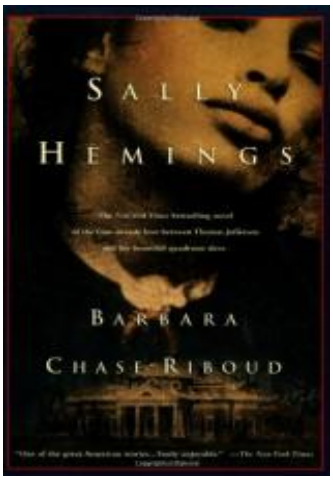
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Sally Hemings

by Barbara Chase-Riboud



About the Book

First printed 17 years ago, **Sally Hemings** was greeted with controversy, vilification, and praise. Utilizing documents and historical evidence, it recreated the love story of Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States and author of the Declaration of Independence, and his beautiful quadroon slave, Sally Hemings. While acclaimed by many reviewers, the novel was viciously attacked by historians, who claimed that the story was not only flagrantly inaccurate, but damaging to the American self-image. Recent DNA findings on the descendants of Jefferson and Hemings have confirmed the novel?s accuracy, and given new light to this moving and enlightening story.

Spanning two continents, sixty years, and seven presidencies, **Sally Hemings** explores the complex blend of love and hate, tenderness and cruelty, freedom and bondage, that made their lifelong liaison one of the most poignant and unforgettable chapters in American history.

Discussion Guide

1. Does the DNA confirmation that Thomas Jefferson fathered seven children with Sally Hemings change your view of him? If so, how, and what does Barbara Chase-Riboud?s novel contribute to this view?

2. Why do you think the subject of Jefferson and Hemings? union is still controversial today?

3. Why are many historians so reluctant to embrace this fact?

4. Even though Thomas Jefferson was a president, a politician, and a writer, it was widely known throughout the Richmond-Charlottesville area that he had an ongoing relationship with his slave. Clearly a man of great power, why would Jefferson carry on a largely public love affair with Sally Hemings? What does this say about him as a man and a leader?

5. The polarities of Jefferson and Hemings? homes--Monticello and Paris, America and France--were vastly antithetical. Revolutionary Paris?s views on race, love, and politics were in many ways freer and more accepting than provincial America. How do you believe these two locations affected Jefferson?s thinking? And how did their various constraints and liberties encourage or condemn the two?s affair?

6. The media of early America was full of muckraking and scandalous rumors. When down-and-out journalist James Callender broke the news of Hemings and her children, it became a nation-wide sensation, but then was quickly ignored or forgotten. How do you think the media of that age compares with ours, and in what ways is it different?

7. Why do you think Sally Hemings chose to stay at Monticello and bear Jefferson seven children?

Author Bio

Barbara Chase-Riboud won the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize for best novel by an American woman for **Sally Hemings**. A widely-exhibited and acclaimed sculptor as well as a writer, her novels include **Echo of Lions** and **The President's Daughter**. She divides her time between Paris and the United States.

Critical Praise

"**Sally Hemings** is an achievement, that rare novel that takes us far beyond mundane levels of reality and fabrication to a new vision of a much-repressed part of our history? Beautifully written. "

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