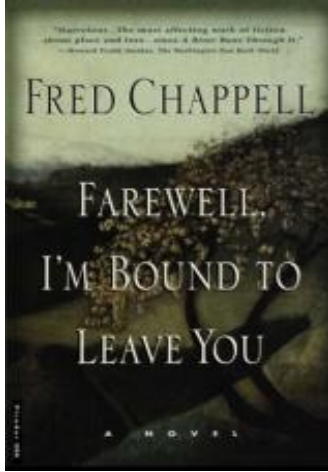


Farewell, I'm Bound to Leave You

by Fred Chappell



About the Book

A magical novel of women's wisdom passed down through generations of storytelling.

Fred Chappell has written a novel of lyrical grace, rich with the music of the Southern mountains and the stories of their people. Jess Kirkman's grandmother is dying, and as her family gathers around her, Jess remembers the tales she and his mother have passed down to him. We meet the "Fisherwoman," the "Traveling Woman," the "Feistiest Woman," the "Silent Woman," the "Wind Woman," and others, in a range of ghost to detective to comic to love stories. In preparing Jess to come of age, these stories assemble a chorus of women's voices that sing and share and celebrate the common song of life.

Discussion Guide

1. The title is a line from the Southern ballad, "O Shenandoah." How does the tradition of folk song relate to **Chappell's** method of telling his story?
2. The first sentence of the book, "The wind had got into the clocks and blown the hours awry," suggests that time has changed, and we are about to enter into an unfamiliar world. What sort of world does the book open up for us? How does this world reflect upon the one in which we live our everyday lives?
3. Each story Jess remembers contains central women characters. What is the role of women in Jess's coming of age? What wisdom do these stories contain that stories about men might not?

4. Farewell, I'm Bound to Leave You is deeply rooted in Southern traditions of storytelling, and in its hill country. Yet the book has a universal feel, gdimages/transcending its setting and colloquialism. How does Chappell's portrayal of the Kirkman family vary from more "urban" scenes of family life? What do we gain as a result?

5. What will Jess take from his grandmother after she passes on? In the world Chapel has created, how is it possible to keep the past alive for generations to come? If the novel begins as a death vigil, how does it become a celebration of life?

6. How does Chappell's style differ from most contemporary fiction? Chappel is also a poet -- how does that affect his use of language?

7. Jess's father, Joe Robert, is said not to be a good storyteller. In the logic f the novel, does that mean he plays a lesser role than his wife, or Jess's grandmother? What sort of role does he have?

Author Bio

Critical Praise

"Haunting . . . Rich, lyrical and frequently elegiac . . . **Fred Chappell** has become one of our indispensable contemporary writers. "

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