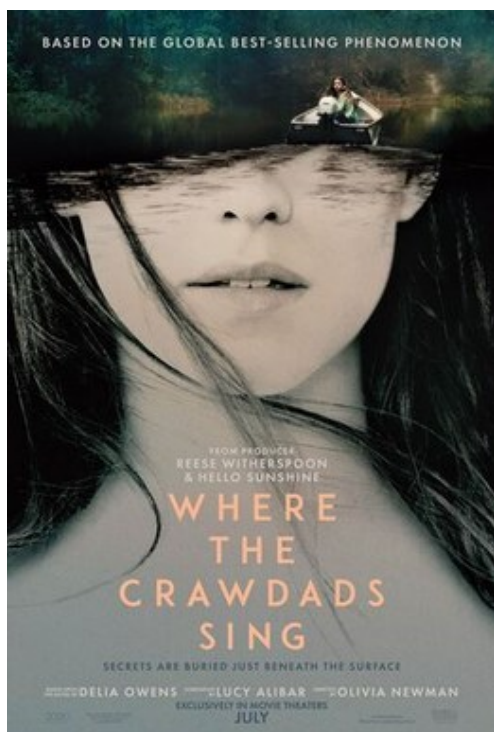


WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING



Book Summary:

The story of a young woman's life of loss and love is told.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains sexual activities; sexual nudity; sexual assault; explicit violence including domestic violence and child abuse; profanity and derogatory terms; alcohol and drug use; and hate including racism.

Adult

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ISBN: 9780735219113



3 / 5

Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
8	Just like their whiskey, the marsh dwellers bootlegged their own laws—not like those burned onto stone tablets or inscribed on documents, but deeper ones, stamped in their genes.
12	After Ma left, over the next few weeks, Kya’s oldest brother and two sisters drifted away too, as if by example. They had endured Pa’s red-faced rages, which started as shouts, then escalated into fist-slugs, or backhanded punches, until one by one, they disappeared.
17	No ladies or children stepped inside because it wasn’t considered proper, but a take-out window had been cut out of the wall so they could order hot dogs and Nehi cola from the street. Coloreds couldn’t use the door or the window.
38	“C’mon, Ed. Ya know how Chase was. Tom-cattin’, ruttin’ ’round like a penned bull let out. ’Fore he was married, after he was married, with single girls, married women. I seen randy dogs at a bitch fest better behaved.” “C’mon, he wasn’t that bad. Sure. He had a reputation as a ladies’ man. But I don’t see anybody in this town committin’ murder over it.”
57	“Ya gotta watch out for folks ’round here,” he said. “Woods’re full a’ white trash. Pert near ever’body out here’s a no-’ count.”
67	Pa had beat all of them, mostly when he was drunk...Once Pa shoved Ma into the kitchen wall, hitting her until she slumped to the floor. He grabbed Kya by the shoulders, shouted for her to pull down her jeans and underpants, and bent her over the kitchen table. In one smooth, practiced motion he slid the belt from his pants and whipped her.
91	“Show us yo’ teeth! Show us yo’ swamp grass!” Peals of laughter.
101	“Jest an ol’ nigger walkin’ to town. Watch out, nigger-boy, don’t fall down,” they taunted Jumpin’, who kept his eyes on his toes. One of the boys reached down, picked up a stone, and slung it at Jumpin’s back. It hit just under his shoulder blade with a thud. He lurched over a bit, kept walking. The boys laughed as he disappeared around the bend, then they picked up more rocks and followed him.
125	He took her shoulders, hesitated an instant, then kissed her lips, as the leaves rained and danced around them as silently as snow. ...And he kissed her again. This time she tilted her head to the side and her lips softened.
131	Sometimes boating forty minutes for a ten-minute beach walk, holding hands. Kissing a lot. Not wasting a minute. Boating back. He wanted to touch her breasts; would kill just to look at them. Lying awake at night, he thought of her thighs, how soft, yet firm, they must be. To think beyond her thighs sent him roiling in the sheets. But she was so young and timid.
133	“I’ll help you.” And he came up behind her and put his arms around her waist. She leaned her head back against his chest, eyes closed. Slowly his fingers moved under her sweater, across her sleek stomach, toward her breasts. As usual, she wore no bra, and his fingers circled her nipples. His touch lingered there, but a sensation spread down her body as though his hands had moved between her legs. A hollowness that urgently needed filling pulsed through her. But she didn’t know what to do, what to say, so pushed back. “It’s okay,” he said. And just held her there. Both of them breathing deep.
134	He stepped toward her purposely. His expression stopped her in front of a broad oak. He took her shoulders and pushed her firmly against the tree. Holding her arms along her sides, he kissed her, his groin pushing against hers. Since Christmas they had kissed and explored slowly; not like this. He had always taken the lead but had watched her

