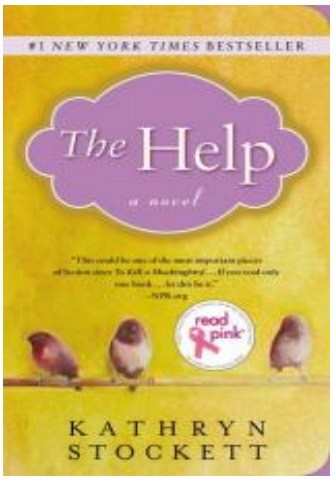
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The Help

by Kathryn Stockett



About the Book

Be prepared to meet three unforgettable women:

Twenty-two-year-old Skeeter has just returned home after graduating from Ole Miss. She may have a degree, but it is 1962, Mississippi, and her mother will not be happy till Skeeter has a ring on her finger. Skeeter would normally find solace with her beloved maid Constantine, the woman who raised her, but Constantine has disappeared and no one will tell Skeeter where she has gone.

Aibileen is a black maid, a wise, regal woman raising her seventeenth white child. Something has shifted inside her after the loss of her own son, who died while his bosses looked the other way. She is devoted to the little girl she looks after, though she knows both their hearts may be broken.

Minny, Aibileen's best friend, is short, fat, and perhaps the sassiest woman in Mississippi. She can cook like nobody's business, but she can't mind her tongue, so she's lost yet another job. Minny finally finds a position working for someone too new to town to know her reputation. But her new boss has secrets of her own.

Seemingly as different from one another as can be, these women will nonetheless come together for a clandestine project that will put them all at risk. And why? Because they are suffocating within the lines that define their town and their times. And sometimes lines are made to be crossed.

In pitch-perfect voices, Kathryn Stockett creates three extraordinary women whose determination to start a movement of their own forever changes a town, and the way women-mothers, daughters, caregivers, friends-view one another. A deeply moving novel filled with poignancy, humor, and hope, THE HELP is a timeless and universal story about the lines we abide by, and the ones we don't.

Click here to listen to Kathryn Stockett discuss THE HELP, and discover the story behind the novel.

Discussion Guide

1. Who was your favorite character? Why?

2. What do you think motivated Hilly? On one hand she?s so unpleasant to Aibileen and her own help, as well as to Skeeter once she realizes she can?t control her. But she?s a wonderful mother. Do you think you can be a good mother but at the same time a deeply flawed person?

3. Like Hilly, Skeeter?s mother is a prime example of someone deeply flawed yet somewhat sympathetic. She seems to care for Skeeter ? and she also seems to have very real feelings for Constantine. Yet the ultimatum she gives to Constantine is untenable. And most of her interaction with Skeeter is critical. Do you think Skeeter?s mother is a sympathetic or unsympathetic character? Why?

4. How much of a person?s character do you think is shaped by the times in which they live?

5. Did it bother you that Skeeter is willing to overlook so many of Stuart?s faults so that she can get married, and it?s not until he literally gets up and walks away that the engagement falls apart?

6. Do you think Minny was justified in her distrust of white people?

7. Do you think that had Aibileen stayed working for Miss Elizabeth, that Mae Mobley would have grown up to be racist like her mother? Do you think racism is inherent, or taught?

8. From the perspective of a 21st century reader, the hair shellac system that Skeeter undergoes seems ludicrous. Yet women still alter their looks in rather peculiar ways as the definition of ?beauty? changes with the times. Looking back on your past, what?s the most ridiculous beauty regimen you ever underwent?

9. The author manages to paint Aibileen with a quiet grace and an aura of wisdom about her. How do you think she does this?

10. Do you think there are still vestiges of racism in relationships where people of color work for people who are white? Have you heard stories of someone who put away their valuable jewelry before their nanny comes ? so they trust this person to look after their child, but not their diamond rings?

11. What did you think about Minny?s pie for Miss Hilly? Would you have gone as far as Minny did for revenge?

Author Bio

Kathryn Stockett was born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi. After graduating from the University of Alabama, she moved to New York City, where she worked in magazine publishing and marketing for nine years. Her first novel, THE

HELP, has sold over 15 million copies worldwide.

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