



Sugar

Bernice L. McFadden

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"Strong and folksy storytelling...think **Zora Neale Hurston**...**Sugar** speaks of what is real." --**The Dallas Morning News**From an exciting new voice in African-American contemporary fiction comes a novel **Ebony** praised for its "unforgettable images, unique characters, and moving story that keeps the pages turning until the end." **The Chicago Defender** calls **Sugar** "a literary explosion...McFadden reveals amazing talent." The novel opens when a young prostitute comes to Bigelow, Arkansas, to start over, far from her haunting past. Sugar moves next door to Pearl, who is still grieving for the daughter who was murdered fifteen years before. Over sweet-potato pie, an unlikely friendship begins, transforming both women's lives--and the life of an entire town.

Sugar brings a Southern African-American town vividly to life, with its flowering magnolia trees, lingering scents of jasmine and honeysuckle, and white picket fences that keep strangers out--but ignorance and superstition in. To read this novel is to take a journey through loss and suffering to a place of forgiveness, understanding, and grace. McFadden is the author of the novels *Gathering of Waters*, *Glorious*, and *This Bitter Earth*.

Sugar Details

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Author : Bernice L. McFadden

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From Reader Review Sugar for online ebook

Rick Slane says

Adult novel takes place in central Arkansas 1955 deals with prostitution and race.

Ms.Toni says

More Sugar, Please

Okay, so I've heard about this book, heard about this book and heard about this book. Haven't run into a single person who read it and didn't love it. But this is me we're talking about so that doesn't mean anything to me. I had read a previous title by Bernice McFadden and it didn't do anything for me. I tried her alter ego, Geneva Holiday, and wasn't moved. It wasn't until a dear friend who is also a bookseller actually put the book in my hand and told me to take it and read it that I gave in. Even still, it sat on my shelf for over a year. Determined to put a dent in the unread books on my shelf, I made "Sugar" a challenge read, and here we are. I finally did it! And you know what? I enjoyed it.

"Sugar" tells the story of two women, very opposite yet in need of each other. Pearl is only a shell of the woman she used to be after the murder of her daughter. Sugar is a prostitute who moves into town and next door to Pearl. The two form an unlikely friendship unknowingly forcing the other to reconcile with the past.

Two people, the exact opposites, becoming friends and learning to appreciate the other and learning what's important in life is not a new theme. However, the somewhat predictability of this tale forces readers to rely on the author's storytelling skills and on the journey itself to entertain. And entertaining it was. I quickly became emotionally vested in Pearl and Sugar, rooting for them and their growth the whole way. Bernice McFadden does a wonderful job of placing readers in Bigelow, Arkansas, in 1955.

"Sugar" was worth the read and I now join the chorus of voices recommending it to others.

Alretha Thomas says

I finished reading Bernice L. McFadden's Sugar this morning at the gym. I have to confess that I did happen to see a review that mentioned something about the ending not being a very happy one, so I braced myself as I approached the last chapter. Happy ending or no happy ending, Sugar was as sweet a read as the title...bittersweet in places, but sweet just the same. I not only fell in love with Bernice's writing style, but I also found a deep place in my heart for the two main women in the novel— Pearl, a middle-aged church-going woman who's daughter's brutal demise left her void of any zeal to live and Sugar, a prostitute who had never known true love and who had long given up trying to find it. I also fell in love with Joe, Pearl's husband.

I experienced every human emotion and then some while I hungrily read the story that epitomizes love, forgiveness and acceptance. The character development is flawless and I loved how Pearl and Sugar, over time, found what they had been in search of in each other. Bernice is a superb storyteller and I loved how she

tied the harrowing opening to the end, revealing the true identity of Sugar. A few of my favorite scenes are as follows: 1) Sugar's entrance into Bigelow 2) Shirley and Pearl catching Sugar in her window and Shirley's reaction. 3) Sugar giving Pearl a makeover. 3) Joe's reaction to Pearl's new look. 4) Seth and Sugar.

