

Further Reading

Pleasantville
Attica Locke (2015)
LOCKE

On the verge of quitting his job, environmental lawyer Jay Porter takes one last case on behalf of the community of Pleasantville. A local election volunteer goes missing as he investigates a suspicious election process and struggles to close the book on a stubborn chemical fire case from 15 years ago.

The Cutting Season
Attica Locke (2012)
LOCKE

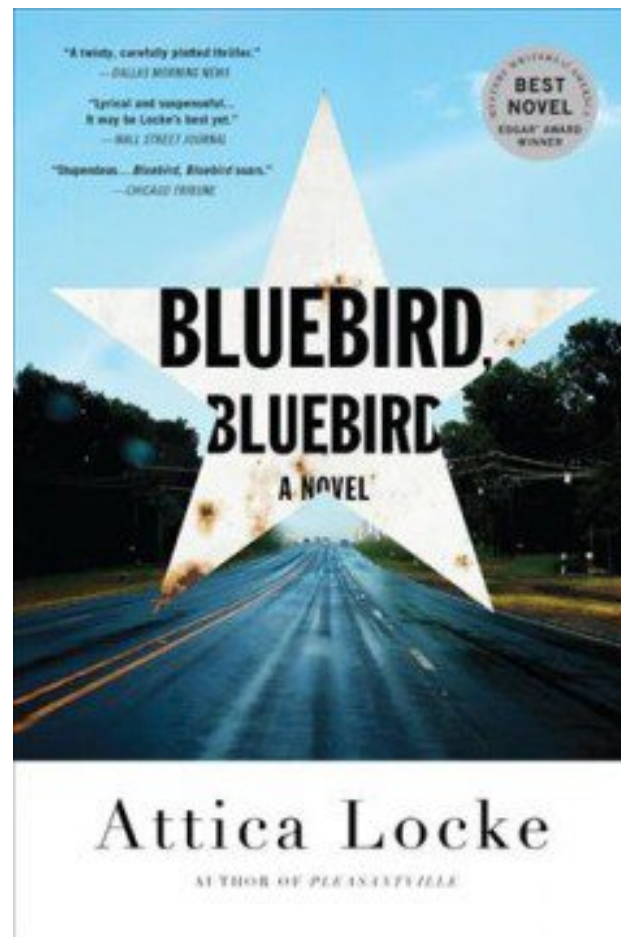
When the dead body of a young woman is found on the grounds of Belle Vie, the estate's manager, Caren Gray, launches her own investigation into Belle Vie's history, which leads her to a centuries old mystery involving the plantation's slave quarters--and her own past.

Black Water Rising
Attica Locke (2009)
LOCKE

When African-American lawyer Jay Porter jumps into the bayou to save a drowning white woman in Houston, Texas, in 1981, he finds his practice and life in danger when he becomes embroiled in a murder investigation involving Houston's elite.

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Book Discussion Guide



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About the Book

In a rural East Texas town of fewer than 200 people, the body of an African American lawyer from Chicago is found in a bayou, followed several days later by that of a local white woman. What's going on? African American Texas Ranger Darren Mathews hopes to find out, which means talking to relatives of the deceased, including the woman's white supremacist husband -- and Mathews soon discovers things are more complex than they seem.

Discussion Questions

1. Which character is your favorite and why? Whom do you find most engaging?
2. In Chapter 1, what do we learn about Darren Matthews — his family, his past, his marriage, his quirks and personality traits?
3. Was Darren right to have driven out to help his friend Rutherford McMillan? Was he right to have filed a report afterward? In other words, where should Darren's loyalty lie: with the Rangers or with an old family friend?
4. Describe the relationship between Geneva Sweet and Darren? Why does Darren seem to want Geneva's approval, or at least her good will? Why does Geneva withhold her friendship from Darren?
5. How would you describe the racial environment in Lark, Texas?

6. Why does Sheriff Van Horn concentrate on solving the death of Missy Dale while ignoring Michael Wright's?
 7. As Wendy looks around Geneva's cafe, she observes that "Forty-some-odd years after the death of Jim Crow, not much had changed" (pg. 8). Reflect on this statement. Where in the book do you see this to be true?
 8. Darren's uncles advise him to follow the "ancient rules of southern living" (pg. 16). What are those rules and why are they so important to black men?
 9. Darren asks Sheriff Van Horn for a copy of the autopsy report for Michael Wright, but Darren already has access to it through his FBI friend Gregg. Why does he pretend he needs a copy?
 10. Is it clear who killed whom, and why? Who killed Michael Wright (and why)? Who killed Missy Dale (and why)? Who killed Joe Sweet and Joe Sweet, Jr. (and why)? What about Isaac? How did he come to have a role in all of this?
- What about Darren's mother? What does her discovery of Mac's gun indicate? What power will the fact that she possesses it give her...over whom?
11. What are your predictions for Darren and Lisa's marriage? Do you have sympathy for Lisa's position: that she married a young lawyer who would be a steady partner with her but now his job takes him away from her? Or do you think she should accept Darren's desire to be a Ranger?

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