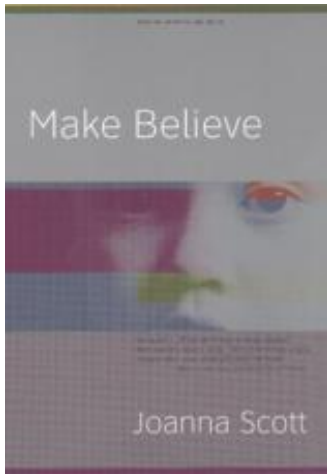


Make Believe: A Novel

by Joanna Scott



About the Book

The world of "Make Believe" into which we are drawn in this remarkable novel?hailed for both its lyrical prose and its profound dramatic and emotional intensity?is the world of four-year-old Bo, cast adrift in a sea of strangers as he becomes the focus of a fierce custody battle between two sets of grandparents, one black and one white.

Discussion Guide

1. "Erma's first thought when she heard the news was not *thank God* or *poor Jenny* but *Now that white girl is gone Bo is mine to raise properly*" (page 38). Do you think it was reasonable for Erma to assume that she would have custody of Bo?
2. People often say that a sense of humor is what they value most in a life partner. Marge notes that "Eddie rarely laughed" (page 41). And yet she seems to consider him an ideal mate. Why?
3. Why is Jenny, at the tender age of sixteen, so ready and eager to have a baby? Do you think she's emotionally prepared for moth-erhood?
4. Bo thinks, "Surely Gran and Pop had always been as old as they were now, no older, no younger" (page 79). To what extent do you consider this a childish perception? Aren't there times when all of us, caught up in our present lives, lose sight of the constancy of change?
5. Ann urges Marge to think of Bo "like a cutting from one of your rosebushes, you know, transplanted, and if he doesn't take, if we're not right for him, then we bring him back, okay?" (page 103). Do you think Marge is ever actually willing to let Bo leave?

6. Do you agree with Judge Wright's decision in *Gantz v. Gilbert*? What is the significance of the thriller that Judge Wright reads several months before he issues his decision? Describe how reading that novel influenced him.
7. Judge Wright seems to believe that the maternal bond is always stronger than a child's bond with his father. Do you agree?
8. How important is the issue of race in *Make Believe*? Do you consider it central to the novel's plot or only marginal? Discuss scenes in which characters in the novel deal with the issue of race head-on, such as when Kamon encounters the white women at McDonald's (page 146).
9. Kamon Gilbert dies harboring a single wish (page 158). What do you think his wish might have been?
10. Discuss the role of fantasy in the lives of the novel's principal characters. Why do you think Joanna Scott chose to call this novel *Make Believe*?

Author Bio

Joanna Scott is the author of 10 books, including *THE MANIKIN*, which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize; *VARIOUS ANTIDOTES* and *ARROGANCE*, which were both finalists for the PEN/Faulkner Award; and the critically acclaimed *MAKE BELIEVE*, *TOURMALINE*, *LIBERATION* and *FOLLOW ME*. She is a recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Lannan Award.

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