If you're looking for a page-turner that will have you laughing and crying at the same time, Sugar is "The One." Bravo to Ms. McFadden!

Keyona says

This was one of the best books I've ever read. I love this author. She never disappoints.

kisha says

I just finished reading this book for the second time after ten years. So much respect is due to Bernice Mcfadden. She's a wonderful writer and storyteller. Her style is amazing. Her excellency in character analysis is outstanding. It was impossible not to fall in love with the characters or at least have an understanding of how or why they are the way that they are. I couldn't get over the language of the narration. So beautifully written. I definitely can't wait to read the sequel. This is a book that sticks to you for a very long time after reading. This was definitely a great read and a wonderful story. Even ten years later she's keeps all stars. I wish I could give her six.

Cheryl James says

Sugar "I wanna say sorry for the things I did and the things I didn't do"

This is a great Southern Read. I loved the story and I truly connected with the character's during their happiness and their sadness. This is a story of love, hate, forgiveness and all in between. I love how the author wrote the story with such meaning and great detail. I felt like a part of the family. The book ended on a sad note for Pearl and Joe, but a happy note for Sugar. She is on her way to recovery and in search of a better life. I am looking forward to part two. ????

Shawnette says

Totally Spellbinding

"Sugar" was one of the best novels I've read in a long time! I applaud the talents of the writer because as a debut novel, she was able to capture the attention of the reader and maintain it throughout. I remember thinking that this was going to be a slow read, however, I found myself enjoying the fact that she didn't reveal too much, too soon. I enjoyed the characters in "Sugar". This book will have you feeling a range of

emotions from beginning to end, it was an incredible read. I found myself weeping uncontrollably in the beginning while reading the horrific tale of poor Jude. I later found myself LOL, and then crying all over again at all the drama that played out in this novel. This is an extraordinarily well written story. I highly recommend it. I'm told there will be a sequel; I can hardly wait! BRAVA, Ms. McFadden!!!

Arlene says

I think this might just be a new favorite of mines.

Sugar, was a fantastic novel. It was a great novel. I enjoyed the friendship dynamic btw Sugar and Pearl. And the underlining story behind what I felt that made their friendship even stronger, spoilers and all. I'm glad that somethings, that went with that underlining story did not happen, even though some characters wanted it to happen. (I know that sounds crazy, but I'm trying to keep it spoiler free) I was actually jealous of the friendship, in a way that I wished that I too was a resident of Bigelow. I wished that I could be their third musketeer and be apart of the friendship these two women shared. The section, where Joe had left for Florida and Pearl and Sugar's relationship really bloomed was probably my favorite part. The heartache, the struggles. I loved seeing Sugar grow as a character, as a woman in the book. Her experiences in the big cities and her relationship with Mary and Marcy were harsh but I have always thought that God puts people in your life at the right time, and at that time you can learn from all that has happened, the good and the bad. Mary was both the good and the bad for Sugar, and I think she go a taste of what family, and being apart of something bigger that herself meant.

The ending of the book left me wanting more. Left me craving for more Sugar. What happened after she left town, what happened to Pearl and Joe? Will she ever see them again. Does anyone pick up those pieces of paper she let fly in the wind holding such a huge secret? Well I think it's definitely clear that I will be reading the sequel, This Bitter Earth in the up coming months.

J Beckett says

Title: Sugar: A Novel

Author: Bernice L. McFadden:

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: Dutton Adult (January 10, 2000)

Bernice McFadden's first novel, Sugar, encapsulates the elements that exemplify the making of a classic. This is not to say that it was perfect, for that would be pretentious on my part, but it was arguably a guaranteed page turner that you hoped would last just a little while longer. As a debut, Sugar did not lack any of the many elements we have come to know and love about McFadden's storytelling style or her imaginative, colorful, and captivating characters. But the tale, even with its twists, was simple - direct with less density than, let's say, The Book of Harlan (one of my favorite novels). Stylistically, it was as vivid, engaging, and captivating -- unmistakably McFadden.

