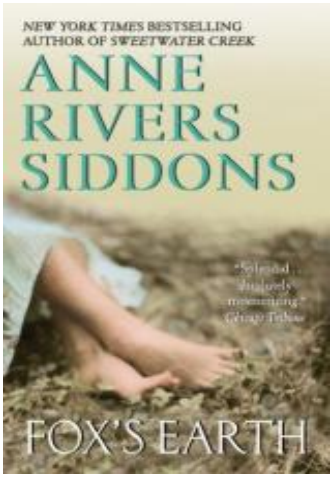
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Fox's Earth

by Anne Rivers Siddons



About the Book

Ever since she first saw the huge, sprawling house they called "Fox's Earth," little Ruth Yancey knew she wanted it for herself. The poor daughter of an insane hell-fire preacher and his battered wife, Ruth discovered her sexuality was her only ticket out of poverty and abuse. Quickly snaring the love of the ugly, dim-witted young Paul Fox, Ruth ingratiated her way into the hearts of his sweet parents as well. With an incredible degree of determination and will power, Ruth slowly transforms herself from an uneducated mill town waif, into a Southern belle of proper breeding and manners. Cleverly manipulating her tractable husband and unsuspecting in-laws, Ruth begins a lifelong campaign to gain complete dominance over all who live in Fox's Earth. Ruth knew the key to her grasp on the estate lay in her ability to control the females of Fox's Earth, her own offspring included. She turns her only child, Hebe, into a frightened, clingy woman desperate for her mother's affection, and then attempts to manipulate her grandchildren as well. Ruth is strangely aided and abetted, by her servant, Rip, who quietly and carefully watches Ruth spin out her web of domination over the household. Rip remains her mute assistant in all of her machinations in a desperate attempt to protect the young children of Fox's Earth from Ruth's direst schemes. But as the grandchildren grow older, Ruth finds her control slipping away from her, and her dangerous plans must escalate in order to maintain power. It is the youngest grandchild, Nell, Ruth's chosen successor, that initiates the collapse of Ruth's carefully laid plans. Faced with a disappointing marriage and a stifled writing career, Nell slowly learns how to break free from her grandmother's domination, and chart a life of her own making.

Discussion Guide

1. How does Pearl Yancey prepare her daughter for life? What advice does she give Ruth, both spoken and unspoken? What role does Pearl's ghost play in Ruth's life?

2. The key relationship in the novel is between mother and daughter. How do the various mother-daughter relationships

differ? Are any of them healthy? How is madness passed down to the next generation of Fox's women? Does Nell break the chain of abuse?

3. How would you define the complex relationship between Rip and Ruth? Why does each need the other? How does each have the other trapped? What is it that finally enables Rip to act out against her employer?

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.

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