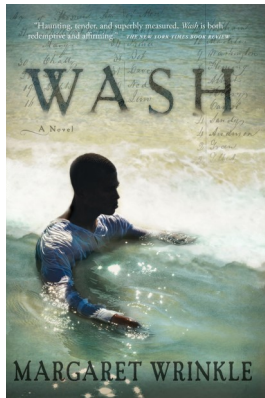




Discussion Guide



About the Book

Book Title: *Wash*

Author: Margaret Wrinkle

Published by: New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2013

Author Website: margaretwrinkle.com

Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. With which of the characters did you most identify and why?
3. What would you say were the themes of the book?
4. Do you think that Wrinkle characterizes the life of a slave accurately? Why or why not?
5. Who would you say were the heroes of this book and why?
6. Did this change your perspective on slavery? Why or why not?
7. Do you think that Wrinkle characterizes the life of plantation owner and his family accurately? Why or why not?
8. Read over the MAMs comments on the book. Which of them do you most agree with and why?
9. In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?

Other Links...

Furious Fiction Interview with Margaret Wrinkle. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2snyMQxOkI>

Check out an Interview Series with Margaret Wrinkle on YouTube: *WASH* by Margaret Wrinkle:

Interview Series, I, II, III, IV, V



NANCY: "...even when your mind wanders, it's going someplace, and all that travelling adds up..." Well, I started out not expecting to like this book, but I learned a lot and I did really enjoy the writing. Wrinkle paints a picture of the inner world of the slaves in a way that makes me appreciate their resilience and inner life. She artfully portrays the strength of love, a skill of leaving the body to cope, and gentle coaxing that brings them back into their bodies as they heal one another. On the other hand, as she invites us into the mind of the dominators, we see less compassion, more confusion and a fearful path that seems to end in distress. And even when they realize the path is wrong, it's difficult to rise above and out of the destructive system. Kudos to Wrinkle! I'll remember this for a long time.



SALLIE: "She wishes she had looked more closely at every bit of her world when she was growing up so she could give more of it to Wash but it had been wrapped so close around her, she had no idea she would ever be without it." - Mena
As usual, I focused on the children. In this book, Wrinkle focused on what the parents pass on to their children. You see how powerful the teaching of a parent can be. Mena works to build a sense of history in Wash which makes all the difference in his life. You also see how conflicted Richardson becomes in what he wants to pass on to them. I think his children pick up on his ambivalence. Is that what killed Lucius? And then you see Pallas, trying to give Wash's offspring a sense of their heritage also. Makes you think. What are we passing on to our children these days? Do we still share soul?



ABIGAIL: "Some folks are better to talk to than others cause they give you a chance to tell things to yourself. Talking to em can bring you new words. Some folks feel like a deep pool and you can drop anything in there and you aint got to worry about it coming back at you some kind a way."

In this very dark book, I found light in the relationships. Did you notice Phoebe caring for Pallas, bringing her back into life after suffering at the hands of the Drummond boys then teaching her the healing profession? Pallas healing Wash, and Wash healing Pallas? And in the end did you notice the love of Rufus and Mena coming back to help Wash find his way? However, the light of love seems more evasive for the dominators. Richardson lost his own love and walks a tormented path. Did you notice the whites seem drawn to the love the slaves possess? Lucius follows Wash, Williams marries Celeste, Richardson returns to Wash time and time again trying to share his story, yearning to connect, even as he abuses. Makes you think.



MOLLY: "Turns out there's a way to give in without losing. You got to find some slack in you. Just this side of your breaking point. Each of us got a different breaking point, according to who you are and the life you get born inside. And if somebody shows you how, you might can move that breaking point from where it started out to where you need it to be. But sometimes, you can't. Who you are and the life you get given won't never fit together and you leave this world as quick as you came in."

Painful reading. If you wonder why we Black folks are angry, remember we have this history tucked into our bodies, passed down through the generations to the present. We may not be owned by whites any more, but discrimination keeps these wounds alive. If you wonder why Blacks don't trust whites, read this book and try to put yourself in the skin of the slaves. This book expresses something that still resides deep in the psyche of the American people.



PRISCILLA: "She wishes she had looked more closely at every bit of her world when she was growing up so she could give more of it to Wash but it had been wrapped so close around her, she had no idea she would ever be without it."

Well, I would say this book is not very pretty. I wonder where was God? Richardson's wife was reading the Bible, but wanted to use it to justify slavery. I just wonder how they could do that. I guess I learned in our last adventure that people are good at misinterpreting the Bible. You've got to be careful if love is not the measure.



KATHARINE: "See, I know how they do. White folks like to stay in those books. They carry and they keep and they dig in their books, like nothing matters that don't get written in some book somewhere. Like that's the only way they can know for sure what happened. They'll write down who they are and what they did. And their daddies and theirs too. Put it all in a book, then close it up and put it on the shelf. Just to know it's there so they can sleep at night. Like if they don't get written down somewhere and they shut their eyes for a minute, they might disappear." "

Well, this is a great look inside at the institution of slavery and how it shaped both the slaves and the white folks who tried to do such a terrible business of living off their fellow humans. The slaves seemed a lot more intelligent than their masters at time. I would recommend this for history teachers, trying to help their students understand the antebellum period. They'll never think about the south and slavery the same way again. I think this story opens all our minds into that horrible reality of slavery. Most of us would rather not even think about it, but this book takes a fresh and unforgettable look at the evil in our history.



JANE: "Folks will take hold of whatever story suits em best and nothing you can do. Don't matter if it is your story, once they start in on it, you can't never get it out of their mouth. No matter how hard you try. All you can do is find a way to hang on to knowing you know better."

Business doesn't justify taking advantage of people, but it happens time and time again. I tried hard to pay fair wages when I was in charge, but that drive to make money often keeps you from doing right. That I believe is the biggest problem with capitalism. Socialism doesn't seem to work either. What is that Molly keeps talking about? "Triple Bottom Line?" I'm glad we're trying that out in Nancy's new book... a business that takes into consideration not just profit, but people and the planet, too. That's the way to go, if you can make it work. I think that's what we need. I'm glad we left slavery behind. I hope we can get rid of exploiting people and the earth soon, too.