Set in Bigelow, Arkansas, Sugar takes the reader on a heartfelt journey through poetic pain and the lives of Sugar Lacey and Pearl Taylor (primarily), and a host of others (secondarily). Sugar's deleterious childhood, overwhelmed by scars and filled with a level of isolation that steals her youth and ultimately her identity, contributes to the creating of the wayward woman she becomes. Pearl, we learn early in the novel, struggles with her own isolation, but unlike Sugar's, hers is involuntarily self-imposed, developed after the tragic and brutal murder of her daughter, Jude. This isolation is not so much about staying out of the company of others (she finds both companionship and solace in church), or even being an effective mother to her other children (Seth, her son, speaks on this point in a single but precise statement later in the book), as it is about withdrawing into herself. Pearl's actions and personality scream depression but McFadden is careful not to label her, allowing the emotional wave we ride with Pearl to reveal, by layer, her quiet but obvious struggle. This internal conflict catapults Pearl into a place from which she cannot easily escape until Sugar crosses her path forming and firming an unusual friendship and, progressively, the voids they've carried are seemingly filled.

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Sugar Lacey is bold, worldly, mysterious and irresistible. She is a woman equally desired and hated, caught, it seems, in a complex network of interconnected (and interlocking) elements, surviving the only way she knows how, by giving pleasure, yet seems to have relegated herself undeserving of joy. She is a vassal to the highest bidder, a beast of burden, a mannequin sans emotions, and as such she receives nothing but a womb filled with frustration. But despite her transgressions and unsavory nonchalance, she has a heart longing, from the child she never was, for unconditional love. Sugar reinvents Pearl, rebuilding the confidence she sorely lacked and the sexiness she secretly, seemingly, yearned for. She takes Pearl from mundane to magnificent, while Joe, Pearl's husband who would object to this rebirth (and perhaps revelation) or so we are made to believe, is out of town (his reaction shortly after his return dismisses all assumptions, including Pearl's). The elements of resurrection (the church is an important "character") develop almost seamlessly throughout the book, and the conflicts are broad but not alarming or distasteful; they are real and familiar.

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Sugar, as a novel, is multitudinous -- an impassioned vision, seething with hope and finishing with unexpected confessions, familiar brutality and wow factor discoveries. It would make for an amazing movie, an incredible television series or Broadway-worthy stage play (think *The Color Purple*). I was enveloped by Bernice McFadden's voice, slowly consuming each chapter and resting a day before beginning the next. I am that kid waiting for her upcoming creations with bated breath and wondrous anticipation. Read Sugar, and you'll understand. I promise.

Shonell Bacon says

If you haven't read this, then SHAME ON YOU...for real.

Snow says

This book was so darn good. 1940/1950's in the south, and a prostitute who's had a hard life moves into a small, Christian town. Only one family befriends her, and everyone else wants her gone.

Isn't that the truth though? So many people claiming to follow Jesus, but instead standing in judgment and venom at other sinners? You'll know when someone is really trying to follow Jesus, by the way, they love other people, regardless of social status, choices in life, of moral fiber. Jesus never said, "Only love your neighbor if they deserve it". No, he said to love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.

Pearl (one of the main characters in the book) understood that command, and she was convicted with its plain and simple expectation when Sugar moved into town. She showed her kindness and tried to understand her choices. As for Sugar, she had a hard life and learned to just survive. My heart hurt when she repeatedly allowed herself to be used as an object, and not a beautiful person, made in God's perfect design.

This story had it all, family secrets, mystery, friendship, laughter, love, forgiveness, conviction, all of it.

Sugar Lacey I must know where this next road leads you. I can't wait to read bitter earth.

Bernice McFadden, you swept me away yet again. PS Whats up with all the wildflowers?