Page	Content
	<p>questioningly for signs to desist; not like now.</p> <p>He pulled away, the deep golden-brown layers of his eyes boring into hers. Slowly he unbuttoned her shirt and pulled it off, exposing her breasts. He took his time to examine them with his eyes and fingers, circling her nipples. Then he unzipped her shorts and pulled them down, until they dropped to the ground. Almost naked for the first time in front of him, she panted and moved her hands to cover herself. Gently he moved her hands away and took his time looking at her body. Her groin throbbed as if all her blood had surged there. He stepped out of his shorts and, still staring at her, pushed his erection against her. When she turned away in shyness, he lifted her chin and said, "Look at me. Look me in the eyes, Kya."</p> <p>"Tate, Tate." She reached out, trying to kiss him, but he held her back, forcing only her eyes to take him in. She didn't know raw nakedness could bring such want. He whispered his hands against her inner thighs, and instinctively she stepped each foot to the side slightly. His fingers moved between her legs and slowly massaged parts of her she never knew existed. She threw her head back and whimpered.</p> <p>Abruptly, he pushed away from her and stepped back. "God, Kya, I'm sorry. I'm sorry."</p> <p>"Tate, please, I want to."</p> <p>"Not like this, Kya."</p> <p>"Why not? Why not like this?"</p> <p>She reached for his shoulders and tried to pull him back to her.</p> <p>"Why not?" she said again.</p> <p>He picked up her clothes and dressed her. Not touching her where she wanted, where parts of her body still pounded.</p>
136	"Damn it, Kya. Damn it to hell!"
161	<p>When she looked at him, he lifted her chin with his hand and kissed her. He touched her neck lightly, then feathered his fingers over her blouse toward her breast. Kissing and holding her, more firmly now, he leaned back until they were lying on the blanket. Slowly he moved until he was on top of her, pushed his groin between her legs, and in one movement pulled up her blouse. She jerked her head away and squirmed out from under him, her blacker-than-night eyes blazing. Tugged her top down.</p> <p>"Easy, easy. It's okay."</p> <p>She lay there—hair strewn across the sand, face flushed, red mouth slightly parted—stunning. Carefully, he reached up to touch her face, but fast as a cat, she sprang away, and stood.</p> <p>Kya breathed hard. Last night, dancing alone on the lagoon shore, swaying about with the moon and mayflies, she'd imagined she was ready. Thought she knew all about mating from watching doves. No one had ever told her about sex, and her only experience with foreplay had been with Tate. But she knew the details from her biology books and had seen more creatures copulating—and it wasn't merely "rubbing their bottoms together" like Jodie had said—than most people ever would.</p>
163	She hadn't seen Chase since their beach picnic ten days ago, but still felt the shape and firmness of his body pinning hers against the sand.
175	At one shack somebody yelled, "Sheriff!" and mostly naked bodies took off in all directions, charging through brambles. "Damn potheads," the sheriff said. "At least the moonshiners kept their clothes on."

