

My Louisiana Sky Study Guide

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Plot Summary

My Louisiana Sky is a coming of age tale with a twist. Tiger Ann Parker is a girl experiencing the summer before seventh grade in a small Louisiana town. Tiger begins to show signs of adolescence when her interests suddenly change from playing baseball with the boys to an interest in sophisticated fashion and seeking the approval of a popular classmate named Abby Lynn. Tiger also admires Aunt Dorie Kay, who lives in the city and buys the Parkers a TV set, which is a rare treat for most families in the area. Tiger becomes self-conscious about her developmentally disabled mother, who embarrasses Tiger at the school gymnasium. Tiger also hopes for an invitation to Abby Lynn's pool party, but Tiger is hurt and disappointed when she realizes that she was not invited. Her best friend, Jesse Wade, received an invitation but left the party once he realized that Tiger was not invited. Tiger begins to cry after Jesse explains the situation. Jesse comforts her then kisses Tiger on the lips. Tiger later confesses to Granny about how Tiger feels about her mother. Granny consoles Tiger and offers advice and solace. Tiger's world is shaken when her grandmother suddenly passes away. Aunt Dorie Kay returns to Saitter to make arrangements for the funeral, since Tiger's parents cannot. During her stay, Dorie Kay takes Tiger out to a movie and invites Tiger to stay with her permanently. Tiger has mixed emotions about leaving her parents, but she is excited about the prospect. She visits with Dorie Kay in Baton Rouge for a few days to see if she likes it. Tiger swims in the large pool and gets a haircut in the Audrey Hepburn style. Tiger returns home with Dorie Kay's maid, Magnolia, and is surprised that she missed her home. One evening, Lonnie notices that the birds are acting strange. The next morning, the cows act abnormally. Lonnie tells Mrs. Thompson, owner of Thompson Nursery and his employer, that a storm is on the horizon and the plants should be brought inside. Mrs. Thompson believes Lonnie, and the plants are brought inside of the Thompson house. Lonnie sends Tiger home to be with her mother, but Tiger returns home to find that her mother has gone out to look for Tiger. Tiger rushes back outside to search for her mother. When they find each other, Tiger appreciates how much both of her parents love her, and how much she loves them back. Tiger makes the decision to stay with her parents and help take care of them. Aunt Dorie Kay tells Tiger that Tiger has grown up.



Chapters 1-3

Chapters 1-3 Summary

My Louisiana Sky is the coming-of-age story of a girl named Tiger, a sixth-grader who lives with her grandmother and mentally disabled parents, Corrina and Lonnie. Although Tiger's parents are "slow", Tiger is intelligent. She earns straight A's in school and has been the spelling bee winner for five years. Living in the rural town of Saitter, Tiger dreams of escaping the embarrassment of her parents and gaining the acceptance of the most popular girl in town, Abby Lynn.

In chapter one, city-dweller Aunt Dorie Kay, Corrina's sister, visits the family. During Aunt Dorie Kay's visit, a delivery truck arrives at the house. Aunt Dorie Kay initially feigns ignorance when the men unload the large box from the truck. After seeing the invoice and opening the box, Tiger realizes that Aunt Dorie Kay has purchased the family a television set. Tiger and her parents are ecstatic about the gift, but Granny is critical. Tiger notices that Aunt Dorie Kay looks sad after Granny critiques the gift.

In chapter two, Granny, Tiger, Corrina and Lonnie attend Baptist church service. Corrina loudly says "Amen" during service, causing the prettiest girl in town, Abby Lynn, to laugh. As the church service wears on, Granny falls asleep and begins to snore. Corrina loudly whispers to Tiger, calling Granny's snoring to attention. The entire congregation laughs at Corrina, and Corrina joins in.

After the service, the congregation has an afternoon picnic. Tiger begins playing baseball with Jesse Wade and other boys in town. In the middle of the game, Tiger decides to stop playing baseball in an attempt to impress Abby Lynn. Tiger walks by Abby Lynn with a smile, but Abby Lynn simply frowns and looks pointedly at Tiger's dirty feet. Tiger joins Granny on the picnic quilt. Suddenly, Lonnie appears, carrying Corrina. Corrina has a splinter in her foot, an injury she obtains while chasing boys in the woods. Granny packs up the picnic supplies and heads home with Tiger, Lonnie and Corrina, just as rain begins to fall on the picnic grounds.

In chapter three, the Parker family performs chores around the house. Granny places Corrina and Tiger on laundry duty. Corrina complains about her injured foot, but Granny insists that Corrina help with the chores. After Tiger and Corrina hang sheets to dry outside, Tiger recalls how she learned about Corrina's childlike mental state. Granny did not tell Tiger, but Tiger learned about her mother's condition on her own as Tiger grew up.

Later in the day, Jesse Wade visits Tiger and tries to convince her to play baseball. Tiger informs Jesse Wade that she is giving up the sport. Jesse Wade taunts Tiger with the idea that Tiger must have lost her talent. Tiger becomes incensed and hits the baseball far behind the chicken coop fencing to prove that she still has baseball skills. Jesse Wade tries to convince Tiger to continue playing baseball, but Tiger is steadfast.



Tiger retrieves the ball for Jesse Wade and returns to her chores. Later that evening, Granny discovers that the chicken coop fence was left open and the baby chicks have disappeared. Tiger confesses to leaving the gate open and Granny tells Tiger that Tiger must pay her back.

Chapters 1-3 Analysis

Chapter one introduces the family dynamic and relationship at Tiger's home. Granny is the head of the household, taking care of Lonnie, Corrina and Tiger. However, Granny's relationship with Dorie Kay is strained. When Dorie Kay gifts the family a TV, Granny criticizes the gift. Corrina and Lonnie are unaware of the tension, but Tiger notices that there is a rift in the relationship, foreshadowing that the conflict's source will be revealed at a later in the plotline.

Chapter two depicts the Parker family's relationship to the townspeople. Tiger becomes embarrassed when the congregation laughs at her mother, but Corrina does not know that the congregation is laughing at her. Tiger feels both embarrassed for Corrina, and embarrassed too by her actions. Corrina's mental state is depicted in the chapter as childlike and unaware of social norms. An apparent change in Tiger's attitude also begins to occur. Tiger becomes more concerned with public opinion, represented by Abby Lynn, than following her own desires and being herself. Tiger wants to continue playing baseball, but gives up the game to impress Abby Lynn.

Chapter three focuses on Tiger's relationship with her mother, and further explains Corrina's mental condition. Because Corrina retains the mind of a six-year-old, Tiger and her mother have similar responsibilities at home. The relationship is more akin to siblings than a mother and daughter relationship. Tiger's relationship with Jesse Wade is also explored in chapter three. The two are best friends, and Jesse attempts to convince Tiger to continue playing baseball because he knows that Tiger enjoys the game. Like friends, Tiger and Jesse banter with each other, which is how Jesse convinces Tiger to hit the baseball. The exploration of both relationships suggests that Tiger's relationship to her mother and Jesse will play an important role in the story.