Adira says

Hot dang! This book was masterfully written and the buildup of the story was perfectly written. I'm so excited to know what happens next in the life of Sugar. After reading this book, I now have an answer to that bothersome question that people always ask, which is "what character would you like to sit down and have a chat with?," it's Sugar Lacey for sure! I'd high recommend this book! #RUNDontWalk

Patricia says

Such a great story. I was reading it the same time that I was reading Sula and there were some subtle similarities. Southern women, excellent familiar dialogue, but this one w/o the magical realism that Toni Morrison is known for. This was just a great story. Not a single sentence seemed wasted. Loved it!

Erica says

This is a little like a Toni Morrison or Zora Neale Hurston novel in that it follows black women as they experience a lot of awful situations and some terrible people.

This one is set in Arkansas in a small town full of gossips and upstanding Christian do-gooders.

It focuses on the lives of Sugar Lacey, an itinerant prostitute who has just moved in to #10 Grove Street, and her new neighbor, the long-grieving Pearl Taylor whose daughter was horribly murdered 15 years prior.

The town hates Sugar, of course, and they look to Pearl to feed them salacious news of the whore next door. What happens, instead, is Sugar's more than passing resemblance to Pearl's dead daughter, Jude, creates a sort of stubbornness in the older woman and she pretty much forces her friendship on the reclusive yet often-naked neighbor via sweet potato pies.

As the two become close, Sugar fails to remain aloof and uncaring while Pearl chooses friendship over her reputation with the snippy townsfolk. Both women learn so much from each other and are on their way to becoming complete people, learning to accept, acknowledge, and live past their grief, their misery, their shame. But, as always, love screws everything up because that's just what love does.

I was on board with this story until Joe came back home and everything took a turn for the melodramatic. The pace of the story changed to a hectic clip and ALL THE THINGS! started happening or came together and it was just too much, too fast, too over-the-top.

All in all, it's a wonderful story, the last third, or so, was just too much for my own personal taste.

Bonita Anthony says

This was a spellbinding and compelling book. The book started slowly. Reading the first 50 pages, you are fooled into thinking that you have figured out the mystery and that you will be bored for the next 150 pages. However, the pace picks up, the story begins to unfold, and you feel like you are watching a movie on Lifetime. Reading this in one sitting is easy as the parallels of people's lives mesmerize you. We have all lived through some kind of hardship, pain, rejection, and abuse. Women, especially African-American women, will find that we all have a "Sugar" story. That is what makes the imagery of some scenes gore at my heart as I read this.

This is definitely a good book. I could not give it five stars because the book, well written, was still missing some depth. I cannot explain. I just know when I read it.

Lulu says

16 years later...still 5 stars! I love this book.

Destiny Hawkins says

Loved it! My second book by this author. Can't wait to read part 2. Sugar was abandoned by her mother at a young age and never knew her father. During her formative years, she saw and heard a lot of things that were a bit much for a youngster. She grew up not really feeling loved. At the age of 15 she left town in search of becoming a star and a woman. See Sugar through her journey in life. Not all people are bad or want something from you.

Alyisia says

I had a hard time getting into this book in the beginning. I think I will blame it all on reader's burn out. All 100% of it. Because once I got into the book I jammed right though it. The story takes place in the Spring of 1940 small town Bigelow, Arkansas and opens with the gruesome murder of a 15 year old girl. I always have a hard time with gruesome and good writing. There are so many great writers out there telling some detailed violent, image burning stories that make you cringe as you read them. Is that good writing? I have no idea. Is the page turning to see what happens next similar to the neck turning on a freeway when you see an accident?

Back to the story. It's not all violent. The overall story is great and makes you question yourself if you have ever judged a person without knowing them. The good Christian ladies of Bigelow didn't even exchange one word with the "Whore" Sugar but they know for a fact that her presence in their town is not good. For them or their husbands.

Bernice McFadden wrote a great story giving voice to the many faces of Black women. She made them real and solid characters. Each woman unique and believable.

