

okreporter

Where readers and writers click.


[find a guide](#) | [for book clubs](#) | [contests](#) | [newsletter](#) | [message board](#) | [for booksellers & librarians](#) | [for auth](#)

Reading Group Guide

About This Book
Discussion Questions
Author Biography
Excerpt

As Hot As It Was You Ought to Thank Me

by Nanci Kincaid

List Price: \$12.95
Pages: 336
Format: Paperback
ISBN: 0316009148
Publisher: Little, Brown


[Buy this book from Amazon.com](#)
[Canadian Readers: Buy this book from Amazon.ca](#)

▼ Other
[Time Warner](#)
[Bookmark](#)

▼ More About This Book

amazon.com
Books!

About This Book

Thirteen-year-old Berry Jackson has more good sense than all the Bible-thumping grown-ups in her hometown of Pinetta, Florida. In the woods behind Berry's house are the swamp and the snakes and the quicksand, where men are said to have been swallowed up whole, leaving only a hat or a handkerchief as evidence. Pinetta is the kind of small southern town where not much happens in a day but a lot can happen in a summer. **As Hot As It Was You Ought to Thank Me** tells the story of the long, hot summer when Berry's father disappears, her mother lusts after the preacher, and a handsome convict comes to town to repair the dusty roads damaged by a hurricane. Berry doesn't understand her world perfectly, but she calls things what they are --- and sometimes that's as much clarity as anyone should expect. In a town where everyone with a dream seems to want to flee, what Berry ultimately discovers is that you don't have to run to find yourself.

technical problem?

Is there a technical problem on this page? Please write a short description and click "Send":

[top of the page](#)

Your email
(optional):

Send

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss Berry's attitude toward religion and faith. Religion is part of her everyday life, but how does she relate to it? Do you see a lot of religious symbolism in this novel? What about Pinetta's two churches --- how do they shape the community?
2. Broadly speaking, this is a story about a young girl's growing understanding of the adult world. How does Berry relate to the adults around her? What does she learn? How does she react to her parents' fallibility?
3. Do parts of this novel remind you of your own childhood? What do you like most about Berry?
4. How does Berry react to people who diverge from what might be considered normal in a small southern town? (The hobos who pass through, for instance, and her friend Jimmy with his proclaimed love for Cadell.) Where do you think Berry's capacity for acceptance comes from?
5. How do you respond to Berry's relationship with Raymond? Does it make you angry, uncomfortable? What do you think about the way Berry handles it? Does her silence betray her age, or does it make her seem beyond her years? Or could Berry simply have done nothing else?
6. Berry's family's reaction to her daddy's disappearance isn't one of dramatic grief. Does this make sense to you? Why do you think the family's response is or isn't appropriate?
7. As a student in Mrs. Freddy's second-grade class, Berry is shocked at the chalk drawings of naked women on the schoolhouse walls. Later she maintains a quiet knowledge of her mother's affair with Pastor Lyons. How does Berry think about right and wrong?
8. As a student in Mrs. Freddy's second-grade class, Berry is shocked at the chalk drawings of naked women on the schoolhouse walls. Later she maintains a quiet knowledge of her mother's affair with Pastor Lyons. How does Berry think about right and wrong?
9. Some people maintain that writing a novel is as much about creating an atmosphere as it is about telling a story. What feeling does **As Hot As It Was You Ought to Thank Me** give you? How does Kincaid create the mood of this story?

[top of the page](#)

amazon.com

Your
Amazon.com

Books

See all 41
Product Categories

Your Account |



Cart |

Your Lists



Help |

Advanced
SearchBrowse
Subjects

Bestsellers

The New York
Times® Best SellersHot New
ReleasesLibros En
Español

Magazines

Sell Your
StuffBargain
Books

Textbooks

Search Books

Gift
Certificates

Web Search

[See larger image](#)[Share your own customer images](#)[Search inside this book](#)

As Hot as It Was You Ought to Thank Me: A Novel (Paperback)

by Nanci Kincaid (Author)

★★★★★ ☒ (10 customer reviews)**List Price:** ~~\$42.95~~**Price: \$11.01** & eligible for
**FREE Super Saver
Shipping** on orders
over \$25. [Details](#)**You Save:** \$1.94 (15%)**Availability:** In Stock. Ships from and
sold by **Amazon.com**. Gift-wrap available.**82 used & new** available from
\$0.45

Quantity: 1



Add to Shopping Cart

or

[Sign in](#) to turn on 1-Click ordering.

