The Air Between Us

by Deborah Johnson



About the Book

Revere, Mississippi, with its population of "20,000 and sinking," is not unlike most Southern towns in the 1960s. Black people live on one side of town and whites on the other. The two rarely mix. Or so everyone believes. But the truth is brought to the forefront when Critter, who is only ten, black and barely tall enough to see over the dashboard, drives Billy Ray --- wounded in a suspicious hunting accident --- to the segregated Doctor's Hospital. Dr. Cooper Connelly, the town's most high-profile resident, assures Billy Ray's family he'll be fine. He dies, however, and most people assume it is just a typical hunting accident?until the sheriff orders an investigation.

Suddenly the connections between white and black are revealed to be deeper than anyone expects, which makes the town's struggle with integration that much more complicated and consuming. Dr. Connelly takes an unexpectedly progressive view toward integration; the esteemed Dr. Reese Jackson, who is so prominent even Ebony has profiled him, tries to stay above the fray. At times, it seems the town's only distraction is the racially ambiguous Madame Melba, a fortune-teller and "voyeur" with a past.

With endearing, fully-realized characters and a mystery that will keep readers guessing until the final page, **The Air Between Us** will keep you engrossed until the end.

To learn more about **The Air Between Us** and to watch a video in which author Deborah Johnson discusses the book, please click here.

Click here to read an excerpt from **The Air Between Us**.

Discussion Guide

1. Jack Rand Connelly has a strong influence on many of the characters. Why is he not more of a "physical" presence?

2. Lyle Dean Jackson and Evelyne Elizabeth Connelly are both doctors' wives. What are the similarities and differences between the two women?

3. The women in the novel are sheltered from a lot of the men's "secrets." Do you think this has to do with the times they live in or are there other reasons?

4. What is the significance of the title and Dr. Connelly's words to Melba about "the air between us"?

5. There are three children: Skippy Jackson, Janet Puckett, and Critter Tate. What role does each play in the final outcome of the novel?

6. Why does Reese Jackson disapprove of the relationship between his wife and Madame Melba?

7. What role does the river play in the novel?

8. How did the events of the storyline contribute to the desegregation of the schools?

9. Do you feel the death of Billy Ray Puckett was justified?

10. If you were alive during the 1960s, do you think your town faced the same problems as those in Revere, Mississippi?

Author Bio

Deborah Johnson was born below the Mason-Dixon Line, in Missouri, but grew up in Omaha, Nebraska.

After college, she lived in San Francisco and then for many years in Rome, Italy where she worked as a translator and editor of doctoral theses and at Vatican Radio.

Deborah Johnson is the author of THE AIR BETWEEN US, which received the Mississippi Library Association Award for fiction. She now lives in Columbus, Mississippi, and is working on her next novel.

The Air Between Us
by Deborah Johnson

Publication Date: March 24, 2009
Paperback: 336 pages
Publisher: Amistad
ISBN-10: 0061255580
ISBN-13: 9780061255588