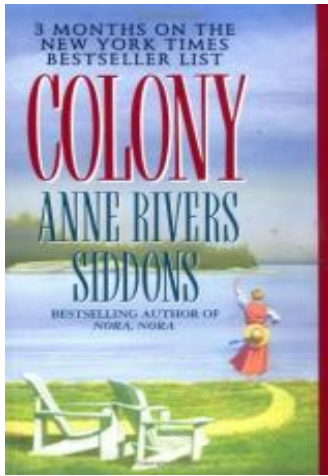


Colony

by Anne Rivers Siddons



About the Book

When Maude Chambliss first arrives at Retreat, the seasonal home of her husband's aristocratic family, she is a nineteen-year-old bride fresh from South Carolina's Low Country. Among the patrician men and women who reside in the summer colony on the coast of Maine, her gypsy-like beauty and impulsive behavior immediately brand her an outsider. She, as well as everyone else, is certain she will never fit in. And of course, she doesn't...at first.

But over the many summers she spends there, Maude comes to cherish life in the colony, as she does the people who share it with her. There is her husband Peter, consumed with a darkness of spirit; her adored but dangerously fragile children; her domineering mother-in-law, who teaches her that it is the women who possess the strength to keep the colony intact; and Maine native Micah Willis, who is ultimately Maude's truest friend.

This brilliant novel, rich with emotion, is filled with appealing, intense, and indomitable characters. Anne Rivers Siddons paints a portrait of a woman determined to preserve the spirit of past generations --- and the future of a place where she became who she is...a place called Colony

Discussion Guide

1. How does Maude permeate the rigid status quo of Retreat? Does she ever truly become an insider? Does her quintessential "otherness" ever help her in her journey?
2. Compare Maude's intimate friendship with Micah Willis, with her father-in-law's parallel relationship with Sarah Fowler. Do these platonic love affairs ultimately hurt or benefit their respective marriages? Do you agree with Christina Willis' assessment that such relationships can "stand side by side, but they can't mingle?" Does Maude succeed in keeping her loves unmingled?

3. Maude, who once hated Retreat and Liberty with all her heart, eventually finds herself being its only defender. What does Retreat, despite all its faults, offer Maude that no other person or place can? What does Maude sacrifice in order to keep Liberty?

4. Late in the novel, the novel's narrator shifts from Maude to her granddaughter, Darcy. What effect does this device have on you as a reader? Does your perception of Maude change after seeing her through Darcy's eyes?

5. What is the metaphoric significance of ospreys in the novel? How are osprey families similar to and different from their human counterparts in Retreat?

6. The colony of Retreat is much like a bee colony: the older women are the queen bees, and the younger women are the drones. How does a life of servitude affect the younger generation? Why is there such a high rate of madness among the young women of the colony: Happy, Darcy, and Elizabeth? Does this peculiar type of matriarchy truly confer power on its women? Who benefits from this system?

7. Micah Willis often tells Maude that she can never bridge the gap between being one of the "summer folk" and one of the "natives." Does their relationship ever traverse this boundary? Is it possible for them to surmount their class differences?

Author Bio

THE GIRLS OF AUGUST is Anne Rivers Siddons's 19th novel. Her previous bestselling novels include BURNT MOUNTAIN, OFF SEASON, SWEETWATER CREEK, ISLANDS, NORA NORA, LOW COUNTRY, UP ISLAND, FAULT LINES, DOWNTOWN, HILL TOWNS, COLONY, OUTER BANKS, KING'S OAK, PEACHTREE ROAD, HOMEPLACE, FOX'S EARTH, THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR and HEARTBREAK HOTEL. She is also the author of a work of nonfiction, JOHN CHANCELLOR MAKES ME CRY. She and her husband, Heyward, split their time between their home in Charleston, SC and Brooklin, ME.

Critical Praise

"An outstanding multigenerational novel...We are hooked from the moment we meet Maude. "

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