More Buying Choices

82 used & new from
\$0.45Have one to sell? [Sell yours here](#)[Add to Wish List](#) ▼[Add to Shopping List](#)[Add to Wedding Registry](#)[Add to Baby Registry](#)[Tell a friend](#)[Return to Product Overview](#)

Editorial Reviews

Amazon.com

Nanci Kincaid's *As Hot As It Was You Ought to Thank Me* is the touchingly honest story of Berry Jackson, a young teenager growing up Pinetta, Florida, home to two churches, a school, and a gas station. Berry spends her days soaking up the lives of her parents, Ford and Ruthie, her brothers Sowell and Wade, and an amusing array of neighbors that include a wayward preacher, a shotgun toting father of six, and the town's (relatively) wealthy businessman. As Berry navigates her way through young adulthood, she unearths a number of truths and lies that will ultimately serve as the foundation for her sense of self. ("It was not really that I longed to be pretty so bad, I swear, it was that I longed to be real. In Pinetta it seemed like being pretty was the one thing guaranteed to make a girl real.")

The book starts off slowly, and some readers may find themselves losing interest in Kincaid's descriptions of Pinetta's long, hot summer days and their inhabitants. However, once the town is hit by a powerful tornado and Berry's father disappears with the town beauty, the pace picks up and readers are rewarded for their perseverance with an exciting tale of mystery and intrigue. The plot thickens when a chain gang rolls into town to help rebuild the roads and the school, and a certain convict steals the heart of Berry and the rest of the townsfolk. Even after his awful crime is revealed, the people of Pinetta can't help but keep a place for him in their hearts.

Kincaid does a commendable job of getting inside 13-year-old Berry's 13-year-old and showing us how no experience is ever truly black or white. In fact, Kincaid is so talented that by the end of the novel, while allegiances may have shifted a bit one way or another, readers will have a hard time saying goodbye to

Berry and her supporting cast of memorable characters. --*Gisele Toueg*

From Publishers Weekly

Kincaid's fourth novel (after *Crossing Blood; Balls; Verbena*) is a deliciously intimate portrayal of the sunstruck small town of Pinetta, Fla., as seen through the eyes of Berry, a 13-year-old trying to make sense of adult indiscretions and her own sexual awakening. Berry's father, Ford, is the town's self-righteous school principal; her mother, Ruth, has a crush on the preacher; her good-looking older brother, Sowell, has his "mind... on tits"; her younger brother, Wade is a specialist in "elaborate animal funerals." When Ford mysteriously disappears in the middle of a tornado with Rennie, the town's tragic teenage wannabe starlet, Berry and her family become the subject of much gossip and attention. In her father's absence, her mother shifts her attentions to a rich, hot-tempered neighbor, and Berry develops a crush on Raymond, a smooth-talking convict in town to help clean up after the storm. When Raymond saves Berry's life by coming between her and two rattlesnakes, it's she who fearlessly volunteers to suck the poison out of his leg. Hungry for affection, Berry ultimately gets what she's after, though when she's had it, she's not sure what to make of it. Narrated with childlike honesty and dead-on Southern flavor ("Used to be we would all get in the tub like a can of worms spilled into shallow ditch water"), this is a sticky, sultry gem. (Feb. 5)

Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist

Starred Review Berry Jackson's life is turned upside down one scorchingly hot summer when a tornado tears through Pinetta, her small Florida town, and her father, the local school principal, vanishes into the night. Is he dead? Has he run away with the young woman who has also vanished? And what will this mean to barely adolescent Berry, who has always defined herself as "the principal's daughter"? Small southern towns, vanishing husbands, and adolescent narrators are staples of Kincaid's earlier fiction, and once again her great strength is the creation of a memorably regional, wryly funny, and naturally artful first-person voice. Like seemingly everyone else in Pinetta--where the heart is definitely *not* a lonely hunter--Berry looks to love for answers, unwisely becoming infatuated with a young prisoner who has been brought to town on a chain gang in the wake of the storm. Love's lessons are sometimes painful ones, but Berry--a terrific character--discovers she can cope when others can't. Kincaid brings a wonderfully engaging authorial sensibility to her story, while her obvious affection for her characters--and theirs for each other--is downright irresistible. *Michael Cart*

Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

< [Return to Product Overview](#)

Feedback

- ▶ If you need help or have a question for Customer Service, [contact us](#).
- ▶ Would you like to [update product info](#) or [give feedback on images](#)? (We'll ask you to sign in so we can get back to you)
- ▶ Is there any other feedback you would like to provide? [Click here](#)

Where's My Stuff?

Track your [recent orders](#).
View or change your orders in
[Your Account](#).

Shipping & Returns

See our [shipping rates & policies](#).
[Return an item](#) (here's our
[Returns Policy](#)).

