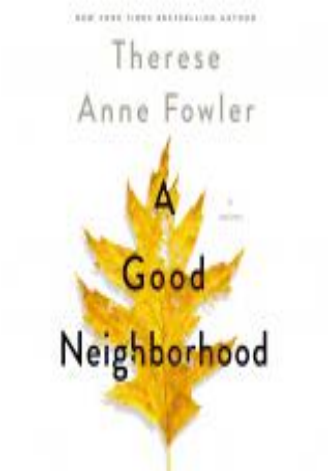
A Good Neighborhood (Audiobook)

written by Therese Anne Fowler, read by Adenrele Ojo



About the Book

In Oak Knoll, a verdant, tight-knit North Carolina neighborhood, professor of forestry and ecology Valerie Alston-Holt is raising her bright and talented biracial son, Xavier, who?s headed to college in the fall. All is well until the Whitmans --- a family with new money and a secretly troubled teenage daughter --- raze the house and trees next door to build themselves a showplace.

With little in common except a property line, these two families quickly find themselves at odds: first, over an historic oak tree in Valerie's yard, and soon after, the blossoming romance between their two teenagers.

A GOOD NEIGHBORHOOD asks big questions about life in America today --- What does it mean to be a good neighbor? How do we live alongside each other when we don't see eye to eye? --- as it explores the effects of class, race and heartrending love in a story that?s as provocative as it is powerful.

Discussion Guide

1. Early in the novel, Juniper considers: ?What, she wondered, made a neighborhood good? To her parents, good seemed to mean there were mainly other people like themselves? (pg. 50). What do you think makes a ?good? neighborhood, and is Oak Knoll one of them? As new houses are built in older, existing neighborhoods, do you think that changes the feel and culture of a place?

2. Do you view the Whitman family as genuinely Christian, or is religion primarily a tool for Julia and Brad? Can both things be true at the same time?

3. Of her new neighbors, Valerie acknowledges: ?I basically judged them from the second the chain saws started, and that bothers me. I try to give everyone a chance, or how can I complain when people pre-judge me?? (pg. 25). What

assumptions do these two families make about each other? Which of these assumptions do you consider to be racist or Classist?

4. Who should shoulder the blame for the chain of aggression between these neighbors? What actions could have been taken by either family to tame the tension?

5. The Greek chorus makes the listener a part of the story, and complicit in the action. How did that affect your listening? Who did you believe the ?we? was in the book?s narration?

6. Did you recognize your teenage self in any of the young characters in this novel? Like Juniper and Xavier, did you also share a strong sense of desiring social justice?

7. What are your thoughts on the novel?s conclusion and Xavier?s choice? Do you think that justice was ultimately served?

Author Bio

Therese Anne Fowler is the author of the *New York Times* bestselling novels IT ALL COMES DOWN TO THIS, Z: A Novel of Zelda Fitzgerald, A WELL-BEHAVED WOMAN and A GOOD NEIGHBORHOOD. Raised in the Midwest, she migrated to North Carolina in 1995. She holds a B.A. in sociology/cultural anthropology and an MFA in creative writing from North Carolina State University.

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