



The Christmas Pearl

By Dorothea Benton Frank (2008)



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Discussion Questions

1. The title of this book can be read in two ways. First, it is about the present moment, and about members of a family being present with each other in a crisis. Can you also see ways in which each character receives a "Christmas pearl?" What gifts do they give each other? What is Theodora's gift to each of her loved ones? What gift does Theodora receive?
2. What was your most powerful memory of a past Christmas?
3. Don't we wish our family squabbles could be so tidily wrapped up?
4. Frank's style interweaves moments of memory and imagination -- past and future -- constantly. How does this work to make us feel the presence of time and lived experience in this novel? How do both the past and future play a part in what happens in this South Carolina home as Christmas looms? What do these moments allow you, as a reader, to see about Theodora and her children's lives that they themselves perhaps cannot see?
5. The delightful character of "Pearl" makes you want to believe in angels while hoping that maybe there is one for each of us. How does Pearl make you feel?
6. Has Theodora's life been successful? How would you define a successful life?
7. Theodora's family had become disconnected and she alludes to the big screen TV & technology is a time waster. In what specific ways has technology --- those electronic gizmos designed to save us more time --- ended up stealing your time? Does technology sometimes delude you into thinking you're saving time when just the opposite is happening? If so, how can you change that?
8. I thought the author did a nice job of showing the women's (Theodora & Pearl) love and respect for each other. I also loved it when they reminisced about their past together, when Christmas was much simpler. Did you think it strange that Theodora missed her maid more than her mother?
9. Gullah magic. What is it? Any ideas?
10. Will any of you try the recipes in the back? Do any of you have fond memories of fruitcake?



Author Bio:

Dorothea Benton Frank, was born and raised on Sullivan's Island in South Carolina. Her first novel, SULLIVANS ISLAND (Berkley Publishing 2000) debuted on the NY Times list at number nine and went back to press over twenty five times, has well over one million copies in print and can be found in ten foreign languages. Her subsequent novels PLANTATION (Berkley 2002), ISLE OF PALMS (Berkley 2003), SHEM CREEK (Berkley 2004), PAWLEYS ISLAND (Berkley 2005), FULL OF GRACE (Wm. Morrow 2006), BULLS ISLAND (Wm. Morrow 2007), THE CHRISTMAS PEARL and LAND OF MANGO SUNSETS (Wm. Morrow 2008), LOWCOUNTRY SUMMER (Wm. Morrow 2009), RETURN TO SULLIVANS ISLAND (Wm. Morrow 2010), FOLLY BEACH (Wm. Morrow 2011), PORCH LIGHTS (Wm. Morrow 2012), THE LAST ORIGINAL WIFE (Wm. Morrow 2013), THE HURRICANE SISTERS (Wm. Morrow 2014), ALL THE SINGLE LADIES (Wm. Morrow 2015), ALL SUMMER LONG (Wm. Morrow 2016) and SAME BEACH, NEXT YEAR (Wm. Morrow 2017). Frank's latest novel, BY INVITATION ONLY, will be released on May 15, 2018.

She is the recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from The College of Charleston, a Doctorate of Fine Arts from Bloomfield College and an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the Charleston School of Law. In 2015, she was inducted into the South Carolina Academy of authors and has been honored many times for her work raising awareness about domestic violence and for her community service.

Ms. Frank is an avid cook, enjoys fly fishing, reading and travel and is a frequent speaker on the creative process for students of all ages. She divides her time between the Lowcountry of South Carolina and New Jersey.

Read-Alikes:

The Christmas wedding by James Patterson
An island Christmas by Nancy Thayer
The mistletoe promise by Richard Paul Evans



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