

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd

- Did Rosaleen realize the significance of registering to vote in the eyes of her white neighbors? What about the ramifications of spitting on their shoes?
- Should she have apologized?
- Do you lose part of your identity when one of your parents dies at a very young age?
- What did you think about the Daughters of Mary? Their devotion, hats, etc.?
- The Daughters of Mary formed an integral part of the lives of the “Calendar Girls” and ultimately Rosaleen and Lily. Do you have anything similar in your lives?
- Do men have comparable support groups?
- Why did Lily wait so long to reveal her identity to August?
- The author has said that Place has a power to transform our experience and heals the vacuums of the human spirit. How important is the sense of place to this novel? What if the pink house was in Birmingham, Alabama instead?
- Why did the author pick bees, beekeeping and honey as an integral part of the story?
- On p. 149 August refers to the Queen bee as the “Mother of Thousands”. Could this phrase symbolize anything else?
- Who is the “Queen Bee” of the book?
 - August?
 - The Black Madonna?
 - Rosaleen?
- Lily says that for some people it is easier to die than forgive. Is that true? And why is it so difficult to forgive?
- Did you find the romance between Lily and Zach believable given the times. If so, why were they drawn together?
- What is the future for the two of them?
- Which of the calendar girls was your favorite?
- Would May have done better with psychiatric help? Was that an option?
- Currently there is a strong trend toward the Feminine in religion...worship of the “Goddess” etc. Could you believe in a feminine deity?
- Did T. Ray redeem himself in the end? Was he a realistic character?
- Could we all use a “wailing wall?” Can you think of substitutes for this in your life?
- This book was set a mere 40 years ago. How have civil rights advanced since then?
- Did any of you experience the kind of racism depicted in this book?
- Should the author write a sequel?
- *The Secret Life of Bees* is scheduled to be released as a movie in 2006. Who do you think will be cast as the main characters?



Skokie Public Library

5215 Oakton Street
Skokie, Illinois 60077
847.673.7774 / 847.673.7797 fax
www.skokielibrary.info

Skokie Public Library Trustees: John Graham, President;
Diana Hunter, Vice President/President Emerita; Zelda Rich, Secretary;
Susan Greer; Eva Weiner; John M. Wozniak; Dayle Zelenka
Director: Carolyn A. Anthony

- Author's response below:
 - The week we first learned that there was interest in making a movie version of my novel, my husband and I sat around dreaming up who we thought should be in it. We mentioned Angela Basset (June), Whoopi Goldberg (May), Oprah Winfrey (August), but we never came up with a choice for Lily, Rosaleen or Zach. My husband insisted that Dwight Yoakam would be a great T. Ray after seeing him in the movie Sling Blade.