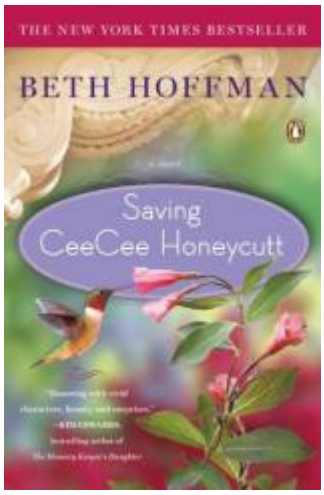
Saving CeeCee Honeycutt

by Beth Hoffman



About the Book

Twelve-year-old CeeCee Honeycutt is in trouble. For years, she has been the caretaker of her psychotic mother, Camille --- the tiara-toting, lipstick-smeared laughingstock of an entire town --- a woman trapped in her long-ago moment of glory as the 1951 Vidalia Onion Queen. But when Camille is hit by a truck and killed, CeeCee is left to fend for herself. To the rescue comes her previously unknown great-aunt, Tootie Caldwell.

In her vintage Packard convertible, Tootie whisks CeeCee away to Savannah's perfumed world of prosperity and Southern eccentricity, a world that seems to be run entirely by women. From the exotic Miz Thelma Rae Goodpepper, who bathes in her backyard bathtub and uses garden slugs as her secret weapons, to Tootie's all-knowing housekeeper, Oletta Jones, to Violene Hobbs, who entertains a local police officer in her canary-yellow peignoir, the women of Gaston Street keep CeeCee entertained and enthralled for an entire summer.

Laugh-out-loud funny and deeply touching, Beth Hoffman's sparkling debut is, as *New York Times* bestselling author Kristin Hannah says, "packed full of Southern charm, strong women, wacky humor, and good old-fashioned heart." It is a novel that explores the indomitable strengths of female friendship and gives us the story of a young girl who loses one mother and finds many others.

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Discussion Guide

1. CeeCee tries to escape from the harsh reality of her life by turning to books. When did your own love of reading develop? Did a particular person or event inspire it? What were some books you loved as a child?

2. Camille’s illness left CeeCee filled with shame and despair. Do you think if she had told Mrs. Odell more of what went on inside the house that the elderly woman could have done something? If so, what? Were there any incidents in your youth that brought you shame or that you were afraid to discuss with an adult?

3. This book highlights comparisons between the North and South. What do you think accounts for the differences --- perceived or otherwise --- between people who live on either side of the Mason-Dixon Line?

4. As the story unfolds, a remarkable relationship develops between Oletta and CeeCee --- Oletta becomes the stable and wise mother CeeCee never had, and CeeCee fills the place in Oletta’s heart left vacant by the untimely death of her daughter. Has anyone ever unexpectedly arrived in your life and filled a void? Have you ever filled a void in someone else?

5. After the attack at the beach, Oletta tells CeeCee she must “reclaim her power” to overcome her fears. What are some times in your life when you had to stand up to reclaim your own power? How did you go about it?

6. Forgiveness is an underlying theme in CeeCee’s story. By eventually forgiving her parents, she frees herself to begin a new life. What people have you forgiven, and how hard was it to do? What were the rewards?

7. Aunt Tootie and all her friends make an art out of making people feel welcome. How do the various women welcome CeeCee into their ranks? What about their welcome for Mrs. Odell? What are some particular times when you’ve received a warm welcome? What about the opposite?

8. The incident at the peach farm followed by the days CeeCee spends in recovery mark a poignant turning point in her life. Has there ever been a time when you faced your own turning point? Was there anyone who helped you? What gifts were waiting for you at the end of your journey?

9. When Aunt Tootie tells CeeCee that she’s “a very popular lady,” it has a profound effect on her. What are some other times in the book when CeeCee takes an adult’s words to heart --- good and bad? What are some particularly memorable things that were said to you as a child --- positive or negative?

10. At several key moments in the story, CeeCee finds that her Life Book is being revised. Are there any other words or terms for “Life Book” that you’ve heard? What are some moments in your life when you knew an indelible memory was being made? When was the last time you recall thinking, “I’ll remember this forever”?

Author Bio

Beth Hoffman was the president and owner of a major design studio in Cincinnati, Ohio. She sold her business to pursue writing full time. Beth lives in Newport, Kentucky with her husband and two very smart cats, in a beautiful historic home that she completely renovated.

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