Need Help?

Forgot your password? [Click here](#).
[Redeem](#) or [buy](#) a gift certificate.
[Visit our Help department](#).

Search Amazon.com



* Choose "Print" from your browser to print the document. Choose "Back" on your browser to return to the document.

Nanci Kincaid

1950-

Entry updated: 02/21/2007

Birth Place: Tallahassee, Florida, United States

[Awards](#)

[Career](#)

[Further Readings About the Author](#)

[Media Adaptations](#)

[Personal Information](#)

[Sidelights](#)

[Source Citation](#)

[Writings by the Author](#)

Personal Information: Born September 5, 1950, in Tallahassee, FL; daughter of William Henry Pierce (an educator) and Lois (a teacher) Pierce Cannon; married first husband (a football coach; divorced); married Dick Tomey (a football coach), February 14, 1997; children: (first marriage) two daughters. **Education:** Attended Virginia Tech University and University of Wyoming; Athens State College, B.A., 1987; University of Alabama, M.F.A., 1991. **Politics:** Democrat. **Avocational Interests:** Travel, public speaking, grandchildren. **Addresses:** Home: Honolulu, HI, and San Jose, CA. Agent: Betsy Lerner, Dunow, Carlson & Lerner, 27 W. 20th St., Ste. 1007, New York, NY 10011. **E-mail:** npkincaid@aol.com.

Career: University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, creative writing and literature instructor, 1987-91; University of North Carolina, Charlotte, creative writing and literature instructor, 1992-96; University of Arizona, Tucson, instructor of English, 1999--. Panelist at Southern Literary Festival, 1992 and 1997, and Writers Today Conference, 1992; keynote speaker, Eudora Welty Writer's Conference, 1993; visiting writer, Meridian Community College, Meridian, MI, 1994; presenter at North Carolina Writer's Network, 1995, Winthrop College, NC, summer writing program, and Hoover College, AL.

Awards: Herbert L. Hughes Fiction Award, The Rectangle, 1986-87; W.B. Yeats Writer's Award, Athens State College, 1987; Fiction Award, Southern Literacy Festival, 1987; Virginia Center for Creative Arts fellowship, 1989; Teaching Writing fellowship, University of Alabama, 1990; University of Alabama graduate council fellowship, 1990-91; National Endowment for the Arts grant, 1991; MacDowell Colony fellowship, 1993, Yaddo fellowship, 1989 and 1994; Bunting fellowship, Radcliffe College, 1994-95; Emerging Artist Award, Alabama Fine Arts Society, 1996; Mary Ingraham Bunting Foundation grant.

WRITINGS:

NOVELS

- *Crossing Blood*, G.P. Putnam's Sons (New York, NY), 1992.
- *Balls*, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC), 1998.
- *Verbena*, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC), 2002.
- *As Hot as It Was You Ought to Thank Me*, Little, Brown and Co. (New York, NY), 2005.

OTHER

- *Pretending the Bed Is a Raft* (short stories), Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC), 1997.

Contributor of short stories to anthologies, including *New Stories from the South: The Year's Best, 1991*, edited by Shannon Ravenel, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1991; *New Stories from the South: The Year's Best, 1994*, edited by Shannon Ravenel, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1994; *Short Stories of the American South*; and *Christmas Stories from the South*, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005.

Contributor of short stories and poetry to periodicals, including *Carolina Quarterly*, *Missouri Review*, *Ontario Review*, *Oxford American*, *Southern Exposure*, and *Southern Humanities Review*.

Media Adaptations: The short story "Pretending the Bed Is a Raft" was adapted as the film *My Life without Me*, Sony Pictures Classics, 2003.

"Sidelights"

Nanci Kincaid grew up in Tallahassee, Florida, and married at age nineteen. Her two daughters were nearly grown when she returned to school to earn a bachelor's degree from Athens State College and a master's degree in fiction writing from the University of Alabama. Her poetry and short stories have been published in periodicals and anthologies, and Kincaid has taught creative writing at the college level.

Kincaid's novel *Crossing Blood* is a coming-of-age tale set in the American South during the 1960s. "Kincaid's adept characterization, blend of humor and pathos, and ear for dialogue mark this promising debut novel," wrote *Publishers Weekly* contributor Sybil Steinberg. The novel's narrator is adolescent Lucy Conyers, whose white family lives on the edge of French Town, a region of Tallahassee consisting mostly of African-American residents. Lucy's mother advocates racial equality while her stepfather does not. Lucy has an older brother, Roy, and a younger brother, Benny, and her brothers' best friends are two African-American boys who live nearby. Benny's friends are the sons of Melvina Williams, a woman who keeps house for the Conyers family. Melvina is the mother of four other children and is married to an alcoholic and abusive husband. Lucy's mother attempts to make up for white racism by helping Melvina's children, and in doing so, jeopardizes her marriage. Reviewing *Crossing Blood* in the *New York Times Book Review*, Steven Stark concluded: "It's easy to wish that Ms. Kincaid had taken more risks with her characters, that the narrative had been more concise. Still, she offers a fresh, honest, and complex portrait of love and hate in the South of the 1960s."

