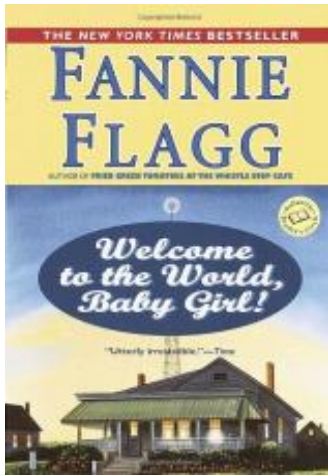


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# Welcome to the World Baby Girl!: A Novel

by Fannie Flagg

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## About the Book

Welcome to the **World, Baby Girl!** is the funny, serious, and compelling new novel by Fannie Flagg, author of the beloved **Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe** (and prize-winning co-writer of the classic movie).

Once again, Flagg's humor and respect and affection for her characters shine forth. Many inhabit small-town or suburban America. But this time, her heroine is urban: a brainy, beautiful, and ambitious rising star of 1970s television. Dena Nordstrom, pride of the network, is a woman whose future is full of promise, her present rich with complications, and her past marked by mystery.

## Discussion Guide

1. This novel tells of Dena's long journey home. What does home look and sound and smell like to you? Is it a place or a state of mind?
2. "Elmswood Springs is a town that likes itself." Do you agree with this assessment of Dena's hometown? How does Dena's opinion of the town change over the course of the novel?
3. The Smith family talks about being able to stop time. Would you like to have this power? If you could, when would you freeze time in your own life?
4. Aunt Elner would want to be at home with her family and friends if she knew the end of the world was coming. What would you do?

5. What has caused Dena's identity crisis? How does she manage to keep the people in her life fooled about her real condition for so long?
6. Why are people in Dena's life so persistent even though she continually shuts them out? Did you ever lose patience with her?
7. Why does Gerry O'Malley believe in true love? Do you think it exists?
8. Why does Dena sleep through Christmas every year and then lie about it? Many people have very conflicted feelings about the holidays for a whole host of reasons. How do you feel about holidays? Do you ever want to sleep through them?
9. Dena is initially very resistant to therapy. How much do you think therapy helped her in the end? Did this novel challenge or confirm your own opinions about therapy?
10. Dena's therapist tells her: "I think you are mistaking a profession for a personal identity." Discuss the meaning of this statement. Does it apply to anyone you know?
11. Ask each person in your reading group to give three answers to the question: who are you? How easy or difficult is this to do? Do you have any answers in common?
12. What was the significance of Dena's recurring dream about the house with the carousel?
13. Dena gets to interview Tennessee Williams, an artist who inspired her. If you could interview a person who has had a major impact on your personal/and or professional development, who would it be? What would you ask them?
14. This novel examines the nature of celebrity in modern America. Why does Dena want to be famous? And why does she eventually reject it? Is celebrity something you would want for yourself?
15. Discuss the negative impact gossip in the media has on various characters in this novel. Where do you think the line should be drawn regarding the private lives of public people?
16. Dena's career in television journalism in the 1960s and 1970s parallels the rise of an increasingly invasive and sensationalized brand of news broadcasting. To what degree do you think Dena owes her career to these developments?
17. How are Dena's good looks both a help and a hindrance in her career? Discuss the problems women face in the workplace based on appearance.
18. What was your immediate reaction upon reading about the disappearance of Dena's mother on Christmas in 1959? Did your opinion change upon learning the whole story?
19. Do you think Sookie should have confronted Dena when she first learned about her mother's disappearance? How do you think Dena would have reacted then?
20. How do you think Gene and his family and friends would have responded if Dena's mother had told them the truth?

Do you think she was justified in keeping her secret?

21. Discuss the many worlds the Le Guarde children inhabited and how their divided loyalties left them homeless in every sense of the word.

22. Discuss the idea of "one drop of blood" and race relations in the United States. How do you think things have changed, or not, since World War II?

23. Do you think Marguerite meant to do what she did in that bathroom in Vienna? What does Dena think?

24. What do you think Dena's life would have been like if her family had remained intact?

25. Dena is very reluctant to uncover the truth about her mother. Do you think she has right to do so?

26. Secrets helped destroy Dena's mother and uncle. And Dena's secrets almost killed her. What makes the difference for Dena?

27. This novel is filled with characters with distinct and quirky personalities. Who is your favorite? What is your favorite descriptive passage about them in this novel?

28. Did the structure of this novel-shifting back and forth in time and place and character-work for you? Why or why not?

29. How did your group select this novel and the other books you have read? What are you reading next?

## Author Bio

Fannie Flagg's career started in the fifth grade when she wrote, directed, and starred in her first play entitled "The Whoopee Girls," and she has not stopped since. At age 19 she began writing and producing television specials, and later wrote and appeared on "Candid Camera." She then went on to distinguish herself as an actress and a writer in television, films and the theater.

She is the *New York Times* bestselling author of DAISY FAY AND THE MIRACLE MAN; FRIED GREEN TOMATOES AT THE WHISTLE STOP CAFE; WELCOME TO THE WORLD, BABY GIRL!; STANDING IN THE RAINBOW; A REDBIRD CHRISTMAS; CAN'T WAIT TO GET TO HEAVEN; I STILL DREAM ABOUT YOU; THE ALL-GIRL FILLING STATION'S LAST REUNION; THE WHOLE TOWN'S TALKING; and THE WONDER BOY OF WHISTLE STOP.

Flagg's script for the movie *Fried Green Tomatoes* was nominated for an Academy Award, and the Writers Guild of America Award and won the highly regarded Scriptor Award for best screenplay of the year. Flagg lives happily in California and Alabama.

## Critical Praise

""Enjoyable . . . [Flagg] Keeps it simple, she keeps it bright, she keeps it moving right along--and, most of all, she keeps it beloved.""

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