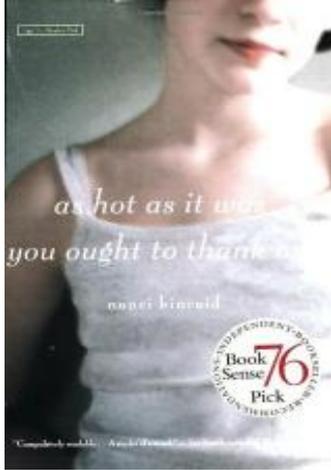


As Hot As It Was You Ought to Thank Me

by Nanci Kincaid



About the Book

Thirteen-year-old Berry Jackson has more good sense than all the Bible-thumping grown-ups in her hometown of Pinetta, Florida. In the woods behind Berry's house are the swamp and the snakes and the quicksand, where men are said to have been swallowed up whole, leaving only a hat or a handkerchief as evidence. Pinetta is the kind of small southern town where not much happens in a day but a lot can happen in a summer. **As Hot As It Was You Ought to Thank Me** tells the story of the long, hot summer when Berry's father disappears, her mother lusts after the preacher, and a handsome convict comes to town to repair the dusty roads damaged by a hurricane. Berry doesn't understand her world perfectly, but she calls things what they are --- and sometimes that's as much clarity as anyone should expect. In a town where everyone with a dream seems to want to flee, what Berry ultimately discovers is that you don't have to run to find yourself.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss Berry's attitude toward religion and faith. Religion is part of her everyday life, but how does she relate to it? Do you see a lot of religious symbolism in this novel? What about Pinetta's two churches --- how do they shape the community?
2. Broadly speaking, this is a story about a young girl's growing understanding of the adult world. How does Berry relate to the adults around her? What does she learn? How does she react to her parents' fallibility?
3. Do parts of this novel remind you of your own childhood? What do you like most about Berry?

4. How does Berry react to people who diverge from what might be considered normal in a small southern town? (The hobos who pass through, for instance, and her friend Jimmy with his proclaimed love for Cadell.) Where do you think Berry's capacity for acceptance comes from?

5. How do you respond to Berry's relationship with Raymond? Does it make you angry, uncomfortable? What do you think about the way Berry handles it? Does her silence betray her age, or does it make her seem beyond her years? Or could Berry simply have done nothing else?

6. Berry's family's reaction to her daddy's disappearance isn't one of dramatic grief. Does this make sense to you? Why do you think the family's response is or isn't appropriate?

7. As a student in Mrs. Freddy's second-grade class, Berry is shocked at the chalk drawings of naked women on the schoolhouse walls. Later she maintains a quiet knowledge of her mother's affair with Pastor Lyons. How does Berry think about right and wrong?

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9. Some people maintain that writing a novel is as much about creating an atmosphere as it is about telling a story. What feeling does **As Hot As It Was You Ought to Thank Me** give you? How does Kincaid create the mood of this story?

Author Bio

Nanci Kincaid is the author of three previous novels --- **Crossing Blood, Balls, and Verbena** --- and a story collection, **Pretending the Bed is a Raft**, which was made into the feature film, *My Life Without Me*. She divides her time between Honolulu, Hawaii, and Austin, Texas.

As Hot As It Was You Ought to Thank Me **Publication Date:** February 1, 2005

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Paperback: 358 pages

Publisher: Back Bay Books

ISBN-10: 0316009148

ISBN-13: 9780316009140