Page	Content
183	<p>The imposer males were referred to as “sneaky fuckers.” ... Across most life-forms, males compete to inseminate females. Male lions occasionally fight to the death; rival bull elephants lock tusks and demolish the ground the ground beneath their feet as they tear at each other’s flesh.</p> <p>...Another article delved into the wild rivalries between sperm. Across most life-forms, males compete to inseminate females. Male lions occasionally fight to the death; rival bull elephants lock tusks and demolish the ground beneath their feet as they tear at each other’s flesh. Though very ritualized, the conflicts can still end in mutilations.</p> <p>To avoid such injuries, inseminators of some species compete in less violent, more creative methods. Insects, the most imaginative. The penis of the male damselfly is equipped with a small scoop, which removes sperm ejected by a previous opponent before he supplies his own.</p>
184	<p>She stood in front of him, balancing in the boat, but as she pulled her T-shirt over her head, he didn’t turn away. He reached out and ran his fingers lightly across her firm breasts. She didn’t stop him. Pulling her closer, he unzipped her shorts and slipped them easily from her slender hips. Then he took off his shirt and shorts and pushed her down gently onto the towels.</p> <p>Kneeling at her feet, without saying a word, he ran his fingers like a whisper along her left ankle up to the inside of her knee, slowly along the inside of her thigh. She raised her body toward his hand. His fingers lingered at the top of her thigh, rubbed over her panties, then moved across her belly, light as a thought. She sensed his fingers moving up her stomach toward her breasts and twisted her body away from him. Firmly, he pushed her flat and slid his fingers to her breast, slowly outlining the nipple with one finger. He looked at her, unsmiling, as he moved his hand down and pulled at the top of her panties. She wanted him, all of him, and her body pushed against his. But seconds later, she put her hand on his.</p> <p>“C’mon, Kya,” he said. “Please. We’ve waited forever. I’ve been pretty patient, don’t ya think?”</p> <p>“Chase, you promised.”</p> <p>“Damn it, Kya. What’re we waiting for?” He sat up. “Surely, I showed ya I care for you. Why not?”</p>
193	<p>He came toward her slowly and unbuttoned her blouse, then turned her gently around and unfastened her bra. Traced his fingers across her breasts. An excited heat flowed from her breasts to her thighs. As he pulled her down onto the bed in the glow of the red and green neon lights filtering through thin curtains, she closed her eyes. Before, during all those almost-times, when she had stopped him, his wandering fingers had taken on a magical touch, bringing parts of her to life, causing her body to arch toward him, to long and want. But now, with permission finally granted, an urgency gripped him and he seemed to bypass her needs and push his way. She cried out against a sharp tearing, thinking something was wrong.</p> <p>“It’s okay. It’ll be better now,” he said with great authority. But it didn’t get much better, and soon he fell to her side, grinning.</p>
194	<p>She was wrapped snugly in a blanket after lovemaking, which had improved only slightly since their first attempt at the motel. Each time left her wanting, but she didn’t have the faintest notion how to broach such a subject.</p> <p>... Chase stood from the table and, lifting her chin with his fingers, kissed her, saying, “Well,</p>

Page	Content
	I won't be out much in the next few days with Christmas comin' up and all. There's lots of events and stuff, and some relatives comin' in."
197	"You don't live in town. You don't know that Chase goes out with other women. Just the other night I watched him drive away after a party with a blonde in his pickup. He's not good enough for you."
202	After lovemaking, they cuddled in blankets around the stove.
212	It hadn't been a coincidence that Chase slyly mentioned marriage as bait, immediately bedded her, then dropped her for someone else. She knew from her studies that males go from one female to the next, so why had she fallen for this man? His fancy ski boat was the same as the pumped-up neck and outsized antlers of a buck deer in rut: appendages to ward off other males and attract one female after another.
229	<p>He shoved Ma backward. "Ya out whoring, that's what. That how you git the money? Tell me now." He grabbed Ma by the arms and shook her so hard her face seemed to rattle around her eyes, which stayed very still and wide open.</p> <p>... "Pa, please, stop!" Kya cried out, then sobbed.</p> <p>He lifted his hand and slapped Kya hard across the cheek. "Shut up, ya prissy-pot crybaby! Git that silly-looking dress and fancy shoes off ya. Them's whorin' clothes."</p> <p>She ducked down, holding her face, chasing after Ma's hand-painted eggs.</p> <p>"I'm talkin' to ya, woman! Whar ya gettin' yo' money?" He lifted the iron fire poker from the corner and moved toward Ma.</p> <p>Kya screamed as loud as she could and grabbed at Pa's arm as he slammed the poker across Ma's chest. Blood popped out on the flowery sundress like red polka dots. Then a big body moved down the hall and Kya looked up to see Jodie tackle Pa from behind, sending them both sprawling across the floor. Her brother got between Ma and Pa and hollered for Kya and Ma to run, and they did. But before she turned, Kya saw Pa raise the poker and whack Jodie across the face, his jaw twisting grossly, blood spewing. The scene played out in her mind now in a flash. Her brother crumbling onto the floor, lying among purple-pink eggs and chocolate bunnies. She and Ma running through palmettos, hiding in brush. Her dress bloody, Ma kept saying it was fine, the eggs wouldn't break, and they could still cook the chicken. Kya didn't understand why they stayed hidden there—she was sure her brother was dying, needed their help, but she was too afraid to move.</p>
264	<p>"Let go of me!" She twisted, tried to yank away, but he gripped her with both hands, hurting her arms. He put his mouth on hers and kissed her. She threw her arms up, knocking his hands away. She pulled her head back, hissing, "Don't you dare."</p> <p>"There's my lynx. Wilder than ever." Grabbing her shoulders, he clipped the back of her knees with one of his legs and pushed her to the ground. Her head bounced hard on the dirt. "I know ya want me," he said, leering.</p> <p>"No, stop!" she screamed. Kneeling, he jammed his knee in her stomach, knocking the breath from her, as he unzipped his jeans and pulled them down.</p> <p>She reared up, pushing him with both hands. Suddenly he slugged her face with his right fist. A sick popping sound rang out inside her head. Her neck snapped back, and her body was thrown backward onto the ground. Just like Pa hitting Ma. Her mind blanked for seconds against a pounding pain; then she twisted and turned, trying to squirm out from under him, but he was too strong. Holding both her arms over her head with one hand, he unzipped her shorts and ripped down her panties as she kicked at him. She screamed, but there was no one to hear. Kicking at the ground, she struggled to free herself, but he</p>

