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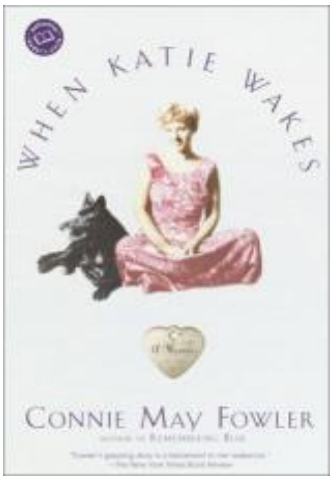
When Katie Wakes

by Connie May Fowler



About the Book

As a young woman, Fowler found herself involved with a man whose behavior disturbingly echoed her mother's. The man she lived with alternately displayed a desperate need for her and rejected her as if she were worse than useless. With heart-wrenching candor, Fowler records the abuse she suffered at his hands, from his constant attempts to undermine her self-confidence to his acts of brutal physical violence. The unconditional love she longed for finally came - in the shape of an adoring Labrador puppy named Kateland. With Katie at her side, Fowler was able to withstand her mistreatment and the crushing weight of her childhood and, miraculously, managed to create a small refuge amid the horrors that surrounded her. This is the story of her decision to end the years of mistreatment and even to open her life to a new, gentle man, whose love and understanding helped to transform her.

Well known for her work with victims of domestic abuse through the Connie May Fowler Women with Wings Foundation, Fowler now offers a strong helping hand to women everywhere in this startling, revealing, and ultimately inspiring memoir.

Discussion Guide

1. Domestic violence is about one person using emotionally, physically, sexually and psychologically abusive tactics to gain power and control over another. What forms of abuse did Connie suffer at the hands of her abusive partner? Her mother?

2. During her relationship with her abuser, Connie rarely defends herself. But the day she brings Katie home Connie says to him, "don't handle her like that" and "I mean it, leave her alone". Why do you suppose she's willing to stand up to him for Katie? How dangerous was it for her to do this?

3. What does Katie mean to Connie? What roles does she play in her life and why was she so important that Connie wanted to write about her?

4. There is often a cycle in families that repeats violence from generation to generation. How many generations of violence does Connie reveal from her history and what are the different ways that she expresses her understanding of the cycle? Why is understanding the abuse by her mother so important in understanding the abuse by her partner?

5. Typewriters have an important role in this story. Connie is not allowed to use her abuser's and Mika later gives her one as a gift. What do you think the typewriter means to Connie? Why do you think she risks using her abuser's in secret? What does she mean when she says "this typewriter helps me be independent?" How?

6. What do the braces mean to Connie? The surgery? Why would her partner not be supportive of her getting the dental work done?

7. Why does Connie think she wants to kill herself? Considering how hard her life was with her mother, wouldn't you think she would be grateful to have freedom? Why does she say in the book that she doesn't want to live without her mother? What does this tell us about child abuse?

8. Connie talks about how she, just like her mother, will not call law enforcement for help. Why not? What happened when her mother did? Do you think law enforcement's response to battered women has changed since then?

9. Just before her mother dies, she says to Connie, "go to hell". And Connie thinks, "maybe there is time left for me to still be a good daughter". Is Connie responsible for the abuse by her mother? By her partner?

10. The number one question asked about battered women is "why don't they just leave?" Why didn't Connie "just leave"? Is this a book about staying or leaving and why?

11. Did Mika save Connie or did Connie save herself? Who is the hero and why?

Author Bio

Connie May Fowler is an essayist, screenwriter, and novelist. Her previous books include **Sugar Rage**, **River of Hidden Dreams**, and most recently**Remembering Blue**. Her 1996 novel, **Before Women Had Wings**, won the Southern Book Critics Circle Award and was made into a successful "Oprah Winfrey Presents" TV movie. **Remembering Blue** won the Chautauqua South Award for Fiction. She and her husband are cofounders of the Connie May Fowler Women with Wings Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to aiding women and children in need. She lives in Florida.

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Publication Date: March 4, 2003
Paperback: 304 pages
Publisher: Ballantine Books
ISBN-10: 034544454X
ISBN-13: 9780345444547