

## Blackberry Women

**Ella O. Williams**

AuthorHouse (Mar 12, 2007)

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*Detail about everyday living in the early 1900s highlights this story of an African American family.*

The intriguing novel *Blackberry Women* by Ella O Williams evokes thought and emotion in equal share as a first-generation freeborn African American mother and father struggle to raise a family of five sons and seven daughters. With similarities to *Eve's Bayou* and *The Color Purple*, this story takes place on the farmlands of the South in the early 1900s.

Williams cleverly demonstrates the hardships of a large Southern family dependent on a good crop harvest each year, which, according to Papa, never comes. The story follows the children as they grow up and embark on their own journeys when they are old enough to leave the farm and make a living for themselves. Many moral life lessons, such as problems associated with drinking or having relations with married men, are strongly presented, even if most of the characters don't seem to learn from their mistakes.

The pacing starts slowly and speeds up considerably by the end of the book, almost as if the author is running out of space and needs to cram as much information as possible into the last small portion of the novel. As the story progresses, time speeds up. The years fly by rapidly and, with the book describing the fates of twenty characters at once, in no particular order, the story becomes a little hard to follow toward the end. The need to turn back a few pages to refresh the memory on what happened to a specific character may become a hindrance.

One of the most intriguing aspects of this novel is the amount of detail about everyday living. From the step-by-step process of making dough for breakfast biscuits to the descriptions of long days working in the cotton fields, Williams's knowledge of how Southern black families lived and adjusted to life in the early 1900s is incredible. These precious moments, largely in the beginning of the novel, seem very believable.

The cover is beautiful, but the house and yard look a bit too new for the description in the book. There also isn't a clear reason for the book title because the story is just as much about the men in the family as it is the women.

Overall, this is a great read. Anyone looking to curl up with a good book and be taken on a journey should consider adding this novel to his or her bookshelf.

JESSICA S. COUNCIL (July 21, 2014)

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