top novels of 2006 by *Booklist* magazine, received a Christy Award and his novel THEY SHALL SEE GOD was a Christy Award finalist. He and his wife, Sue, live in Southern California.

Critical Praise

"The stunning beauty of Athol Dickson's writing is a perfect compliment to the spellbinding story of RIVER RISING."

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