



Bodecia Book Club!



The Help by Kathryn Stockett

We had wanted to read *The Help* last year but we were with the libraries reading group and *The Help* was constantly booked out. So we were pleased when we finally got round to reading it.

We were not disappointed, we loved it and it is now at the top of our reading list!

As well as reading the book some of us also watched the film and there are a lot of differences between the two as we shall tell you.

We discussed the book at our usual book club meeting, although this was particularly awesome as we were fortunate to have Ann, from California who was on holiday here and also Skyped Caroline who lives in Georgia. So we could discuss the book not only from our perspective here in England but also that of our fellow Americans, where the book is based.

A lot of people have suggested that the story of *The Help* is fundamentally troubling: In both the film and the book, a white woman in 1960s Mississippi compiles the stories of black maids into a book, empowering them all in a time of segregation.

We all felt that we have yet another fictional book that puts white people at the centre of the Civil Rights Movement (like *Mississippi Burning* or *Driving Miss Daisy*.) You've got another white author telling a Civil Rights story and reaching millions of people, while stories by black writers that have black people in leading roles continue to be uncommon. The book and film caused a lot of tension in the states, a lot of afro Caribbean's didn't like that it was so well received and people said that the black actresses were selling out by playing the parts.

We can understand that frustration, and when we read Kathryn Stockett's book, we definitely encountered "white people are awesome!" moments, like when Skeeter Phelan (the writer) got to righteously disapprove of the prejudices of her well-heeled Southern friends. However, the book also features many scenes where white people—Skeeter included—are casually racist without realising it, which reminds the reader that every white person, no matter how decent, was culpable in the segregated South.

Plus, the black characters are written with equal dimension, equal amounts of good and bad traits. And since two-thirds of the novel is narrated by Aibileen (a maid with a gift for writing) and her brassy friend Minnie, black voices actually dominate the storytelling. So while we were always aware that a white woman was telling us a Civil Rights story, we were also drawn into a rich and interesting narrative that did a pretty good job of balancing its perspectives and intentions.

We can't say the same for the movie, which was written and directed by Stockett's friend Tate Taylor. Though it tells roughly the same story as the novel, it makes several small changes that seriously upend the racial balance. Much more than the book the movie is a story about white people being awesome and noble, some of the changes make the story much more palatable to white folks, it was very much sanitised.

You need to read this book, we all enjoyed the story about the poo pie! We also picked up cleaning tips! ... you need to read it! ☺

We gave *The Help* 9/10 (top read!)

The book we are now reading is ***Is It Me* by Miranda Hart**



@bodeciabookclub



The Bodecia Book Club



www.bodeciabookclub.weebly.com



bodeciabookclub@hotmail.co.uk

Don't forget the first rule of Book Club!