The story ended just the way I like a good read to end. There was just enough to want more but most of the ends were neatly wrapped up. But, personally a little revenge would have been icing on the cake. There were a few situations that were missing revenge and people not speaking their piece. But that is just me. I really liked it!

Suzanne (Chick with Books) Yester says

I didn't know what to expect from Sugar as I read the opening scene of a horrendous murder of a young black girl named Jude and the devastated mother she left behind named Pearl. The year was 1940, the place was a southern black town, and it was the era of segregation...

"No one cared except the people who carried the same skin color"

Bernice McFadden made me feel the anguish of a mother who lost her child; the injustice of the times as it was known nothing was going to be done about it... And then she whisked me ahead 15 years. Pearl is still mourning the loss of her daughter, Jude, in her quiet reserved manner... But there's a new girl in town, and her name is Sugar - a young prostitute looking to change her life. Sugar exudes sex, with her short short skirts, spiky high heels, and BIG attitude. Pearl is a quiet obedient church-going wife. Their unlikely friendship creates amazing changes in both of them... much to the dismay of Pearl's church going friends, but to the delight of Pearl's family.

Bernice is a master storyteller. Her prose is beautiful. As the layers of this story unfold, of murder, secrets, jealousy and pride, Bernice seamlessly weaves it all together to an amazing ending. I felt a whirlwind of emotions as I read Sugar; I laughed, I cried and I felt anger. I saw past those short skirts Sugar wore and found a little girl struggling to catch her breathe. And I walked through a small town scared to open its arms to someone who obviously wasn't 'one of them'... or was she? I kept turning those pages... Graphic in nature at times, but not gratuitous, you will appreciate Sugar's sincerity. You'll appreciate the rich, complex and strong female characters fully fleshed out and who don't shy away from sharing their feelings. Bernice has also captured the feel of small town life, with the soft whispers heard between small clutches of people. The story will grab your attention, and your heart, and will not let you go until the very last page.

Sugar is friendship... it's honesty wrapped up in the poetry of words... it's redemption and it's powerful...

Melissa says

Pearl has had her heart ripped out after the murder of her daughter; Sugar has had her life ripped apart by choices made for her by others. Neither knows, until Sugar moves next door to Pearl, what life has in store for them both.

In my quest to find the alternative to “The Help” I’m trying to immerse myself in African-American authors, who’s points of view lend more authenticity and credibility to the stories of African-American characters. I hit gold with Bernice L. McFadden’s, Sugar.

Set in the rural town of Bigelow Arkansas during the early 40’s-50’s, this gut wrenching novel hits you square in the jaw from the opening pages. Pearl’s daughter, Jude, has been found brutally murdered and raped on the side of the road. For the next 15 years, she lives in a vacuum left by Jude’s absence, but in the comfort of her stoic husband, Joe. Sugar, abandoned at birth to be raised by 3 sisters who operate a “whore-house,” is raised to become a commodity in the family business – a life no one should be subjected. When Sugar moves to Bigelow, the town is horrified. They ignore her, gossip about her and ultimately want her gone. Pearl takes Sugar under her wing and tries to give her a friend for the first time in her life and to recreate for herself what it would be like to have a daughter. When they both try to learn each other’s histories, they are surprised at what they find. Ultimately, Sugar’s relationship with Pearl and Joe puts her at risk with one of her “tricks”, and the results are devastating.

This novel is not for the faint of heart. It is brutal, graphic and gruesome. Life as a “whore” is ugly, filthy, and humiliating. Sugar’s life is not her own. She is nothing but a shell. But the love and friendship Pearl offers to Sugar, shows that there is a chance she can turn her life around. Ms. McFadden’s characters are multifaceted and alive, even if their circumstances show otherwise.

In the end, this novel will envelop you and break your heart, if only for the fact that I’m sure these experiences were the necessary evil for some women.

For the sensitive reader: No question, I would avoid this book.

Book source: public library
