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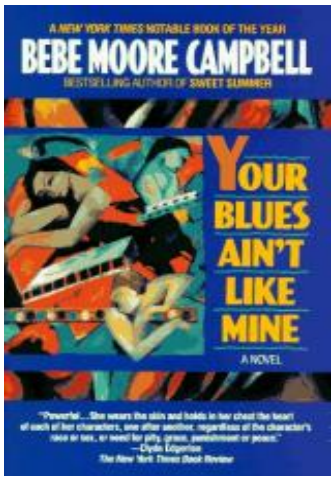
Your Blues Ain't Like Mine

by Bebe Moore Campbell



About the Book

Chicago-born Armstrong Todd is fifteen, black, and not used to the segregated ways of the Deep South when his mother sends him to spend the summer with relatives in her native rural Mississippi. For speaking a few innocuous words in French to a white woman, Armstrong pays the ultimate price when her husband, brother-in-law, and father-in-law decide to teach him a lesson. As each man and woman turns toward or away from the calling of their hearts, this precariously balanced world and its determined people-white and black-are changed, then and forever, by the horror of poverty, the legacy of justice, and the singular gift of love's power to heal.

Discussion Guide

1. Armstrong Todd is the perfect scapegoat. Why?

2. Lily Cox is partly responsible for Armstrong Todd's murder. Yet, in what ways is she also a victim?

3. Floyd Cox and Clayton Pinochet appear to be two different men from two different walks of life. Examine the ways in which their relationships with their fathers are similar and in which ways Floyd's and Clayton's responses to their fathers are different.

4. Ida and Sweetbabe, Lily and Floyd junior--two mothers and two sons. How are Ida's and Lily's circumstances similar? How is Ida's character different from that of Lily's?

5. Discuss the character of Jake. Is he an enemy to his own race, an enemy, or just selfish?

6. The Illinois Central train runs through the town of Hopewell. What does this train mean to Armstrong, Lily, Ida, and Clayton?

7. What is Clayton and Marguerite's relationship like initially? How does this relationship change? Why does it change?

8. Wydell poses the question to Delotha, "What kind of mother would send her own kid to that hellhole?" Was Delotha a bad mother and responsible for Armstrong's fate?

9. Does Wydell ever become a real man? Why or why not?

10. What is the significance of the singing of black slaves to all the different characters, black and white, throughout the novel?

Author Bio

Bebe Moore Campbell is a bestselling author and a journalist. Her nonfiction work has appeared in ***The New York Times , The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Ms., Essence, Black Enterprise, Ebony, Working Mother, USA Weekend,*** and ***Adweek,*** among other publications. She is a regular contributor to National Public Radio.

Critical Praise

"Intriguing?A thoughtful, intelligent work?The novel traces the yeasr from he '50s to the ate '80s, from Eisenhower to George Bush?.She writes with simple eloquence about small-town life in the South, right after the start of the great social upheaval of he civil rights movement?.Campbell has a strong creative voice."

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