Chapters 4-6

Chapters 4-6 Summary

In chapter four, Granny wakes Tiger early in the morning to pick peas with Granny and Corrina at the Thompson nursery. The money Tiger earns will pay Granny back for the lost baby chicks. Lonnie is an employee at the Thompson nursery. Mr. Thompson meets the Parker family upon their arrival and introduces a new type of camellia he has invented, the Louisiana Lady. Then Granny, Tiger and Corrina begin picking peas. After a few hours, Tiger spots her friend Jesse Thompson watching them. Jesse acts out funny gestures to make Tiger laugh, but Tiger decides that Jesse is spoiled because he does not have to do chores. At lunch, Jesse asks Tiger to sit with him under an oak tree. Jesse mentions that Abby Lynn has a new swimming pool. Tiger has never seen a swimming pool and is excited but acts nonchalant about the news. After lunch, Tiger returns to work picking peas, and the women don't stop until that evening.

In chapter five, Corrina, Jesse and Tiger relax at the creek on a hot summer day. Corrina frightens Tiger when Corrina jumps in the water and disappears, but is relieved when Corrina reveals herself. Later, Tiger and Corrina walk to the school bookmobile. Tiger encounters Hannah, who has a cast on her arm. Tiger recalls the town rumors that Hannah's father abuses Hannah, and Tiger wonders whether it is true. Tiger spots Abby Lynn and a few girls headed for the school gym. Knowing that her mother will spend some time in the bookmobile, Tiger sneaks out and follows them. Tiger overhears Abby Lynn mention a swimming party that Abby Lynn plans to host. Suddenly, Corrina appears and loudly calls out for Tiger in the gym. Tiger is embarrassed by the scene Corrina is causing. Abby Lynn and the girls laugh at Tiger and Corrina.

In chapter six, Tiger notices that Corrina spends most days watching television. Corrina begins quoting lines from TV shows. Instead of greeting Lonnie at the door when he returns home from work, as usual, Corrina ignores him and continues to watch TV. Tiger tells Granny about the embarrassing incident at the school gym. Granny attempts to comfort Tiger, but all Tiger can think about is getting an invitation to Abby Lynn's pool party.

Chapters 4-6 Analysis

When the Parkers spend the day working at the Thompson Nursery in chapter four, it illustrates the financial disparity between the families. In contrast to the small Parker home, the Thompson home is large brick house with land for a nursery business. While Tiger, Corrina and Granny spend the laboring under the sun, Jesse relaxes on the porch swing and has time to play games while the women work. Jesse attempts to brighten Tiger's day by making Tiger laugh, but Tiger considers Jesse spoiled for not doing any chores. When Mrs. Thompson greets the women with refreshments at lunch, Tiger



cannot help but compare Mrs. Thompson's clean and crisp attire to Corrina's "silly sunbonnet".

In chapter five, Tiger is desperate to be accepted into Abby Lynn's circle of friends, but Tiger's hopes are dashed completely when Corrina embarrasses Tiger at the school. Tiger is torn between her love for her mother and the desire for acceptance. Tiger's anger with Corrina becomes so intense that Tiger wishes for a different mother.

In chapter six, the TV represents disruption, rather than entertainment, in the Parker household. Corrina is addicted to the TV while Lonnie becomes quickly bored with it. After seeing her mother's obsession with the TV, Tiger rejects the pastime. Tiger has no one to talk to about the growing embarrassment she feels for her parents. However, Granny notices Tiger's change in attitude and Tiger opens up to Granny. While Tiger knows that Granny is correct and that being different is not a bad thing, Tiger still continues to wish for "normal" parents and acceptance from Abby Lynn.



Chapters 7-9

Chapters 7-9 Summary

In chapter seven, Tiger spends each day rushing to the mailbox with the hope that an invitation to Abby Lynn's swimming party will arrive. After a week, Tiger realizes that she has not been invited to the party. Tiger walks to Jesse's home to invite Jesse to the creek for a swim. Mrs. Thompson answers the door and reveals that Jesse is at Abby Lynn's swimming party. Crushed that she was not invited and that Jesse went to the party without her, Tiger begins walking home. A car stops and Jesse runs out to meet her. Jesse tells Tiger that he thought Tiger had been invited, but he left the party when he realized that Abby Lynn excluded Tiger. Tiger begins to cry and Jesse consoles her with a hug. Jesse kisses Tiger on the lips. Tiger pushes Jesse away and runs home.

Chapter eight begins after Jesse kisses Tiger. Tiger arrives home to find Miz Eula visiting with Granny while Granny sews Tiger dresses. Miz Eula reveals that Hannah has eloped with a man named J.T. Webster. Mr. Webster is an older man with three children of his own. Tiger is shocked that fourteen-year old Hannah is now a wife. Tiger's thoughts continually stray to Jesse and her first kiss. After Tiger tries on a handmade dress and Granny finishes sewing, Granny tells Tiger that it is time for her to learn how to make Granny's secret chicken and dumpling recipe. Fearful that Granny is preparing Tiger to marry someone, Tiger questions Granny. Granny laughs at the insinuation and teaches Tiger how to make the dumplings, telling Tiger that she is smart but has a lot to learn. That evening, Tiger's thoughts are filled with Jesse's kiss and Abby Lynn's swimming party. Tiger walks to Granny's room and falls asleep in Granny's embrace. In the morning, Tiger hears her mother scream while Tiger picks blueberries at the creek.

In chapter nine, Tiger discovers her mother crying over Granny's body. Tiger runs to the Thompson Nursery to tell her father. Corrina, grieving, refuses to release her hold on Granny. A poisonous coral snake suddenly appears next to Granny's body, threatening Corrina. Lonnie quickly kills it. Finally, Dr. Randall and a few men take Granny from Corrina and place Granny in the ambulance. Corrina retreats to her room to grieve. Tiger becomes irritated that her father does not know what to do next. Tiger calls Aunt Dorie Kay, who says she will handle the arrangements. Neighbors arrive at the Parker home with food and condolences, but Tiger is in shock. Tiger rebuffs Jesse when he reaches for her hand. Then, Tiger crawls under the house until the guest leave. When Aunt Dorie Kay arrives, Tiger rushes out to meet her. Dorie Kay begins making phone calls to arrange the funeral details. The next morning, Dorie Kay tells Corrina that Corrina must leave the bedroom. Tiger embraces her mother until Corrina stops crying. Dorie Kay continues with her task list.



Chapters 7-9 Analysis

Chapter seven reinforces Abby Lynn's character as an insensitive girl who invites Tiger's best friend to the swimming party, but not Tiger. Still, Tiger still desires Abby Lynn's approval and acceptance. The chapter also introduces another aspect of Tiger's budding adolescence, which is a change in her relationship with Jesse. Tiger considers Jesse a friend, but Jesse's feelings for Tiger have become romantic.

Chapter eight echoes Tiger's confusion about Tiger's imminent adolescence and budding womanhood. While attempting to understand the mixed emotions she has about Jesse and her first kiss, Tiger learns the unsettling news that Hannah has eloped with a much older man. The news opens Tiger's eyes and Tiger realizes that she could be headed down the same path. Still, Tiger continues to desire a more sophisticated lifestyle, like Abby Lynn. While trying on the simple dresses that Granny makes her, Tiger fantasizes about fashionable clothes and being pretty. Tiger realizes that she should be thankful for her family when compared to Hannah's predicament, but Tiger cannot shake her desire to be like Abby Lynn.

