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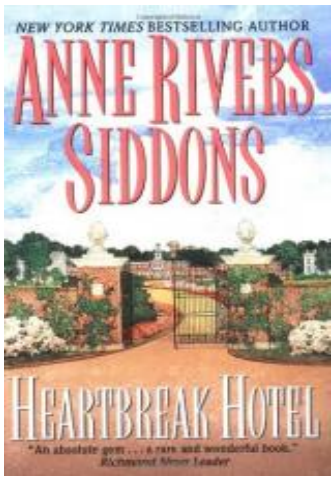
Heartbreak Hotel

by Anne Rivers Siddons



About the Book

Maggie Deloach has everything going for her. She's one of the most popular girls on Randolph University's campus, beloved of the faculty and the student body. She belongs to the best sorority and is pinned to the most eligible fraternity boy, Boots Claibornes. From an impeccable lineage, Maggie was brought up to behave like a perfect Southern belle. Maggie knows the rules and is willing to play by them, which all but guarantees her a future of smooth sailing, with no surprises, and no disappointments. But this is Alabama, in the summer of 1956, and the world is about to be rocked by the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement. Maggie runs into a young newspaper reporter, Hoyt Cunningham, who begins to open her eyes to the momentous societal changes that are happening all around her. Responding to her obvious intelligence, Hoyt challenges her to become a part of the veritable revolution that is sweeping the nation. A visit to the Claiborne family estate in the delta brings Maggie face to face with the cruel injustices of segregation and racism. Her newly-awakened moral indignation drives her to write an incendiary article in Randolph's college newspaper that forever changes the way people think of Maggie, and how she thinks of herself. As the nation rocks to Elvis Presley tunes and the winds of change blow across the South, Maggie is launched onto a wrenching journey of self-discovery that threatens to shatter her whole world.

Discussion Guide

1. Maggie says of the imprisoned black man, "he was something in a trap and he couldn't get out, and he hated the people who'd trapped him, but at the same time he'd do anything on earth they wanted him to, just so they didn't punish him. And I recognized that, I knew what he was feeling, I understood that." What does she mean? What does her initial empathy for the black man lead her to conclude about her own life? How does she succeed in getting out of the "trap" for herself?

2. What role does Aiken play in Maggie's life? How does Maggie's impression of Aiken change through the course of

the novel? What are the different types of friendships Maggie has with other women? Which proves to be the most instrumental in her life, and why?

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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Publication Date: July 15, 1993
Paperback: 320 pages
Publisher: HarperTorch
ISBN-10: 0061042781
ISBN-13: 9780061042782