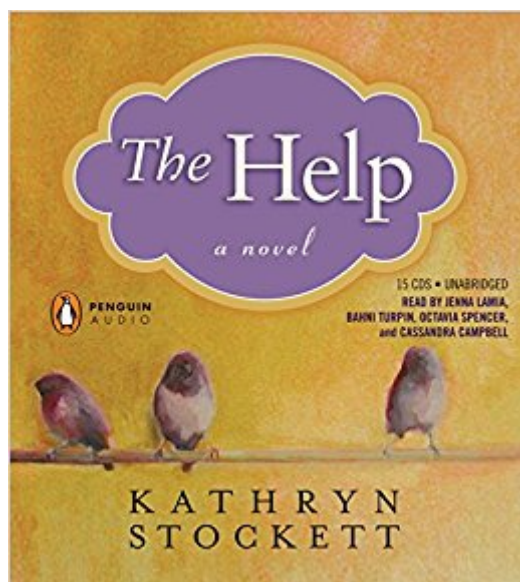


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The Help



Synopsis

Be prepared to meet three unforgettable women. Twenty-two-year-old Skeeter has just returned home after graduating from Ole Miss. She may have a degree, but it is 1962, Mississippi, and her mother will not be happy till Skeeter has a ring on her finger. Skeeter would normally find solace with her beloved maid Constantine, the woman who raised her, but Constantine has disappeared and no one will tell Skeeter where she has gone. Aibileen is a black maid, a wise, regal woman raising her seventeenth white child. Something has shifted inside her after the loss of her own son, who died while his bosses looked the other way. She is devoted to the little girl she looks after, though she knows both their hearts may be broken. Minny, Aibileen's best friend, is short, fat, and perhaps the sassiest woman in Mississippi. She can cook like nobody's business, but she can't mind her tongue, so she's lost yet another job. Minny finally finds a position working for someone too new to town to know her reputation. But her new boss has secrets of her own. Seemingly as different from one another as can be, these women will nonetheless come together for a clandestine project that will put them all at risk. And why? Because they are suffocating within the lines that define their town and their times. And sometimes lines are made to be crossed. In pitch-perfect voices, Kathryn Stockett creates three extraordinary women whose determination to start a movement of their own forever changes a town, and the way women's mothers, daughters, caregivers, friends's view one another. A deeply moving novel filled with poignancy, humor, and hope, *The Help* is a timeless and universal story about the lines we abide by, and the ones we don't.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Four peerless actors render an array of sharply defined black and white characters in the nascent years of the civil rights movement. They each handle a variety of Southern accents with aplomb and draw out the daily humiliation and pain the maids are subject to, as well as their abiding affection for their white charges. The actors handle the narration and dialogue so well that no character is ever stereotyped, the humor is always delightful, and the listener is led through the multilayered stories of maids and mistresses. The novel is a superb intertwining of personal and political history in Jackson, Miss., in the early 1960s, but this reading gives it a deeper and fuller power. A Putnam hardcover (Reviews, Dec. 1). (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

In writing about such a troubled time in American history, Southern-born Stockett takes a big risk, one that paid off enormously. Critics praised Stockett's skillful depiction of the ironies and hypocrisies that defined an era, without resorting to depressing or controversial clichés. Rather, Stockett focuses on the fascinating and complex relationships between vastly different members of a household. Additionally, reviewers loved (and loathed) Stockett's three-dimensional characters—and cheered and hissed their favorites to the end. Several critics questioned Stockett's decision to use a heavy dialect solely for the black characters. Overall, however, *The Help* is a compassionate, original story, as well as an excellent choice for book groups. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

I originally read the audio book edition of "The Help" by Kathryn Stockett and later read it on my Kindle for book club. *The Help* is most definitely on my short list for all time favorite books. I am not sure which was better the audio book or the Kindle read. This is the first novel by this author and I do not know how she will ever top herself. The book is about the relationship between White women living in the deep South in the early 1960's and their Negro domestic help. It shows a time, not all that long ago, when there was no such thing as political correctness, when Whites, especially in the South, had no problems showing their Negro help who was boss. At that time in Jackson, Mississippi, a Black woman was allowed in a White grocery store only if she was wearing her white maid's uniform. The grocery stores in the Negro section of town were not well lit, not too clean and not very well stocked. For a maid to speak out of turn was reason enough for immediate firing, if not putting herself and her family in physical danger. To characterize the racial condition of the American South in 1963 as American Apartheid, would not be an exaggeration. But, this is only the

backdrop of the story. The real story is about the relationship that develops between one White woman, Skeeter and the Black maids, Abilene and Minny, she eventually writes a book about. Skeeter recently graduated from college with a degree in Journalism, which was all well and good, except all anyone, especially, in this case, Skeeter's mother, really expected from women who attended college in that time was to get their MRS.degree; anything less was all but useless. Skeeter, was an exception to the rule. She was determined to be a writer and unlike her close friends, with whom she played bridge on a weekly basis and was a member of the local women's organizations, Skeeter had a sense that all was not well regarding race relations in the South. In her attempts to find something worthwhile to write about, she decides on exploring what it is like for the "colored maids" to work for the white women of Jackson, Mississippi, from the maid's point of view. And so begins the relationship that develops between Skeeter and Abilene and Minny, who work for her friends. The author, who is White, takes on the task of giving voices to the Negro maids who are interviewed for her book and those voices are believable and pitch perfect. This was the first book I have read in many years, perhaps decades, in which I felt a kinship with these main characters to the extent that I already miss them, as if they had been guests staying at my home and have now left, leaving me with a sad void. I hope that Kathryn Stockett sees fit to write a sequel to "The Help", so that her readers can know what happens to her characters in the years to come. If you are an avid reader or if you only read a few books a year, you will want to read "The Help".

I enjoyed the movie so I gave the book a shot. It's pretty interesting to me, I just wish the ending had been a tad different and not ended at a bus stop. There are some differences in the book and movie, but overall it's pretty much the same. One thing- the writing may be a problem for some people, particularly if you're not southern, it may be hard to comprehend. I had no trouble personally, but a lot of it is written like the black characters spoke at the time. It's a little over 500 pages, but I read it in 2 nights, so it's not a slow read. I didn't feel like it ever slow or boring, but at the same time it's not one of those books I just can't put down.

Summer reading has always been my least favorite part of summer vacation. Ever since I can remember, we have been assigned books to read over the summer. This year, we had a choice between four books for English and I chose The Help by: Kathryn Stockett. Stockett really brought the stories to life by her use of multiple perspectives and vivid vocabulary. I enjoyed this book because of the way it taught about racism and Skeeter's strong personality. Reading the fictitious, yet very real stories of the Southern help creates an illustration of how prevalent racism really was.

The white ladies of Jackson were convinced to pass "a bill that requires every white home to have a separate bathroom for the colored help." We always hear about the classic stories of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., but these stories are more real and personal. Along with racism, *The Help* displays how segregated the South was in the 1960s. It was a true risk for Skeeter to work on a book with the African American help; risking her career and reputation, as well as their careers and very possibly, their lives. One of the main characters and narrators of the book, Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan has a very strong-willed, independent personality. She chose to write about what she was interested in, not necessarily what was socially acceptable. "I get to work writing down every goddamn thing that bothers me in life." Skeeter may face some obstacles along the way, but you will have to read on to find out if she prevails or not.

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