"Eight exquisite examples of great short story writing" is the phrase *Library Journal* contributor Ann H. Fisher used to describe Kincaid's *Pretending the Bed Is a Raft*. In the title story, Belinda, a young mother and cancer patient, makes a list of things she wants to do before she dies. In "Won't Nobody Ever Love You like Your Daddy Does," the same male neighbor attracts a girl and her mother. An instructor in love with his student contemplates leaving his wife in "Why Richard Can't." *Booklist* contributor Mary Ellen Quinn noted that "the narrative voice in all the stories is sure and strong," and praised the author's "fresh insights and quirky humor." A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer called Kincaid "a master at revealing personality through dialogue" and labeled *Pretending the Bed Is a Raft* a "fine debut story collection."

Balls concerns the culture of southern college football as seen through the eyes of fifteen female narrators. Having been married to two football coaches, Kincaid brings an insider's view to the game as it affects coaches, their families, and the players. The story begins in 1968, and the novel's main narrator is Dixie Carraway, a former homecoming queen married to former college quarterback Mac Gibbs. Mac coaches high school teams, then becomes the coach of the (fictional) Birmingham University Black Bears. Kincaid also depicts the recruiting of players and southern fans' passion for college football. When Mac starts a black quarterback, he hears from the Ku Klux Klan. Mac also commits recruiting violations and experiences problems in both his marriage and career. A contributor to *Kirkus Reviews* wrote that "Kincaid handles this rather pulpy material more-or-less evenhandedly" and noted that her "gritty, down-to-earth dialogue dominates the novel, saving it from its worst miscalculations."

Reviewing *Balls* in *Library Journal*, Wilda Williams praised "the novel's warm humor and eccentric characters." *Booklist* contributor Dennis Dodge noted that although *Balls* "seems to center on the most macho of sports, it is all about the inner lives of women," and called the novel "unfailingly perceptive and deeply moving." While a *Publishers Weekly* reviewer noted that Kincaid "hasn't quite found the shape to show her wit and wisdom to their best advantage," she "is a fresh, promising voice in the serio-comic good ol' girl school."

Bena Eckert McKale is the exceptionally strong protagonist in Kincaid's third novel, *Verbena*. Bena's life is dramatically altered after her husband dies in an automobile accident while seated next to another woman half his age. Later, Bena learns a baby also died in the crash. Kincaid thrusts more than her fair share of heartache on Bena, but the character perseveres and manages to maintain her friendly southern virtues and raise five teenage children. William W. Starr of the *Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Service* commented that "readers likely will cheer her choices in this engaging but tough characterization, shorn of sitcom sentimentality and blessed with an ending so gently satisfying." The final chapters in the novel were inspired by the real-life drama of Kincaid's own mother, as Bena battles to find meaning in a life of continuous setbacks and painful lessons. "This is an authentic story," a *Publishers Weekly* contributor noted in reviewing Kincaid's book, "of a resilient woman's doubts, troubles, heartbreak and survival."

In *As Hot as It Was You Ought to Thank Me*, Berry Jackson, an inexperienced and socially awkward thirteen-year-old, finds her world transformed during a searingly hot south Florida summer. As she struggles with her own nascent sexuality, Berry observes the goings-on of her family, including girl-obsessed older brother Sowell; her uptight and self-righteous father, who is the principal of the local school; and her lovestruck mother--interested not in her father, but in the local preacher. When a tornado rips through her tiny hometown of Pinette, the town is nearly destroyed, and her father has vanished, along with a young woman, Rennie Miller, a lovely young waif and dreamer. As the town speculates on whether Berry's father has run off with Rennie, a gang of prison inmates is sent in to help with the cleanup and rebuilding. One of the inmates, Raymond, catches Berry's attention and she develops a crush on him. When he saves her from a poisonous snake bite, Berry returns the favor by volunteering to suck the poison from his leg wound. As her attraction to Raymond deepens, she struggles on the cusp of womanhood and tries to make sense of the contradictions and bad decisions she sees being made all around her. *Texas Monthly* reviewer Jeff McCord called the book "a novel that's tough, tender, and mysterious all at once," while a *Publishers Weekly* contributor described it as a "sticky, sultry gem." Michael Cart, writing in *Booklist*, remarked favorably on Kincaid's "memorably regional, wryly funny, and naturally artful first-person [authorial] voice." Kincaid's "quirky characters" and "Deep South sensibility" all "combine to make a well-developed fictional world," commented Ann H. Fisher in *Library Journal*.

