

Lay That Trumpet in Our Hands by Susan Carroll McCarthy

The One Book, One Community Project - Michigan State University and the City of East Lansing

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Questions for *Lay That Trumpet in Our Hands*



1. In many ways, *Lay That Trumpet in Our Hands* is a story of personal courage. Consider the ways in which that courage is exhibited, and by whom. In what ways do you believe you have demonstrated courage in your own life? What were the consequences of doing so?
2. Before reading the novel, were you aware of the Ku Klux Klan's activities in Florida during the first half of the twentieth century? Are you aware of the activities of the Klan in Michigan's history? In what ways have you seen racial and ethnic relationships evolve during your lifetime?
3. How did the civil rights movement affect your community? Your family?
4. Do Reesa's role models—her mother and father, Doto, Luther, and Armetta—provide her with contradictory or consistent messages about human nature? What are some examples?
5. In chapter nine, May Carol's mother begs Armetta to return to her job in their household. What does this scene reveal about the balance of power between adults and children in Mayflower, and between blacks and whites? Were you surprised that Mr. Garnet made no effort to hide his KKK robe from Armetta?
6. Consider the author's many references to baseball. Why are these important? What do you know about the role of athletics in desegregation? Why do you think the desegregation of sports often preceded other forms of institutional desegregation?
7. Religion figures prominently in *Lay That Trumpet in Our Hands*, from the Marvin's lessons in Bible study to the horrific Klan bombings of Catholic and Jewish citizens. How do these myriad experiences shape Reesa's understanding of God? How does her faith change throughout the book?
8. The Red Scare is an important historical backdrop for the novel. In what way did the Klan align itself with those who feared a Communist insurgency?
9. In your opinion, whose "hands" are implied by the title? Who are their contemporary equivalents?
10. In her author's note, Susan Carol McCarthy emphasizes the fact that the characters Reed Garnet, J.D. Bowman, and their families are completely fictional, but of course the crimes described are real. Visit the website of the Southern Poverty Law Center (www.splcenter.org) to learn more about the Civil Rights Memorial dedicated to men and women who died between 1952 and 1968, victims of racially motivated violence.
11. Susan Carol McCarthy began writing this novel as a gift for her father, whose heroism in Florida inspired the character of Warren McMahan. Who are the Warrens and Luthers in your life?

Questions adapted from those found at ReadingGroupGuides.com