



Ya-Yas in Bloom

By Rebecca Wells
ISBN: 9780060953652

Introduction

The third book in the Ya-Ya saga returns to the roots of the Ya-Ya friendship during the 1930s in Thornton, Louisiana, when four-year-old Teensy Whitman stuffs a big old pecan up her nose out of boredom. Rushed to Dr. Mott's office by her Cajun Mama, Genevieve Whitman, she sets off a chain of events that leads Vivi, Teensy, Caro, and Necie to become lifelong sister friends. Then the novel roars with all the raw power of Vivi's vintage T-Bird through sixty years of marriage, parenting mistakes, and hair-raising family secrets.

A narrative woven out of many voices, including those of Vivi and the petite Ya-Yas, Sidda and Baylor Walker, as well as tales by other inhabitants of the small town of Thornton, *Ya-Yas in Bloom* depicts the profound emotional ties among women and the confidences they share. Each episode, told in the rich patois of Cajun Bayou country, brings to life the Ya-Yas in love and at war with convention.

From a show-down with the nuns at Divine Compassion Parochial School to a uproarious trip to see the Beatles, from the disturbing effects of alcoholism to the dark realities of racial bigotry, the Ya-Ya values of unconditional loyalty, high style, and Southern sass shine through. Necie's wise credo, "Just think pretty pink and blue thoughts," helps too.

But the four remarkable women who call themselves the Ya-Yas also teach their children about the Mysteries: the wonder of snow in the deep South, the theory that humans are made of stardust, and the certainty that miracles do occur. And the Ya-Yas need a miracle when old grudges and wounded psyches lead to a heartbreaking crime. It is the dynamic web of sisterhood that emerges as the safety net strong enough to hold families together and endure.

In this rich, multi-layered saga is ultimately a celebration of life, bursting with Ya-Ya sparkle, energy, and joie de vivre.

Questions for Discussion

1. Rebecca Wells writes that the pecan that Teensy stuffed up her nose becomes a talisman of the origins of the Ya-Ya tribe, "who always made themselves up as they went along and always tried to see what they could hold inside and still keep breathing." (p. 19). What are some of the things the Ya-Yas held inside? Do you think women should keep some things inside, or let them out? Why or why not?
2. The relationships of mothers and daughters are a dominant theme in the Ya-Ya books. In this one, we learn a great deal more about the mothers of the original Ya-Yas. Vivi Abbott's mother, Mary Katherine, is called "Buggy" because she claimed she could speak in tongues (p. 14), and Genevieve Whitman is called "an uppity woman" (p. 38). How do the personalities of the mothers affect each of the daughters, Vivi and Teensy? Why do some daughters try to be like their mothers and others rebel against them?
3. The stories "Buckaroo" and "Circling the Globe" are told through the eyes of Baylor as a child. "Safety" is one of the stories told from his point of view as an adult. Talk about what kind of little boy he was. Does the child mold the man? Specifically is his choice of profession a good fit for him? Is his behavior as an adult consistent with the child he once was?
4. The impulse to protect one's family is extraordinarily powerful for parents. Baylor's first impulse after the kidnapping is to go out and buy a gun. He doesn't. Why not? Do you agree with his decision? Would you have a gun in your house? Why or why not?
5. Take a close look at Vivi Abbott's marriage to Big Shep Walker. What was wrong with it? What was right with it?
6. What are the Mysteries? How does an awareness of them change the way we perceive life ... and death?

About the Author

A native of Louisiana, Rebecca Wells is an actor and playwright in addition to being the author of the phenomenal bestsellers *Little Altars Everywhere* and *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, which have been translated into twenty-three languages worldwide. She has received numerous awards, including the Western States Book Award for *Little Altars Everywhere* and the American Booksellers Book of the Year Award for *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*.