Granny's death marks a turning point in Tiger's life. As the family's leader and head of the household, the Parker home is marked with confusion, shock and grief. Tiger is irritated at her father, who does not understand what needs to be done after a death in the family. Again, Tiger wishes for different parents. Aunt Dorie Kay represents what Tiger desires in a parent, someone who takes charge and can take care of the family. Still, Tiger is puzzled that Dorie Kay does not express any grief at Granny's death. Immediately upon her arrival, Dorie Kay takes charge of the situation by speaking with Corrina and planning the funeral arrangements.



Chapters 10-12

Chapters 10-12 Summary

In chapter ten, Tiger puts on a strong façade during the funeral and does not cry. Dorie Kay dresses Granny in a fancy dress that Dorie bought for Granny the prior year. Dorie Kay found the dress in the closet with the tags intact. After the funeral, people in the town bring more food to the house to express condolences. Tiger tries to avoid anyone who approaches her and eventually walks to the creek. Jesse follows her and apologizes for the kiss. When he brings up Granny, Tiger becomes angry and yells at Jesse. Jesse leaves and Tiger waits at the creek for hours until her father calls for her. Lonnie greets Tiger at the gate and hugs her. Tiger begins to cry.

In chapter eleven, Tiger watches as Aunt Dorie Kay tries to teach Lonnie how to pay bills and write checks. After some time, Dorie Kay becomes frustrated when Lonnie does not understand. Tiger volunteers to pay the bills on her father's behalf, but Dorie Kay does not want Tiger to worry about the bills. Instead, Dorie Kay calls Brother Dave. She asks Brother Dave to write the bill checks in return for having Lonnie mow the church lawn. Then Mr. Thompson calls and offers Tiger a job at the nursery, which Tiger accepts. Later that afternoon, Dorie Kay offers to take Tiger to a movie. Tiger is excited about the rare treat, but at the theater she notices "colored people" must watch from the second floor. Still, Tiger enjoys the movie and agrees when Aunt Dorie Kay offers Tiger a milkshake. Tiger notices an African-American boy watching her drink a milkshake at the window, but everyone in the soda shop has white skin. Tiger begins to worry internally about how the household will run when Dorie Kay leaves. Suddenly, Dorie Kay asks Tiger to live with her in Baton Rouge.

In chapter twelve, Dorie Kay and Tiger discuss the idea of Tiger living in Baton Rouge. Tiger is worried and feels guilty about how her parents will feel about the move, but Dorie Kay assures Tiger that she will speak with Tiger's parents. Dorie Kay tells Tiger that she will send her maid, Magnolia, to help at the Parker home for a few days. Tiger still feels an inkling of guilt, but her desire for a new life triumphs and she agrees to stay with Aunt Dorie for a few days to see Baton Rouge. At home, Corrina has not showered for days, and Tiger convinces Corrina to let Tiger wash her hair. Aunt Dorie Kay takes care of the arrangements for Magnolia's stay at the "colored quarters" and for Miss Eula to check on Corrina while Lonnie is at work.

Chapters 10-12 Analysis

In chapter ten, Tiger realizes how important Granny was in her life. In Tiger's grief, she pushes everyone away, including her best friend Jesse. Clues about the strained relationship between Dorie Kay and Granny are revealed when Dorie Kay discovers the unworn dress Dorie Kay bought for Granny. Tiger witnesses the hurt in Dorie Kay's eyes and remembers the disagreeable look Granny had when Granny received the gift.



The reality of life without Granny's leadership becomes apparent in chapter eleven. A basic household chore of paying bills is too much for Lonnie. Aunt Dorie Kay represents a possible escape for Tiger when Dorie Kay offers to take Tiger with her to Baton Rouge permanently. Tiger admires Dorie Kay and is taken in by Dorie Kay's sophistication and treat to the movies. There is also an undercurrent of prejudice that Tiger notices during the outing. Tiger begins to notice the difference in race relations when those with darker skin sit in the second floor of the theater, and only those with light skin are enjoying the soda fountain.

Aunt Dorie Kay gives Tiger the opportunity to leave Saitter and reinvent herself. Tiger cannot deny her desire to leave the rural community for city glamor and escape the embarrassment of her parents' condition. Aunt Dorie Kay epitomizes everything Tiger wishes for: sophistication, a glamorous life and someone to take care of her.



Chapters 13-15

Chapters 13-15 Summary

Tiger packs her bags and leaves with Aunt Dorie Kay after an emotional farewell to her parents. Dorie Kay drives Tiger out of rural Saitter past Bunkie, which is the farthest that Tiger has ever been from her home. During the drive, Tiger contemplates how different Aunt Dorie Kay is from her mother. Dorie Kay confesses how difficult it was to have Corrina as a sister and tells Tiger that Corrina was not born with her mental condition. Dorie Kay also tells Tiger to call her Doreen when in the city, which is Dorie Kay's given name. Then, Dorie Kay suggests that Tiger use her middle name, Ann, while in the city. Tiger thinks Ann Parker sounds plain, but agrees. When Tiger and Dorie Kay reach Dorie Kay's city apartment, Tiger is impressed with the building's swimming pool and the apartment's luxurious bathroom. Tiger spots a photograph of her mother and Dorie Kay as children. Dorie Kay walks in and confesses to Tiger the circumstance of Corrina's accident. Dorie Kay was a baby when she crawled up a ladder to a tree. Corrina followed Dorie Kay, but fell and hit her head, resulting in a six-year-old mindset for the rest of Corrina's life. After telling Tiger about Corrina, Dorie Kay suddenly suggests that they go shopping. Dorie Kay buys Tiger new clothes. Tiger begins to feel like a new person.

In chapter fourteen, Tiger awakes the next morning and meets Magnolia, Dorie Kay's maid and cook. Magnolia reminds Tiger of Granny with her no-nonsense attitude. After breakfast, Tiger offers to help with the dishes, but Magnolia insists that the dishes are her job. Tiger changes into a swimsuit to enjoy the courtyard pool. During Tiger's relaxing swim, she is startled when someone whistles at her. Unable to locate the person, she decides to return to the apartment. With Magnolia handling the daily chores, Tiger lounges on the bed and considers getting a haircut. Magnolia sends Tiger to the post office, which is next to a beauty parlor. Tiger walks into the parlor and asks the beautician for a short hairdo like Audrey Hepburn. Tiger is shocked when the haircut is complete, thinking that her eyes look smaller and her nose larger. The beautician points out Magnolia across the street and Tiger rushes out of the beauty parlor to meet her.

In chapter fifteen, Dorie Kay returns to the apartment from work and expresses her delight at Tiger's new haircut. At dinner, Tiger asks Dorie Kay whether she has a boyfriend. Tiger admits that Miz Eula had brought up the subject in the past. Dorie Kay tells Tiger that she can pay the bills on her own without a husband. Tiger responds that Granny once said Dorie Kay had a good head on her shoulders. Dorie Kay becomes tearful and Tiger feels bad about bringing up the subject. After dinner, Tiger and Dorie Kay wash the dishes and dance to an Elvis song. Tiger tells Dorie Kay about Jesse's kiss and that she feels bad about yelling at him. Dorie Kay encourages Tiger to talk to Jesse so that Tiger won't feel regret later. Dorie Kay admits that she regrets not resolving her relationship with Granny before Granny's death.



