



Shifting Through Neutral

By **Bridgett M. Davis**
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Introduction

For Rae Datsun, the early 70s are as hopeful and promising as the prolific as the Peace signs. The signature sounds of Motown are filling Detroit's airwaves and the automobile factories are supporting a burgeoning middle class who work by day and play by night. Rae's hip, older sister has moved back home from New Orleans; her mother's nerves have calmed enough for her to stop taking her "vitamins"; and her father has new painkillers that ease his chronic migraines. But all that changes when Rae's mother suddenly takes off down a stretch of highway with her one true love, taking Rae's beloved sister along with her. Left to care for her ailing father, Rae grows up faster than any young girl should and is forced to confront the cracks in her world.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the author show intimacy between Rae and her father? How does Rae react when her father begins to withdraw as she grows older?
2. What is the significance of the title and how does it connect to the main characters' lives?
3. How does music function throughout the book?
4. How does Kimmie's death impact the dynamics of the relationships in the household?

About the author

Bridgett M. Davis is an associate professor of English at City University of New York's Baruch College, where she teaches film writing, journalism, and literature. She lives in Brooklyn, New York with her husband and son.