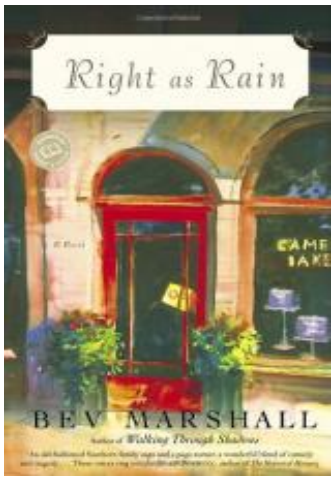
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

Right as Rain: A Novel

by Bev Marshall



About the Book

A richly emotional novel spanning two decades in the Deep South, the story of Tee Wee and Icey?a cook and a housekeeper working side-by-side in rural Mississippi?as well as their children and the family that employs the two women, is a prism through which we view the universal: racial strife, shattered ties, secrets, and redemption. Illuminated by a resonant storytelling voice and dialogue that rings loud and true, **Right as Rain** provides indelible portraits of indomitable characters and an almost tangible sense of place, while revealing a deep understanding of race in mid-century America's south.

Discussion Guide

1. Right as Rain follows Tee Wee and Icey's friendship from their first meeting until the scene between them at the end of the novel. While they love and support each other, theirs is a relationship fraught with competition. In one scene their anger incites them to an actual physical battle. Is this friendship realistic? How does it compare to the relationships of modern women?

2. What impact does the civil rights movement have on each of the characters, especially the African-American characters? How would their lives differ today had they been born post?civil rights movement?

3. The author of **Right as Rain** is white. However, the majority of the voices in the novel are those of African Americans. How well did she depict those voices? In what passages did she fail or succeed?

4. Many of the conversations between Ruthie and Dimple center on sex and religion. How do their views differ? To what do you attribute their dissimilar views on sexuality and God?

5. Crow is one of the most complex characters in **Right as Rain**. She is determined to leave Parsons Place and, after the

death of her cat, vows never to love anyone or anything. Yet, she falls in love with Browder, seemingly against her will. How and why does she recant her earlier feelings? Is this consistent with her character?

6. Much of Part Three is devoted to J.P.'s trial. Considering the era and J.P.'s race, did you expect the verdict to be guilty or not guilty? To what or whom do you attribute the verdict? Is it a realistic one?

7. Ruthie's relationship with Dennis is problematic throughout the novel. Trace the development of that relationship beginning in high school. Why did Ruthie marry Dennis? What factors contributed to her staying in an abusive relationship for so many years?

8. The mother-daughter relationships in **Right as Rain** differ greatly between the African Americans and the Parsonses. Characterize and contrast the interaction between Tee Wee and Crow and Mrs. Parsons and Ruthie.

9. Browder's obsession with films and Crow begins in puberty. Yet he marries Missy and takes over the farm after his father dies. Do you see Browder as a weak character or do you consider his actions noble? Why? Would his relationship with his father change if the novel were set in recent times and, if so, in what ways?

10. At the end of the novel Icey and Tee Wee have become business partners. Do you think this partnership will succeed? Why? What do you foresee happening between them as they grow older?

11. If Crow had told Browder about her pregnancy, how would he have reacted to this news?

12. The bond between Ruthie and Tee Wee is sustained throughout the novel. Trace the development of their relationship from Ruthie's childhood to J.P.'s going-away party. How does their relationship change? How does it remain constant?

Author Bio

Bev Marshall is the critically acclaimed author of **Walking Through Shadows**. A native of McComb, Mississippi, she lived as a nomadic military wife for many years. Marshall returned to her Southern roots and taught English at Southeastern Louisiana University. She now lives in Ponchatoula, Louisiana, with her husband.

Critical Praise

"Bev Marshall has managed the rare feat of mixing history and fiction, memory and magic, and she has accomplished the all but impossible task of writing about race in a way that is utterly generous, without censure, apology, or fear. . . . After this one book, she's one of my favorite writers. I look forward to reading everything she's written and is going to write. It's not often that a writer's staying power is so evident so quickly."

Right as Rain: A Novel

by Bev Marshall

Publication Date: January 25, 2005
Paperback: 448 pages
Publisher: Ballantine Books
ISBN-10: 0345468422
ISBN-13: 9780345468420