The following morning, Tiger accompanies Dorie Kay to pick up Magnolia. Dorie Kay tells Tiger not to get out of the car. Dorie Kay drops off Tiger at the bus station with Magnolia, telling Tiger that she will bring Tiger back to Baton Rouge at the end of summer. On the bus, Tiger makes room for Magnolia to sit next to her, but Magnolia walks to the back of the bus. After several hours and the bus clears of people, Tiger walks to the back to sit near Magnolia. Magnolia asks Tiger whether her parents are aware that she plans to live in Baton Rouge. Later, the bus arrives in Saitter, where Lonnie greets Tiger and Magnolia.

Chapters 13-15 Analysis

Tiger continues to feel guilt about leaving her parents, but the excitement of staying in the city is overwhelming. Chapter thirteen reveals the cause of Corrina's condition and explains Dorie Kay's feelings of guilt about the childhood incident. In order to escape her past, Dorie Kay has changed virtually every aspect of herself to cut her ties to country life in Saitter. Dorie Kay uses a different name, speaks with a different accent and educates herself to become an office secretary. Dorie Kay also suggests improvements for Tiger, such as using Tiger's middle name, Ann, and changing her hair. Later, she takes Tiger shopping for new, more mature clothes to complete the transformation.

Chapter fourteen introduces Magnolia, Dorie's Kay's forthright maid. Tiger thinks of Granny when she meets Magnolia, suggesting that Magnolia will play an important role at the Parker home when Magnolia visits Saitter. Tiger embraces her new life at Dorie Kay's apartment, but is disconcerted when a stranger whistles at her when she's at the pool. Tiger follows Dorie Kay's suggestion to get a haircut in a short Audrey Hepburn style to continue with her improvements. The chapter demonstrates how Tiger is moving toward Dorie Kay's path of escaping the past and small-town life for a more mature and sophisticated lifestyle. However, Tiger still has a lot to learn. While Tiger ventures out on her own to the post office and beauty parlor, she later rushes across a dangerously busy street in haste to meet Magnolia.

Tiger continues to feel guilt and mixed emotions about her plan to live in Baton Rouge. She feels comfortable enough with Aunt Dorie Kay to talk about Jesse's kiss. In many ways, Tiger displays growing wisdom, such as when Tiger discerns that Aunt Dorie's tears of laughter are also tears for Granny. Yet, Tiger also exhibits childlike discernment when she feels bad about telling Aunt Dorie about Granny's regard for Aunt Dorie's independence. Aunt Dorie's tears were not just tears of sadness, but being touched by the sentiment.

The racial disparity becomes more conspicuous to Tiger when she travels with Magnolia. Dorie Kay does not want Tiger to leave the car in Magnolia's neighborhood because it is perceived as improper and unsafe. Tiger recalls that Granny would not allow her to visit the "colored quarters" in Saitter, either. When Tiger steps on the bus, she assumes that Magnolia will sit next to her. However, Magnolia is forbidden from sitting at the front of the bus because of her skin color.



Chapters 16-18

Chapters 16-18 Summary

In chapter sixteen, Tiger arrives home to find the house in a disheveled state. Corrina is in bed and has not showered for more than a week. Embarrassed about the house's condition, Tiger tells Magnolia that it is Tiger's job to wash the dishes. Magnolia greets Corrina with surprising warmth, then asks Lonnie to drive her to her quarters for the evening.

The next morning, Tiger prepares for her first day working at the Thompson Nursery. Magnolia is already in the kitchen making breakfast. Magnolia queries Tiger about why she would leave such a loving home to live with her aunt. Tiger tells Magnolia that Dorie Kay will take care of her, but Magnolia tells Tiger that she is "a big girl" and Tiger's family needs her. At the nursery, Jesse helps Lonnie and Tiger with the important Louisiana Lady Camellia flowers. Two other workers, Shorty Calhoun and Milton Lambert, laugh at Lonnie mockingly and make Tiger uncomfortable. Lonnie instructs Tiger and Jesse about how to take plant cuttings. At lunch, Jesse asks Tiger to sit with him under the tree. Tiger is uncomfortable at first, but Jesse jokes with her and they laugh together. Tiger apologizes for yelling at Jesse and asks him to remain her friend. He agrees and the two spend the rest of the day working. When Tiger reaches her home, she sees her mother's nightgown on the laundry line outside.

In chapter seventeen, Tiger and Lonnie find Magnolia making dinner and Corrina peeling potatoes. Tiger is filled with emotion when she sees her parents hold hands and show their affection to one another. Raindrops begin to fall and Tiger rushes out to remove the hanging laundry. She leaves three bonnets on the line. The bonnets were used by Granny, Corrina and Tiger when they worked in the Thompson garden. Magnolia departs for the evening with her plate of food and Tiger is thankful for Magnolia's helping Corrina out of seclusion. Lonnie senses that something is amiss, but he does not know what. Suddenly, the family hears hundreds of birds settle in trees outside of the house.

In chapter eighteen, Tiger has a difficult time sleeping because of the bird noise. But it is strangely silent the next morning. Magnolia arrives and Tiger finds Corrina picking beans in the garden. Corrina is still in the garden when Tiger and Lonnie leave for the Thompson Nursery. On the way to work, Lonnie and Tiger notice the Anders cows standing huddled in the middle of the field, which is unusual for the cows. At the nursery, Lonnie tells Mrs. Thompson that a storm is coming, based on his observations of the birds and cows. Shorty and Milton mock Lonnie's opinion. Mrs. Thompson believes Lonnie, although Shorty disagrees with Lonnie's prediction. Lonnie suggests bringing the camellias inside. Shorty becomes angry that Mrs. Thompson is taking Lonnie's advice and confronts her about it. Mrs. Thompson tells Shorty to leave, but Milton stays because he must provide for his family.



Lonnie instructs the workers to bring the plants into the house for safety. Shortly after the plants are secure, the storm begins. Lonnie sends Tiger home, but refuses to leave the Thompson home. Lonnie promised Mr. Thompson before he left that Lonnie would take care of the nursery. On her way home, Tiger encounters one of the Astor calves stuck in the mud. Tiger stops to help the baby cow and steers it toward its mother. Abby Lynn sees her and tells Tiger that her hair looks like Audrey Hepburn.

Chapters 16-18 Analysis

In chapter sixteen, Tiger surprises herself when she tries to boss Magnolia around. Magnolia's character is reminiscent of Granny when Magnolia attempts to impart wisdom about the importance of family to Tiger. Although Tiger realizes that she missed Saitter and her family during her time at Baton Rouge, Tiger is still set on living with Aunt Dorie Kay.

Lonnie's relationship with his coworkers at the Thompson Nursery is also explored in chapter sixteen. The other workers, Shorty and Milton, have virtually no respect for Lonnie as they laugh and jeer at him. Tiger notices how people treat her parents differently and compares the treatment to how African-Americans are treated in the community. Tiger also takes Aunt Dorie Kay's advice and mends her relationship with Jesse. Tiger's ability to communicate with Jesse about their relationship is one example of how Tiger is beginning to mature.