Page	Content
	<p>grabbed her waist and flipped her over onto her stomach. Shoved her throbbing face into the dirt, then reached under her belly and pulled her pelvis up to him as he knelt behind. "I'm not lettin' ya go this time. Like it or not, you're mine."</p> <p>Finding strength from somewhere primal, she pushed against the ground with her knees and arms and reared up, at the same time swinging her elbow back across his jaw. As his head swung to the side, she struck him wildly with her fists until he lost his balance and sprawled backward onto the dirt. Then, taking aim, she kicked him in his groin, square and solid.</p>
269	<p>"She came stumbling' out toward her boat, and well, she was partway undressed. Her shorts 'round her ankles and her knickers 'round her knees. She was tryin' to pull up her shorts and run at the same Time. The whole time shoutin' at him. She went to her boat, jumped in, and zoomed away, still pullin' at her pants." ... "She was screamin', 'Leave me alone, you bastard! You bother me again, I'll kill ya!'"</p>
271	<p>She wasn't sure what the two fishermen had seen, but they'd never defend her. They'd say she had it coming because, before Chase left her, she'd been seen smooching with him for years, behaving unladylike. Actin' the ho, they'd say.</p>
273	<p>She'd brought this on herself. Consorting unchaperoned. A natural wanting had led her unmarried to a cheap motel, but still unsatisfied. Sex under flashing neon lights, marked only by blood smudged across the sheets like animal tracks. Chase had probably bragged about their doings to everyone. No wonder people shunned her—she was unfit, disgusting.</p>
274	<p>Just at that moment she noticed a female praying mantis stalking along a branch near her face. The insect was plucking moths with her articulated forelegs, then chewing them up, their wings still flapping in her mouth. A male mantis, head high and proud as a pony, paraded along to court her. She appeared interested, her antennae flailing about like wands. His embrace might have been tight or tender, Kya couldn't tell, but while he probed about with his copulatory organ to fertilize her eggs, the female turned back her long, elegant neck and bit off his head. He was so busy humping, he didn't notice. His neck stump waved about as he continued his business, and she nibbled on his thorax, and then his wings. Finally, his last foreleg protruded from her mouth as his headless, heartless lower body copulated in perfect rhyme.</p>
280	<p>"What happened to your face?" He walked toward her, reaching to touch her cheek. She turned away.</p> <p>"Nothing. I ran into a door in the middle of the night." He knew that wasn't true by the way she flung her hand to her face. Someone had hit her. Had it been Chase? Was she still seeing him even though he was married?</p>
353	<p>He hadn't decided exactly what he'd say to her, but kissing some sense into her came to mind.</p>
359	<p>In the evenings, they drifted in her old boat until sunset, then swam naked in moonlight or loved in beds of cool ferns.</p>

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	1
Bitch	3
Fuck	3
Nigger	6
Shit	11
Tit	1