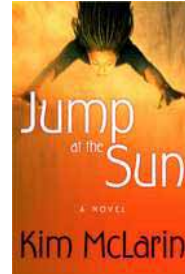


Reading Guide

Jump at the Sun: A Novel Kim McLarin

ISBN: 0060528494; William Morrow/HarperCollins; 07/03/2006; \$24.95;
Hardcover; Pages: 320; www.kimmclarin.com



Introduction

Jump at the Sun is a searing new novel about Grace, a modern, self-realized woman, who finds herself doomed to relive the mistakes of her mother, Mattie. Growing up during the Jim Crow era, Mattie lived a life that she was not proud of, but is also not able to leave behind. McLarin explores the challenges of mothering and being mothered in a complex world. In the same bold and fearless voice she has brought to her past novels, McLarin shows how Grace is forced to struggle with the same race and gender issues that plagued Mattie, and how Grace may very well pass the same burden on to her own daughter. In a story that spans three generations, *Jump at the Sun* is a moving story about mothers and daughters which deals with issues of race and gender head on.

About the Author

Kim McLarin is the author of the critically-acclaimed novels *Taming it Down* and *Meeting of the Waters*, both published by William Morrow. She is an award-winning journalist and former staff writer for *The New York Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Greensboro News & Record* and the Associated Press. Currently writer-in-residence at Emerson College, she lives with her family near Boston, MA.

Questions for Discussion

- 1) The novel explores the relationships between mothers and daughters. Has this novel made you consider how that relationship can affect a person's outlook on marriage, children, and life?
- 2) What do you think of Grace's decision at the end of the book? What are your predictions for her and her family? Is it a hopeful ending?
- 3) When Grace thought she was pregnant, she made a decision without consulting her husband. Do you think her decision was justified? What about Eddie's reaction? Do you think Grace and Eddie have a strong marriage? Overall, what commentary does the book provide about the institution of marriage?
- 4) The novel traces the lives of three generations of women. How are these women similar, and how are they different? In what ways is Grace like her mother? In what ways is Grace like her grandmother? Do they resemble women in your own family?
- 5) Rae, Mattie, and Grace grew up in three different times where the social and political environments influenced their choices, opportunities, and outlooks. How do you think these different time periods affected each of the characters and their subsequent life decisions?

- 6) Throughout the novel, the three women discuss the role of a wife. What do you think the role of a wife is? Do you agree or disagree with their opinions?
- 7) What do you think about the book's treatment of motherhood? Is it realistic? Negative? Do you think a mother must sacrifice everything for her children? Are there certain things that a mother shouldn't sacrifice?
- 8) What does the novel say about personal choice? Can you provide examples where the characters' personal choices hurt other people? Can you think of personal choices you had to make that may have hurt other people?
- 9) What is your opinion of Grace? How would you define her personality? How much of her character results from her relationships with her mother, her grandmother, and her sisters?
- 10) The book also discusses family and the various degrees of relationships within that unit. Do you believe the book contained examples of strong family units? What is the role of the family in contemporary society? What is your opinion of the current state of the family unit?
- 11) What did you think about the way the men, specifically Eddie, Clarence, Jimmy, Howard, were treated in the novel? Did they represent strong male figures?
- 12) How did you feel about Rae's decision to move with Clarence, Hootie's Brother and leave her daughter Mattie, with her aunt, Eba? Overall, what do you think about Rae as a character?
- 13) At one point in the novel, Grace's sister comments that their mother cares for foster kids because caring for children is all she knows. Do you agree with that statement? Did Mattie's life revolve around her children?
- 14) In subtle ways, the novel addresses forgiveness. Do you think Mattie was able to forgive her mother before she died? What do you believe is the relationship between forgiveness and healing?