Chapter seventeen marks a turning point in Tiger's decision to leave Saitter. When Tiger sees her parents holding hands and behaving in a loving manner, Tiger swells with pride and love. It is a far cry from Tiger's previous feelings of embarrassment and pity for her parents. Tiger realizes that the love of family is an important part of her life. Tiger decides to leave the three bonnets on the clothesline in Granny's memory. Tiger has not finished mourning her grandmother, but has come to terms with her death. Magnolia plays an important role in the change at the Parker home by helping Corrina recover, get out of bed and help prepare the food instead of allowing Corrina to spend the day in front of the TV. In addition, the strange behavior in the birds foreshadows an imminent and significant event.

Chapter eighteen depicts how some people disregard the opinions of others simply because the other person is different. On the other hand, there are also people who will respect a person despite that person's differences. When Lonnie tells Mrs. Thompson that a storm is on its way, she believes him immediately and listens to Lonnie's advice. Shorty wishes to disregard Lonnie's opinion because Lonnie is "slow". In the end, Lonnie is proved correct and his advice leads to the safety of Mr. Thompson's prized Louisiana Lady flowers. Lonnie may not have the mental capability to pay bills and solve mathematical formulas, but he demonstrates his strong work ethic and integrity. Mr. Thompson asked Lonnie to watch over things before Mr. Thompson leaves for his business trip, and Lonnie keeps his word and decides not to leave the Thompson home, even when the storm hits.



Later, Tiger demonstrates similar strength in character when she helps the calf reach its mother. When Tiger speaks with Abby Lynn, she realizes that Abby Lynn is scared of the storm. Tiger is surprised, realizing that Abby Lynn is more vulnerable than Tiger had thought. Another marker for Tiger's character growth, Tiger is not impressed or elated when Abby Lynn compliments Tiger's new haircut. The approval that Tiger had desperately sought after no longer mattered.



Chapters 19-20

Chapters 19-20 Summary

Tiger reaches her home in the beginning of chapter nineteen and finds Magnolia, but Corrina has disappeared to look for Tiger. Tiger runs back into the storm to look for her mother. Struggling against the storm, Tiger grabs a tree trunk to prevent being blown away by the harsh wind. Then she sees her mother, also holding on to a tree trunk. Corrina and Tiger run and embrace each other. They return safely to the house. Magnolia chastises Corrina for looking out the window. Corrina reports that several trees have been uprooted from the ground. Then Corrina suddenly runs outside to retrieve the bonnets Tiger left on the clothesline. Suddenly, the wind stops howling. Lonnie arrives in the pickup truck and Corrina, Lonnie and Tiger embrace.

In chapter twenty, Mr. Thompson hosts a party for his Louisiana Lady flower. Tiger tells Aunt Dorie Kay that she has decided to stay in Saitter with her parents. Dorie Kay warns Tiger that Tiger will be responsible for the household, but Tiger is firm about her decision. A newspaper reporter arrives at the party and learns of Lonnie's weather prediction that saved the Louisiana Lady. The reporter asks for a picture of Lonnie with the Louisiana Lady, but Lonnie insists that Mr. Thompson and the other helpers, including Tiger and Jesse, should be included. Tiger is later overcome with emotion when she sees her mother put her arm around Aunt Dorie Kay's shoulders for a picture. The scene reminds Tiger of the picture she saw at Dorie Kay's apartment, when her mother and aunt were children.

Tiger invites Abby Lynn to play baseball with the other kids at the party. Tiger had realized during school that Abby Lynn did not join in games before because Abby Lynn was afraid of looking awkward in front of everyone. Abby Lynn declines, but Abby Lynn's mother encourages her to join in the game. When it is Abby Lynn's turn at bat, Tiger helps her by telling Abby Lynn when to swing at the ball, even though Tiger is not on her time. Abby Lynn hits the ball and Tiger tells her to run for first base.

Chapters 19-20 Analysis

Chapter nineteen marks the turning point for Tiger, when she realizes how important her parents are to her. Despite Corrina's faults, she braves the harsh weather to look for Tiger. Tiger realizes how much her mother loves her, and how much Tiger cares for her despite Corrina's childlike state. When Lonnie returns from the Thompson house, the emotion Tiger feels when seeing her family reunited convinces Tiger that she belongs in Saitter with her parents.

Chapter twenty depicts the resolution of the conflict that troubles Tiger throughout the summer. Tiger informs Aunt Dorie Kay of her decision, standing firm even when Dorie Kay reminds Tiger of the responsibilities. Ultimately, Dorie Kay respects Tiger's decision,



recognizing that Tiger has matured over the summer. Tiger feelings about her parents have also changed. Rather than the constant fear of embarrassment, Tiger feels pride for her father, who is recognized for his part in saving the Louisiana Lady for Mr. Thompson. Tiger is also happy to see Corrina and Aunt Dorie enjoying the picnic together with the bonds of sisterhood intact. Finally, Tiger's relationship with Abby Lynn changes. Tiger no longer seeks out Abby Lynn's approval. Instead, Tiger invites Abby Lynn to join the game, and Tiger is kind enough to prevent clumsy Abby Lynn's embarrassment by helping her hit the ball.



Characters

Tiger Ann Parker

Tiger, the main character, is a smart sixth-grader living in the rural town of Saitter, Louisiana, with her grandmother and developmentally disabled parents. My Louisiana Sky follows the life-altering events that occur in the summer before Tiger's seventh grade year. Tiger's mother, Corrina, named Tiger after a pet cat that Corrina had once loved. Unfortunately, Corrina hugged the cat too tightly and accidentally killed the cat. Since Tiger was born from parents who are "slow", the local townspeople are baffled that Tiger is such a smart student, earning straight A's and winning the local spelling bee competition for several years in a row.

One of Tiger's favorite pastimes is to play baseball with her best friend, Jesse Wade. But Tiger experiences a change of heart and decides that she would rather join pretty Abby Lynn's inner circle of friends. Abby Lynn and her clique do not play baseball, so Tiger quits the game in hopes of gaining acceptance. Tiger spends much of the summer trying to gain Abby Lynn's friendship and admiration, but Abby Lynn snubs Tiger. The most hurtful snub occurs when Abby Lynn hosts a pool party and omits Tiger from the invitation list. In the same time frame, Jesse reveals his true feelings to Tiger by kissing her suddenly. A shocked Tiger spends much of the remaining summer coming to terms with her feeling about Jesse, until she ultimately tells Jesse that she would like to remain friends.

Two major life events occur in the book. Tiger must deal with the death of her grandmother and make a major decision about whether to leave her parents when Aunt Dorie Kay offers Tiger a home in Baton Rouge. Tiger feels a mixture of embarrassment and pity for her parents, as well as guilt for wanting to leave them. After Granny's death, Tiger's character changes from a girl who is more interested in pool parties and poodle skirts to a young lady who decides to remain at home to help her parents.

