

BEECHER BOOK & BAKE

NOV. 4

BOOK



CHAT



FEMALE

Characters

Patricia Campbell

- Underestimated
- Prone to apologizing for herself
- Selfless to a fault
- Finds and loses her voice

Slick Paley

- Most devout Christian of the club
- Battles with her conscience throughout novel
- Offers encouragement to the other women even on her deathbed

Grace Cavanaugh

- Keenly observant and detail oriented
- Picture perfect southern housewife/mother
- Married to an abusive husband

Kitty Scruggs

- Fun-loving and artsy (plastic jewelry, baggy sweaters, smokes, heavy drinker)
- Not the typical “perfect” southern housewife
- Courage develops as novel progresses
- First to take risks with Patricia

Maryellen

- Only northerner of the core group
- Still learning the cultural expectations of living in the suburban South
- Confesses to Patricia the reason they moved to the Old Villiage

Miss Mary

- Patricia's mother-in-law
- Plays a key role in revealing James Harris's identity
- Supernatural counterweight to James Harris
- Victim of agism - dismissed as dementia induced raving old person

Ursula Green

- Window into the world of Six Mile, the historically Black neighborhood in Mt. Pleasant
- Her no-nonsense personality and willingness to protect her children at all cost seems to be the backbone of James's undoing.



MALE Characters



James Harris

- Charismatic, charming, and manipulative
- Connects with Patricia better than her husband, Carter
- Establishes personal relationships with Patricia's children
- Sometimes portrayed as a sympathetic character; uses information he gleans to passively point blame toward others
- Monster, murderer, pedofile, fraudulent, etc.

Carter Campbell

- Psychiatrist
- Distant and dismissive
- Sees Patricia as a bored housewife
- Tries to “fix” Patricia and Blue with medication instead of investing the time and effort to talk through issues
- Cheats on Patricia

The Other Husbands

Captivated by James Harris

Boys club mentality

The Kids

Kory and Blue age and develop throughout the course of the novel.

Both deeply impacted by their relationship with James Harris

Kory's "relationship" with James is hidden while Blue's is known

Behaviors are often dismissed as teen angst.





A. Why does James Harris seem to fit within so well (and easily)? Why does no one (other than Patricia) see the red flags?

B. How are racial and socio-economic equatibiility themes portrayed in the novel? (example: The stark difference between Mt. Pleasant and Six Mile)

C. Although there is one obvious monster at the center of the story, we learn that fear, dread, and terror come in many forms. Is there more than one kind of monster? What are the scariest elements of this story and why?



D. How does the relationship between Patricia and Miss Mary evolve as the book progresses?

E. What is the significance of the book club keeping the true nature of their meetings a secret from their husbands?

**F. The Downfall of James Harris
(a.k.a. Hoyte Pickens)**

- **What lead to his defeat?**
- **What characteristics bloomed heavily as James was being dismembered?**

QUOTES TO NOTE

“This story begins with five little girls, each born in a splash of her mother’s blood, cleaned up, patted dry, then turned into proper young ladies, instructed in the wifely arts to become perfect partners and responsible parents, mothers who help with homework and do the laundry, who belong to church flower societies and bunco clubs, who send their children to cotillion and private schools.”

How does the above passage set the stage for the reader?

“She weighed her sympathy against what Carter would say when he balanced the checkbook. But it was her money, too, wasn’t it? That was what Carter always said when she asked him for her own bank account: this money belonged to both of them.

This is one of the many moments that wakes Patricia to the inequity of her marriage - what are others?

QUOTES TO NOTE

“It’s a gated community we’re building out by Six Mile. It’s going to really elevate the surroundings. Gated communities let you choose your neighbors so the people around you are the kind of people you want around your children.”

How is Gracious Cay encroaching upon the community of Six Mile and what does this say about the residents of the Old Villiage?



Thank you for joining us today.