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Whiter Than Snow

by Sandra Dallas

About the Book

WHITER THAN SNOW opens in 1920, on a spring afternoon in Swandyke, a small town near Colorado?s Tenmile Range. Just moments after four o?clock, a large split of snow separates from Jubilee Mountain high above the tiny hamlet and hurtles down the rocky slope, enveloping everything in its path including nine young children who are walking home from school. But only four children survive. WHITER THAN SNOW takes you into the lives of each of these families: There?s Lucy and Dolly Patch --- two sisters, long estranged by a shocking betrayal. Joe Cobb, Swandyke?s only black resident, whose love for his daughter Jane forces him to flee Alabama. There?s Grace Foote, who hides secrets and scandal that belies her genteel façade. And Minder Evans, a civil war veteran who considers his cowardice his greatest sin. Finally, there?s Essie Snowball, born Esther Schnable to conservative Jewish parents, but who now works as a prostitute and hides her child?s parentage from all the world.

Ultimately, each story serves as an allegory to the greater theme of the novel by echoing that fate, chance, and perhaps even divine providence, are all woven into the fabric of everyday life. And it?s through each character?s defining moment in his or her past that the reader understands how each child has become its parent?s purpose for living. In the end, it?s a novel of forgiveness, redemption, survival, faith and family.

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Discussion Guide

1. Why does Lucy hate Swandyke, while her sister Dolly loves it? What do the mountains represent to each girl? Why did Lucy miss Dolly more than Ted during the women?s estrangement?

2. Emancipation did not end prejudice against African Americans, and in many cases, their treatment was worse after

freedom. Compare the lives of men during slavery with Joe?s life as a post-Civil War black man. How was it better and worse? When did the attitude toward blacks change, and what brought about that change?

3. Why was Grace so anxious to find a husband after she discovered her family?s fortune was gone? Did she have options other than marriage? Compare her life with Jim with what it would have been if she?d married George.

4. Should Minder have tried to save Billy Boy, even though both men would have drowned? Why didn?t Minder identify himself to Kate when he encountered her in Fort Madison? Should he have done so?

5. What made Esther more ambitious than her sister? What alternative did she have to becoming a prostitute? Does she have a future in Swandyke? Will the townspeople ever forget she was a hooker?

6. Which character in the book did you relate to most, and why?

7. You knew from the outset that only four of the nine children caught in the avalanche would live. Which ones would you have saved?

8. If an avalanche took place in a small mountain town today, how would the residents? reactions differ from those of the townspeople in Swandyke in 1920? How would they be the same?

9. Why does tragedy bring people together? How did it change the characters in **Whiter Than Snow**? And how does it change people in general?

Author Bio

Sandra Dallas is a *New York Times* bestselling author of 20 adult novels, several children's novels, and numerous works of nonfiction about Western subjects. Her work has won numerous awards and prizes, including the Colorado Book Award, and, in 2021, she was inducted into the Colorado Authors' Hall of Fame. A former bureau chief for *Business Week* magazine, Sandra lives in Denver and Georgetown, Colorado, with her husband.

Critical Praise

A quintessential American voice.

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