Granny

Granny is Tiger's no-nonsense, practical grandmother and mother to Corrina and Dorie Kay. Granny's role is the head of the multi-generational Parker household, taking care of both Tiger's parents and Tiger. She has a strong work ethic, telling Tiger and Corrina that chores and work are good for them. When Tiger accidentally leaves the gate open and releases the chicks from the henhouse, Granny tells Tiger that Tiger will work to pay her back. At the Thompson garden, when Granny, Corrina and Tiger spend a long hot day picking peas, Granny does not complain and encourages Corrina and Tiger to work steadily.

Granny plays an important role in Tiger's life, teaching Tiger life values and lessons. Even after Granny's death, Tiger continues to think of what Granny would say in certain



situations. When Tiger confesses how Corrina embarrassed Tiger in front of her classmates, Granny offers advice and consolation. When Tiger loses Granny, Tiger feels lost because Granny is the person Tiger seeks out when Tiger needs to talk. Granny's death is a turning point in Tiger's life, when Tiger must examine her core values to make a decision about whether to leave her parents or not.

Corrina Parker

Corrina is Tiger's developmentally disabled mother. Corrina's sister, Dorie Kay, reveals to Tiger that Corrina was not born with her disability. Corrina fell from a tree as a small child while trying to retrieve Dorie Kay, an infant at the time, who had climbed up the tree. Due to the head trauma from the accident, Corrina has remained in the mental state of a six-year-old. Due to Corrina's condition, she does not retain the same social etiquette that most adults follow. Corrina chases boys at the school picnic and cries like a child when she cuts her foot. In church, Corrina responds to the sermon loudly and awkwardly, causing laughter in the congregation. At Tiger's school gym, Corrina calls for Tiger loudly in front of Tiger's classmates. Each incident is an embarrassment in Tiger's eyes, and Tiger spends much of the summer lamenting her parents' condition. Corrina is devastated when her mother, Granny, passes away. Corrina refuses to bathe or leave her room for days at a time. It is not until Magnolia arrives at the Parker home that Corrina begins to heal, leaving her room and helping with chores. Later in the novel, Corrina teaches Tiger the importance and love of family when Corrina rushes in a hurricane storm to save her "baby", Tiger.

Lonnie Parker

Lonnie is Tiger's father and Corrina's husband. Lonnie works at the Thompson Nursery, and assists with the propagation of Mr. Thompson's new, prized flower dubbed the Louisiana Lady. After Granny's death, Tiger pities her father because he does not understand how to do simple things like pay the bills. Tiger also becomes irritated when her father does not know what arrangements to make for Granny's funeral. However, Lonnie's strength of character comes from the love for his family and understanding of nature. Lonnie may not understand paying bills, but he is comfortable working outdoors in the garden and nursery. While Lonnie's co-worker Shorty calls Lonnie "simple", it is Lonnie's quick thinking and discernment of weather signs that saves the Louisiana Lady plants from hurricane destruction. Lonnie correctly reads the signs when a large group of birds flock together in trees before flying away. Lonnie also notices the strange behavior of the pasture cows on the way to the Thompson Nursery. Tiger witnesses her father's strong sense of integrity when Lonnie does not leave the Thompson home before the storm hits, and he does everything he can to save the Louisiana Lady.



Aunt Dorie Kay

Aunt Dorie Kay is Corrina's younger sister and Tiger's aunt. Dorie Kay left rural Saitter for the city life in Baton Rouge. Described by Tiger as stylish and sophisticated, Dorie Kay makes a comfortable living as a secretary for Governor Earl K. Long. In the beginning of the novel, Dorie Kay buys a television for the Parker home. Corrina is ecstatic, but Granny finds the gift disagreeable. Dorie Kay's relationship with Granny is strained because Dorie Kay feels guilty about Corrina's brain injury. As a young child, Corrina attempted to follow the infant Dorie Kay up a tree, but falls and injures her head. Dorie Kay feels that Granny blamed her for the accident. When Dorie Kay left Saitter to live in Baton Rouge, she felt that Granny was unhappy that Dorie Kay abandoned the family to pursue her own path. After Granny's death, Dorie Kay invites Tiger to stay with her for a few days in Baton Rouge to see if Tiger would like to live with her permanently. She has money and connections, offering Tiger a private school education and taking Tiger shopping for new clothes, including the poodle skirt Tiger wanted.

Jesse Wade Thompson

Jesse Wade is Tiger's loyal best friend. His father, Mr. Thompson, owns Thompson Nursery, one of the major town businesses. Although his family is wealthy when compared to Tiger's family, Jesse is a steadfast friend. Tiger finds Jesse Wade spoiled because he does not have to do chores and spends most of his time playing baseball. But Jesse is a good friend to Tiger, making her laugh while she is working to pick peas at the Thompson garden with her grandmother and mother. Jesse also proves his loyalty by leaving Abby Lynn's pool party after realizing that Tiger was not invited. Jesse grows to have romantic feelings about Tiger, and he gives Tiger her first kiss. Tiger is harsh toward Jesse, and she yells at him after her grandmother's death. Tiger considers Jesse a good friend and is not interested in him romantically. The two resolve their difference and remain friends through the end of the novel.

Abby Lynn Anders

Abby Lynn is the prettiest girl in Saitter, according to Tiger. Tiger spends much of her summer trying to win Abby Lynn's acceptance. However, Abby Lynn often laughs unkindly at Tiger's predicament. Abby Lynn and her friends laugh at Tiger's mom at the Baptist church service and when Corrina calls out to Tiger at the school gym. Abby Lynn goes out of her way to exclude Tiger by omitting Tiger's name from the pool party guest list while inviting Tiger's best friend, Jesse Wade. Although Abby Lynn is unkind to Tiger, Tiger admires her. At the end of the summer, though, Tiger realizes that Abby Lynn's nature is a facade for fear of being mocked. Abby Lynn is awkward when playing sports, which is why she never joins the baseball game. Tiger encourages Abby Lynn to join a baseball game and helps Abby Lynn hit the baseball, although Tiger is not on her team.



Magnolia

Magnolia is Dorie Kay's African-American cook and housekeeper in Baton Rouge. After Granny's death, Dorie Kay sends Magnolia to Saitter for a short while to help at the Parker home. When Tiger is around Magnolia, Tiger is reminded of Granny. Magnolia is a no-nonsense maid. Magnolia accompanies Tiger home on the bus. Although Tiger makes room for Magnolia to sit next to her, Magnolia must sit in the back of the bus. At the Parker home, Magnolia is kind to the mourning Corrina. With Magnolia's encouragement, Corrina sheds her dirty nightgown and bathes. Magnolia also chides Tiger about leaving her parents, telling Tiger that she is lucky to have such loving parents.

Miss Eula

Also referred to as "Miz Eula", Miss Eula is the town gossip. While Miss Eula visits with Granny, she reports that young Hannah has eloped with an older man to escape Hannah's physically abusive father. While Tiger visits Dorie Kay in Baton Rouge, Dorie Kay enlists Miss Eula to help clean and keep an eye on Corrina while Lonnie is at work. Tiger is unsure about the arrangement, since Miss Eula is not known to keep her own home clean. When Tiger returns from Baton Rouge, she finds that Miss Eula has done very little with cleaning the Parker house, which has become filthy during Tiger's absence.