Kincaid once told *CA*: "How can you grow up Southern and not develop a passion for stories and the words that give them life? In the poor South of my childhood money was something only a few people had--words were the true currency of the culture. I also loved the way the truth hid inside the language, how artfully camouflaged it always was and is."

"I have over-listened all my life. All that listening built up and spills out into voices and stories. Some people speak when spoken to. I write when spoken to--whether by the inner voice or by the amazing external voices that surround me. I never have writer's block. (Even when I should!)"

"I don't choose my subjects. They choose me. Race. Gender. The power of place. And lately, forgiveness."

FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

BOOKS

- *Contemporary Southern Writers*, St. James Press (Detroit, MI), 1999.

PERIODICALS

- *Aethlon*, fall, 1999, review of *Balls*, p. 188.

- *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, September 27, 1998, Carolyn Nizzi Warmbold, review of *Balls*, p. L11; October 30, 1998, Don Briant, review of *Balls*, p. K10.
- *Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1998, review of *Balls*, p. 138.
- *Booklist*, March 15, 1993, p. 1342; October 1, 1997, Mary Ellen Quinn, review of *Pretending the Bed Is a Raft*, p. 308; July, 1998, Dennis Dodge, review of *Balls*, p. 1829; March 1, 2002, Peggy Barber, review of *Verbena*, p. 1092; December 15, 2004, Michael Cart, review of *As Hot as It Was You Ought to Thank Me*, p. 707.
- *Charlotte Observer*, June 3, 2002, Polly Paddock, review of *Verbena*.
- *Entertainment Weekly*, December 12, 1997, Alexandra Jacobs, review of *Pretending the Bed Is a Raft*, p. 81; November 20, 1998, Rhonda Johnson, review of *Balls*, p. 120; November 26, 1999, review of *Balls*, p. 85.
- *Honolulu Advertiser*, October 5, 2003, Wanda A. Adams, "Author Finds Fact in Fiction," review of *Verbena*.
- *Kirkus Reviews*, April 1, 1992, p. 419; August 1, 1998; March 1, 2002, review of *Verbena*, p. 280; December 15, 2004, review of *As Hot as It Was You Ought to Thank Me*, p. 1158.
- *Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Service*, June 5, 2002, Polly Paddock, review of *Verbena*, p. K0104.
- *Library Journal*, May 1, 1992, p. 118; September 1, 1997, Ann H. Fisher, review of *Pretending the Bed Is a Raft*, p. 222; September 1, 1998, Wilda Williams, review of *Balls*, p. 214; February 15, 2005, Ann H. Fisher, review of *As Hot as It Was You Ought to Thank Me*, p. 119.
- *New Yorker*, September 7, 1992, p. 95; February 1, 1999, review of *Balls*, p. 14.
- *New York Times*, December 13, 1998, Erica Sanders, review of *Balls*, p. 35.
- *New York Times Book Review*, January 31, 1993, p. 21; February 13, 1994, p. 32.
- *Orlando Sentinel*, July 19, 2002, Mary Ann Horne, review of *Verbena*.
- *Publishers Weekly*, March 30, 1992, review of *Crossing Blood*, p. 87; August 18, 1997, review of *Pretending the Bed Is a Raft*, p. 66; August 3, 1998, review of *Balls*, p. 71; February 18, 2002, review of *Verbena*, p. 69; January 24, 2005, review of *As Hot as It Was You Ought to Thank Me*, p. 222.
- *Rapport*, June, 1999, review of *Balls*, p. 25.
- *School Library Journal*, November, 1992, p. 142.
- *Southern Living*, December, 1992, p. 82; November, 1997, p. 126.
- *State* (Columbia, SC), May 30, 2002, William W. Starr, review of *Verbena*.
- *Texas Monthly*, February, 2005, Jeff McCord, review of *As Hot as It Was You Ought to Thank Me*, p. 58.
- *Winston-Salem Journal*, November 22, 1998, Anne Barnhill, review of *Balls*, p. A20.

ONLINE

- *Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill Web site*, <http://www.algonquin.com/> (November 12, 1998).
- *Auburn University Web site*, <http://www.auburn.edu/> (May 1, 2006), biography of Nanci Kincaid.

Source: *Contemporary Authors Online*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Source Database: Contemporary Authors Online