

Darby

Recommended for Grades 6-8

Book Summary: Darby

1926. Darby is inspired to start writing news stories when her friend, Evette, tells her how easy it is. Darby's first story is published and the praise and attention she receives has her soon writing a second story. Around her, Darby witnesses the signs of racial unrest when her friend Evette is unable to have her full name in the paper on account of being black and when her father is threatened for having tried to help a black boy who was beaten to death. As these instances of racial inequality continue around her, Darby is inspired with another news story.

[SPOILER]

Darby writes a third article about how black people within the community are treated unfairly and how black and white people should be respected equally. At first, the editor declines to publish it, but, with her father permission, the article is finally printed. Darby receives both positive and hostile feedback from the people around her but is convinced that she did the right thing. However, Darby gets a lesson in how the truth takes courage when her family is targeted by the Ku Klux Klan. Eventually most of the unrest stirred by her article dies down. She and Evette continue to write news articles and get published but never again write a story about blacks and whites.

Author Biography: J. Scott Fuqua

J. Scott Fuqua is an artist, author and historian. He was born in Virginia and went to the College of William and Mary before moving to Maryland. He has received two awards from the Maryland State Arts Council for his writing and is a writer-in-residence for the Carver Center for the Arts in Towson, Maryland. He is most known for his books *The Reappearance of Sam Webber* and *Darby*, which have both won numerous awards. Scott also writes living history plays for the Jewish Museum of Maryland and the Maryland Historical Society. He currently lives in Baltimore with his wife and daughter.



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Discussion Questions: Darby

1. Darby tells her mother that she wants to be a reporter to which her mother replies “reporting is a man’s job”. Why do you think this would have been considered an unladylike job? Can you think of any instances where jobs today are still considered either primarily for men or for women? Are there any reasons for these stereotypes?
2. When Evette tells Darby she knows a black family who owns a car and a big house, Darby doesn’t believe her. Why would she find this hard to believe? Why was Evette upset with Darby when she was told that she was getting her story published in the newspaper as soon as she wrote it?
3. In Darby’s class, there are kids from the Mill Village whose fathers weave cotton. This deems them low-class by Darby and her friends. Why do Darby and her classmates hold these opinions? Are there any instances of low class discrimination today? If so, why do people still have these opinions?
4. When Darby takes her second story to Mr. Salter, he tells her that he can’t have people know it was edited by a black girl. Do you think his compromise to have only Evette’s first name on it was fair? Why did he want people thinking Evette was from another town?
5. Why did Darby have to lie to Mr. Salter about why the black boy really died? How do you think Mr. Salter would’ve reacted if she had told the truth?
6. Compare Darby and Evette’s dreams for the future. What influences their dreams? Why does marrying not matter to Evette? Is this reasonable for her to believe? Why or why not?
7. When Darby gives her third story to Mr. Salter, he is reluctant to hand it back to her when he admits he can’t publish it. Why does Mr. Salter want to keep the story? When he hands the story back, he tells her “Now, I’m as guilty as everyone else.” What does he mean by this?
8. Compare the three stories Darby wrote. How did she improve as a writer? Are there any other ways in which she improved? How have the events around Darby influenced her writing?
9. When she sees all the negative effects from her story, Darby briefly wished that she hadn’t published it. Why was it more important for her to tell the truth? Have you ever seen an injustice like Darby did and tried to speak out against it? If so, what happened?
10. *Darby* was written in 2002. Although the events of the story are from the past, how do you think the story is relevant to modern society?



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