Otis

Otis is Lonnie's co-worker at the Thompson Nursery. As an African-American, Otis lives in the "colored" party of town, which Tiger has never seen. While at work, Lonnie spends his time with Otis rather than the other workers who taunt Lonnie for being "slow". Otis and his family represent the fringe population at Saitter: those who do not fit in with the mainstream population. Tiger discerns that both Otis and her father are treated differently because they are both different from what is considered normal by the Saitter townspeople.

Shorty

Shorty is Lonnie's co-worker at Thompson Nursery. He is an unkind man who mocks Lonnie. When Lonnie tells Mrs. Thompson that a storm is imminent, Shorty becomes incensed that Mrs. Thompson believes Lonnie. Shorty does not respect Lonnie's opinion and refuses to follow Lonnie's advice. An angry Mrs. Thompson tells Shorty to leave the property.

Otis

Description



Objects/Places

Saitter

Saitter, Louisiana, is the rural town where Tiger resides.

Thompson Nursery

The Thompson Nursery is one of the major businesses in Saitter. Jesse Wade's parents own the business, and the family has large home on the property.

Louisiana Lady

The Louisiana Lady is a type of Camellia flower that Mr. Thompson has been working on for eight years. Now ready to unveil, the Louisiana Lady is an important achievement for Mr. Thompson.

Baton Rouge

Baton Rouge, Louisiana is the city where Aunt Dorie Kay lives and works. Tiger visits Baton Rouge with Aunt Dorie Kay and uses her time to swim in the apartment building's pool and get a haircut at the local beauty salon.

Saitter Creek

Saitter Creek is one of Tiger's favorite places. After Granny's death, Tiger retreats to Saitter Creek when she wants to be alone. During the summer, Tiger, Jesse and Corrina spend hot afternoons floating on inner tubes at Saitter Creek.

Hazel's Beauty Shop

Located in Baton Rouge, Hazel's Beauty Shop is located near the post office where Tiger drops off Aunt Dorie Kay's bills for mailing. Tiger decides to get her hair cut in the trendy, short Audrey Hepburn style.

Television

During Aunt Dorie Kay's visit early in the novel, she gifts the Parker family with a television set. Granny is unhappy about the gift, but Corrina is taken with it. Later, Corrina becomes obsessed with the TV set, quoting dialogue from TV shows instead of using her own words.



Miss Astor and Pansy

Miss Astor is the cow that belongs to the Anders family. The cow often gets loose from the pasture and the Parker family regularly finds it standing on the road. Pansy is Miss Astor's calf. During the storm, Tiger helps loosen Pansy from the mud. Tiger reunites Pansy with Miss Astor.

Poodle Skirt

Iconic clothing worn in the 1950s, Tiger references the poodle skirt when she thinks about fashion. When Granny makes Tiger simple dresses, Tiger wishes for a poodle skirt. During Tiger's visit to Baton Rouge, Dorie Kay fulfills Tiger's wish and buys Tiger a poodle skirt.

Hair Bonnets

Granny, Corrina and Tiger wear hair bonnets while they pick peas in the Thompson garden. Tiger is embarrassed to wear the bonnet, but after Granny's death Tiger thinks fondly about the bonnets and the time the women spent together.



Themes

Importance of Family

One of the major themes in the book is the importance of family. In the beginning of the book, Tiger only sees what is lacking in her parents. Tiger focuses on the embarrassing and uncomfortable traits, but does not take into account the love her parents have for one another and for Tiger. After Granny's death, Tiger is excited to leave her parents and Saitter to make a new life for herself with Aunt Dorie Kay. Tiger sees that Dorie Kay is successful and sophisticated, everything Tiger wishes to be. Later, Tiger realizes that Dorie Kay harbors guilt and regret about Dorie Kay's strained relationship with Granny. Dorie Kay wanted to improve herself by moving to the city and supporting herself, but Granny felt that Dorie Kay abandoned the family. Tiger tells Dorie Kay that Granny was proud of Dorie Kay's independence, giving Dorie Kay the bittersweet assurance that Granny cared for her.

Throughout the text, examples of different families parallel and contrast with the Parker family. Hannah elopes with an older man who has three children in order to escape her physically abusive father. She moves from one unhappy family situation to another. The Thompson family is an example of a family, like the Parkers, that cares for one another. When Jesse volunteers to walk Tiger home before the storm begins, Mrs. Thompson tells Jesse that she needs his help with the plants. Tiger detects that Mrs. Thompson is too worried about Jesse to let him go out in such dangerous weather. At the end of the book, Tiger realizes that family love is what is most important. When Tiger tells Dorie Kay that she has decided to stay in Saitter, Dorie Kay tells Tiger that she has grown up. Tiger has matured enough to understand that her desires for an Audrey Hepburn haircut and poodle skirt are nothing in comparison to the love of her parents.

Coming of Age

The theme of coming of age is prominent to the story. In the summer after sixth grade, Tiger experiences a myriad of life events that results in her growth from an immature girl to a young lady. Although she is an excellent baseball player, Tiger gives up the game with the hopes of being accepted by pretty and popular Abby Lynn. Since Abby Lynn does not play baseball, Tiger decides that she will not play, either. Tiger understands rejection when Abby Lynn does not invite Tiger to a pool party. Then, Tiger experiences her first kiss with Jesse. She has mixed feelings about being romantic with Jesse, who is closest childhood friend. Granny's death plunges Tiger into the world of responsibility. If Tiger decides to stay with her parents, she will be responsible for them. Tiger will no longer be the child, but will be burdened with caring for her parents in a similar way that Granny took care of the Parkers before her death. However, if Tiger decides to live with Aunt Dorie Kay, Tiger will be taken care of. During Tiger's trip to Baton Rouge, Tiger does not need to do chores, but can spend her day reading magazines and swimming in the pool. Evidence of Tiger's growing maturity is presented when Tiger realizes that



she will take on the responsibility of staying with her parents rather than pursuing a more comfortable life with Aunt Dorie Kay in the city.

Prejudice

Prejudice is an underlying theme that is revealed through minor details throughout the storyline. In some ways, some of the people in Saitter are prejudiced against Tiger's parents because of Corrina and Lonnie's mental handicap. The church congregation laughs at Corrina when Corrina responds loudly to a sermon. Shorty does not believe Lonnie when Lonnie predicts the hurricane, simply because Lonnie is "simple" and different. The town cannot understand how Corrina and Lonnie could produce a smart daughter like Tiger. Tiger's parents are treated with less respect than other community members. In parallel, the segregation of African-Americans in the community is overt. Otis's children, Minnie and Abner, attend a segregated school. Otis and his family attend Granny's funeral, but do not attend the wake. African-Americans at the movie theater sit on the second floor, not the main level. The boy at the soda shop looks longingly through the window while Tiger enjoys a milkshake, only to be dragged away by his mother. Then, Magnolia must sit at the back of the bus on the trip from Baton Rouge to Saitter.

