

# Ya-Yas in Bloom

by Rebecca Wells

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## About the Book

For readers everywhere who are ga-ga for the Ya-Yas and clamoring for more and for those who are lucky enough to be discovering the Ya-Yas for the first time, comes a new book about the incomparable Sisterhood, bursting with life and funnier than ever....

An emotionally charged addition to Rebecca Wells' award-winning bestseller **Little Altars Everywhere** and #1 *New York Times* bestseller **Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood**, **Ya-Yas In Bloom** reveals the roots of the Ya-Yas' friendship in the 1930s and roars with all the raw power of Vivi Abbott Walker's 1962 T-Bird through sixty years of marriage, child-raising, and hair-raising family secrets.

When four-year-old Teensy Whitman prisses one time too many and stuffs a big old pecan up her nose, she sets off the chain of events that lead Vivi, Teensy, Caro, and Necie to become true sister-friends. Told in alternating voices of Vivi and the Petite Ya-Yas, Siddalee and Baylor Walker, as well as other denizens of Thornton, Louisiana, **Ya-Yas In Bloom** show us the Ya-Yas in love and at war with convention. Through crises of faith and hilarious lapses of parenting skills, brushes with alcoholism and glimpses of the dark reality of racial bigotry, the Ya-Ya values of unconditional loyalty, high style, and Cajun sass shine through. Necies wise credo, "Just think pretty pink and blue thoughts," helps too...

But in the Ya-Yas' inimitable way, these four remarkable women also teach their children about the Mysteries: the wonder of snow in the deep South, the possibility that humans are made of stars, and the belief that miracles do happen. And they need a miracle when old grudges and wounded psyches lead to a heartbreaking crime...and the dynamic web of sisterhood is the only safety net strong enough to hold families together and endure.

After two bestsellers and a blockbuster movie, the Ya-Yas have become part of American culture -- icons for the power of women's friendship. **Ya-Yas In Bloom** continues the saga, giving us more Ya-Ya lore, spun out in the rich patois of the Louisiana bayou country and brim full of the Ya-Ya message to embrace life and each other with joy.

## Discussion Guide

1. Rebecca Wells writes that the pecan that Teensy stuffed up her nose becomes a talisman of the origins of the Ya-Ya tribe, "who always made themselves up as they went along and always tried to see what they could hold inside and still keep breathing." (p. 19). What are some of the things the Ya-Yas held inside? Do you think women should keep some things inside, or let them out? Why or why not?
2. The relationships of mothers and daughters are a dominant theme in the Ya-Ya books. In this one, we learn a great deal more about the mothers of the original Ya-Yas. Vivi Abbott's mother, Mary Katherine, is called "Buggy" because she claimed she could speak in tongues (p. 14), and Genevieve Whitman is called "an uppity woman" (p. 38). How do the personalities of the mothers affect each of the daughters, Vivi and Teensy? Why do some daughters try to be like their mothers and others rebel against them?
3. The stories "Buckaroo" and "Circling the Globe" are told through the eyes of Baylor as a child. "Safety" is one of the stories told from his point of view as an adult. Talk about what kind of little boy he was. Does the child mold the man? Specifically is his choice of profession a good fit for him? Is his behavior as an adult consistent with the child he once was?
4. The impulse to protect one's family is extraordinarily powerful for parents. Baylor's first impulse after the kidnapping is to go out and buy a gun. He doesn't. Why not? Do you agree with his decision? Would you have a gun in your house? Why or why not?
5. Take a close look at Vivi Abbott's marriage to Big Shep Walker. What was wrong with it? What was right with it?
6. What are the Mysteries? How does an awareness of them change the way we perceive life ... and death?

## Author Bio

Rebecca Wells, actress, playwright, and *New York Times* bestselling author of *DIVINE SECRETS OF THE YA-YA SISTERHOOD*, *LITTLE ALTARS EVERYWHERE*, *YA-YAS IN BLOOM*, and *THE CROWNING GLORY OF CALLA LILY PONDER* was born in Louisiana.

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After college, Wells later moved to New York City to pursue her acting career and began studying the Stanislavski method of acting, as well as a depth approach that integrates spirituality and performance with Maurine Holbert. "I live in an actor's body, in which the cultivation of sense memory, active listening, and the belief that the sublime can arise

out of the most common character, word, or gesture is somewhat of a religion for me," she says.

Wells's commitment was not only to the stage, but to peace and social justice as well. In 1982 she went to Seattle, Washington, where she performed at numerous professional theaters. She also founded a chapter of Performing Artists for Nuclear Disarmament. Charmed by the beauty and grace of The Great Northwest, she decided to make it her home.

Her writing, however, resides in the heart of Louisiana. While many fans assume her work is autobiographical, Wells maintains that her stories are just that --- stories. "I grew up in the fertile world of storytelling, filled with flamboyance, flirting, futility, and fear. My work, though, is a result of my imagination dancing a kind of psycho-spiritual tango with my own history, and the final harvest is fiction, not memoir." *LITTLE ALTARS EVERYWHERE*, which won the Western States Book Award and was a *New York Times* bestseller, and *DIVINE SECRETS OF THE YA-YA SISTERHOOD*, a #1 *New York Times* bestseller and winner of the 1999 Adult Trade ABBY Award, have given Wells a dominant place in American literature.

She lives in Washington State with her husband and her King Charles Cavalier Spaniel, who is named Mercy. As Wells is fond of saying, "Dogs always remind me why the word *God* is *dog* spelled backward."

## Critical Praise

"Readers in touch with their inner Ya-Yas will feel right at home in Thornton."

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**Publication Date:** April 11, 2006

**Genres:** Fiction

**Paperback:** 258 pages

**Publisher:** Harper Paperbacks

**ISBN-10:** 0060953659

**ISBN-13:** 9780060953652