Style

Point of View

My Louisiana Sky is narrated entirely from a first person point of view. Tiger, as the heroine, reflects on her internal emotions and interprets the world around her. Due to her young age, Tiger misinterprets situations, and the reader must decipher and extract the true meaning. For example, Tiger assumes that Magnolia will sit next to her on the bus, but Tiger does not realize that Magnolia is legally and socially prohibited from sitting in the front of the bus in that time period. While Tiger's interpreted narration is not entirely reliable, the perspective allows the reader to delve into Tiger's inner conflict, experiencing the turmoil with her. The first person point of view provides the reader with an intimate account of Tiger's life, providing the a strong connection between the reader and the heroine. Tiger is a girl experiencing the changes of growing up while coming to terms with her home life as a child of disabled parents. The first person perspective provides greater contrast when comparing the protagonist's character growth from the beginning of the story and after major life events, such as Tiger's first kiss, Granny's death and deciding whether to leave her parents and live in Baton Rouge.

Setting

The majority of the book takes place in the small, rural town of Saitter, Louisiana in the 1950s. The time frame is alluded to through references of Elvis Presley and an Audrey Hepburn movie, as well as the social disparity between those in the Caucasian community and African-Americans. The town is supported by two major plant nurseries that are owned by the Thompson family and the Astor family. Much of Tiger's time is spent at her family's modest home, the Thompson Nursery where her best friend Jesse lives, and Saitter Creek.

After Granny's death, Aunt Dorie Kay offers Tiger to stay with her in Aunt Dorie Kay's Baton Rouge apartment. Tiger visits with Dorie Kay for a few weeks to experience life in the city. She swims in the apartment building's pool, but feels uncomfortable at the idea of being watched from one of the many apartments that overlook the pool. Tiger briefly visits the section of homes for "coloreds" when she and Aunt Dorie Kay pick up Magnolia. The homes are small, worn and cramped together. Tiger thinks that the crowded homes might be nice, with neighbors living so close to one another.

The end of the book comes full circle to a picnic party at the Thompson Nursery. Tiger decides to stay in Saitter with her parents and continue her life in the place she has spent much of the summer attempting to escape from. Instead of quitting the baseball game to impress Abby Lynn, Tiger invites Abby Lynn to play in the game.



Language and Meaning

The language of the book is casual and informal to reflect the rural and historical setting of Saitter, Louisiana in the 1950s. The casual language contributes to the novel's authenticity. There is regular dialogue in each chapter that depicts an accurate setting in a small, southern community. Southern slang and jargon are common, including the use of "Miz" instead of "Miss", and cultural adages such as "Red and yella kill a fella". The wording and inflection also reflects the southern style of accent. When referring to African-Americans, the use of "colored" or "Negro", reflects the time period, which may be perceived as offensive by modern standards.

Language is used to illustrate differences in social standing. The wealthy Thompson family speaks with more formality than the Parker family. In Baton Rouge, Aunt Dorie Kay changes her manner of speaking through the study of movie and television show characters. In the city, Dorie Kay is referred to as Doreen. The use of language depicts Dorie Kay's transformation from a girl with a rural background to a woman living in the city.

Structure

The book encompasses a short time frame in Tiger's life, the summer between sixth grade and seventh grade. In a few short months, Tiger experiences a number of major life experiences, like the death of her grandmother and leaving town of Saitter, Louisiana to experience Baton Rouge for the first time. Each experience, both major and minor, is broken down by chapter for a total of twenty chapters in length. The length of each chapter varies, but each one is relatively short.

The paragraphs are brief and succinct, with short, descriptive narration that is regularly enhanced by character dialogue to keep the story moving at a steady pace. There are no flashbacks to disrupt or cause confusion about the story's timeline. The plot is straightforward with no subplots to the storyline. Each piece of the story relates directly to Tiger's summer experiences. Tiger begins as a tomboy who wishes for acceptance into Abby Lynn's world. Then, she experiences the public embarrassment that her developmentally disabled mother causes by acting strangely. Tiger is then kissed by her best friend, Jesse, after Tiger is snubbed by Abby Lynn. When Tiger's granny passes away, Aunt Dorie Kay offers Tiger a means of escape with an offer to live in Baton Rouge. The remainder of the story involves Tiger's decision about whether to move to the city.

The book is easy to read because of the constant dialogue and character interaction in each chapter. Rather than riddling the story with extensive descriptions about the landscape, the author focuses almost entirely on the characters that encompass Tiger's world. The result is a storyline that draws the reader into Tiger's family dilemma to witness Tiger grow up from a childlike tomboy to a young lady within a few short months.



Quotes

"Momma began to laugh too, only I don't think she knew they were laughing at her."
Chap. 2, p. 21

"I wanted to sit with those girls and be a part of their secret world. I wanted to know why they laughed when nothing seemed particularly funny and how to bat my eyelashes like Abby Lynn."
Chap. 2, pp. 23-24

"Jesse Wade, a girl has to grow up sometime."
Chap. 3, p. 33

"Part of me wished I was inside the church with Abby Lynn, helping her dry off those golden curls, and part of me wished real bad that I had stayed in that game and struck out Bobby Dean."
Chap. 2, p. 25

"People are afraid of what's different. That don't mean different is bad. Just means different is different."
Chap. 6, p. 65

"People handle death in different ways. Sometimes they act strange on the outside, but inside it's the same for everyone. Their hearts are breaking."
Chap. 9, pp. 95-96

"The pity I had for Daddy stirred with the shame I felt about him."
Chap. 11, p. 107

"For the first time I realized that she didn't think of Saitter as her hometown. She must have traded Saitter in for the excitement of Baton Rouge a long time ago."
Chap. 12, p. 118

"My new life. I enjoyed the sound of those words. Then guilt faded my joy."
Chap. 12, p. 114

"I wondered if I was washing Momma's hair because I wanted to do something good for her or if I was trying to feel less guilty about desperately wanting to leave Saitter."
Chap 12, p. 117

"You can reinvent yourself in Baton Rouge, Tiger. That's what I did. Whoever thought a country bumpkin like me from Saitter could make it in a city like Baton Rouge?"
Chap 13, p. 125

"I left those bonnets hanging there in the rain as if somehow that could bring back Granny. If only it could, I'd be prouder than anything to stick that silly old bonnet on my



head. I'd even wear it in front of Abby Lynn Anders."
Chap. 16, p.171

"When I looked at her, I recognized something in her face. The 'I wish I was invisible'
look."
Chap. 20, p. 198



Topics for Discussion

What motivates Dorie Kay to invite Tiger to live with her? Is it because of guilt or because she truly cares about Tiger? Explain with examples from the text.

Why does Tiger choose to stay with her parents in Saitter rather than live in Baton Rouge with Aunt Dorie Kay?

How does Granny's death affect Tiger immediately after the event and later in the book?

Tiger compares her developmentally disabled parents' to the treatment that African-Americans receive in her town. Both must endure unequal treatment because they are different from the mainstream population. What are the similarities? What are the differences?

How do the events that occur during Hurricane Audrey change Tiger's perception of her parents?

How does Corrina's accident affect Dorie Kay's relationship with Granny as adults?

Jesse Wade is born with a different family background than Tiger. What traits and characteristics keep the two together as best friends? Abby Lynn comes from a similar background as Jesse Wade. Why aren't Abby Lynn and Tiger friends?